



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC LETTER
ISSUED "MOTU PROPRIO"

BY THE SUPREME PONTIFF

FRANCIS

« AB INITIO »

QUIBUS CAN. 435 §1 ET CAN. 506 §1
CODICIS CANONUM ECCLESiarUM ORIENTALIUM MUTANTUR

Ever since the earliest times of the Church, some of the faithful have felt called to consecrate their life to the service of God and their brethren in a special way, bearing witness before the community of their detachment from the world through what would then become the profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience.

Individual experiences were followed, first in the East and then in the West, by those of fraternal communal life, defined by the prescriptions of a Rule and by submission to the Superior.

“Thus it has come about”, says [Vatican Council II](#), “that, as if on a tree which has grown in the field of the Lord, various forms of solidarity and community life, as well as various religious families have branched out in a marvelous and multiple way from this divinely given seed. Such a multiple and miraculous growth augments both the progress of the members of these various religious families themselves and the welfare of the entire Body of Christ” (Dogmatic Constitution [Lumen Gentium](#), 43).

The Church welcomes the various forms of consecrated life as a manifestation of the richness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; ecclesiastical authority, especially the Pastors of the particular Churches, interprets the counsels, regulates their practice and, on their basis, constitutes stable

forms of life, avoiding that “communities may be needlessly brought into being which are useless or which lack sufficient resources” (Decree *Perfectae caritatis*, 19).

It is the responsibility of the Apostolic See both to accompany the Pastors in the process of discernment that leads to the ecclesial recognition of a new Institute or of a new Society of eparchial law, and to make a final judgment to test the authenticity of the inspiring purpose.

After having provided for the amendments to the Code of Canon Law, from this perspective I also order the amendment of cann. 435 §1 and 506 §1 of the *CCEO*, which are replaced by the following texts, respectively:

Can. 435 §1 — *Episcopi eparchialis est erigere monasterium sui iuris praevia licentia scripto data intra fines territorii Ecclesiae patriarchalis Patriarchae aut in ceteris casibus Sedis Apostolicae.*

Can. 506 §1 — *Episcopus eparchialis erigere potest tantum congregationes; sed eas ne erigat nisi praevia licentia scripto data Sedis Apostolicae et insuper intra fines territorii Ecclesiae patriarchalis nisi consulto Patriarcha.*

I order that what has been deliberated in this Apostolic Letter in the form of a Motu Proprio shall have firm and stable force, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, and that it be promulgated by publication in *L’Osservatore Romano*, entering into force on 8 December 2020, and thereafter published in the official commentary of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

Francis

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