

Pope Signs Canon Law

New Church Code Effective Nov. 27

Excerpts from the pope's address on promulgating the code are on Page 18.

Vatican City (NC) — In a 10-minute ceremony Jan. 25 in the Vatican's Consistory Hall, Pope John Paul II signed a decree promulgating the Church's new Code of Canon Law.

At a press conference announcing the promulgation, a Vatican official said the revised code would take effect Nov. 27 and one of its key aims is to expand the role of the laity especially in areas where there is a shortage of priests.

The date of the signing marked the 24th anniversary of the announcement by Pope John XXIII that an updated version of the Church's laws would be drafted and that he would convene the Second Vatican Council.

The new code, replacing the one issued in 1917, governs the administrative life of the Church and codifies the reforms of Church law and practice developed during the Second Vatican Council, 1962-65.

Some 25 Vatican officials were present for the signing, mostly from the commission which drafted the revision, including Archbishop Rosalio Jose Castillo Lara, a Venezuelan who is the commission's pro-president.

At a press conference before the signing, the archbishop said the new code greatly expands the role of the laity. As an example he noted that in areas where there is a severe shortage of priests, the new code allows for parishes to be administered by lay men and lay women. Lay people so designated could not celebrate Mass or hear confessions but could be permitted to be regular ministers of baptism, to witness marriages, preside at funeral services and direct preparation for the reception of the sacraments.

The new code prohibits women from being ordained priests or deacons and from holding the permanent ministries of lector or acolyte.

Archbishop Castillo Lara said that in all other areas of the new code "there is no discrimination — whatever a lay person can do, a woman can do."

The new code thus would permit women to fill such positions as diocesan chancellors, judges on diocesan marriage tribunals or members of diocesan synods.

The pro-president added that women can continue to do scriptural readings at Mass despite not being eligible for institution in the permanent ministry of lector.

The pope signed three copies of the new code and three copies of the apostolic constitution which promulgates it. The



Pope John Paul signs the new Code of Canon Law as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, center, and Archbishop Rosalio Jose Castillo Lara look on.

apostolic constitution is called "sacrae disciplinae leges," which in English means "fundamental law of the Church."

One of the copies will remain in the papal apartment, one will be used by the Secretariat of State and one will be kept by the drafting commission.

The pope gave no talk during the ceremony. Archbishop Castillo Lara told those present that a formal ceremony solemnizing the promulgation will take place Feb. 3.

In addition to codifying many post-Vatican II reforms which have been ushered into the Church by particular legislation, the code streamlines the Church's regulations, reducing the number of canons from 2,414 to 1,752.

Archbishop Castillo Lara said the new text aims at decentralizing Church authority, granting to national conferences of bishops some prerogatives which have belonged only to the pope.

The new code, the archbishop said, incorporated into its text a section on the rights and responsibilities of all Catholics, derived from a draft once considered for separate promulgation, called the "lex ecclesiae fundamentalis," in English "fundamental ecclesial law."

Until Nov. 27, the first Sunday of Advent, the 1917 code will remain in effect.

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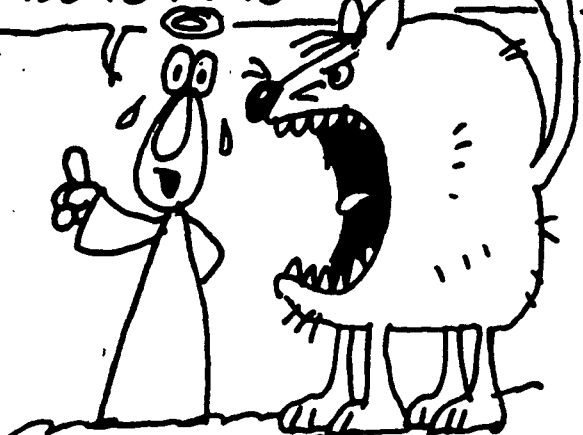
Less than 24 hours before they were to have appeared at the Immigration and Naturalization Service court last week, Rochester's Haitian refugees learned that their plea for a change of venue had moved to the INS Board of Appeals.

A motion filed on their behalf for a change of venue

to Rochester from Buffalo last December had been turned down. That decision has been appealed; and until a determination is made the dates for the refugees' exclusionary hearings are uncertain. Courier-Journal readers will be informed of the developments in the case as they occur.

Gabriele

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