



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC LETTER  
ISSUED "MOTU PROPRIO"

*SPIRITUS DOMINI*

BY THE SUPREME PONTIFF

FRANCIS

MODIFYING CANON 230 §1 OF THE CODE OF CANON LAW  
REGARDING ACCESS OF WOMEN TO THE MINISTRIES OF LECTOR AND ACOLYTE

The Spirit of the Lord Jesus, the perennial source of the Church's life and mission, distributes to the members of the People of God the gifts that enable each one, in a different way, to contribute to the edification of the Church and to the proclamation of the Gospel. These charisms, called ministries because they are publicly recognized and instituted by the Church, are made available to the community and to her mission in a stable form.

In some cases this ministerial contribution has its origin in a specific sacrament, Holy Orders. Other tasks, throughout history, were instituted in the Church and entrusted through a non-sacramental liturgical rite to individual members of the faithful, by virtue of a particular form of exercise of the baptismal priesthood, and in aid of the specific ministry of bishops, priests and deacons.

Following a venerable tradition, the reception of "lay ministries", which [Saint Paul VI](#) regulated in the Motu Proprio *Ministeria Quaedam* (17 August 1972), preceded in a preparatory manner the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, although such ministries were conferred on other suitable male faithful.

A number of Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops have highlighted the need to deepen the subject

doctrinally, so that it may respond to the nature of the aforementioned charisms and the needs of the times, offering appropriate support to the role of evangelization that is incumbent upon the ecclesial community.

Accepting these recommendations, a doctrinal development has taken place in recent years which has highlighted how certain ministries instituted by the Church are based on the common condition of being baptized and the royal priesthood received in the Sacrament of Baptism; they are essentially distinct from the ordained ministry received in the Sacrament of Orders. A consolidated practice in the Latin Church has also confirmed, in fact, that these lay ministries, since they are based on the Sacrament of Baptism, may be entrusted to all suitable faithful, whether male or female, in accordance with what is already implicitly provided for by Canon 230 § 2.

Consequently, after having heard the opinion of the competent Dicasteries, I have decided to modify canon 230 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law. I therefore decree that Canon 230 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law shall in future have the following formulation:

*“Lay persons who possess the age and qualifications established by decree of the conference of bishops can be admitted on a stable basis through the prescribed liturgical rite to the ministries of lector and acolyte. Nevertheless, the conferral of these ministries does not grant them the right to obtain support or remuneration from the Church”.*

I also order the amendment of the other provisions having the force of law which refer to this canon.

I order that the provisions of this Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio have firm and stable effect, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, and be promulgated by publication in *L'Osservatore Romano*, entering into force on the same day, and then published in the official commentary of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

*Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the tenth day of January in the year 2021,  
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the eighth of my Pontificate.*

Francis

