

code: child of the council

have to be embodied in the new law. Otherwise the church's laws would be developed outside Catholic life and would be extrinsic to it.

Despite innumerable changes in specific points, the new Code of Canon Law may be most notable for the new general ideas that pervade it. A few examples:

—The new code is based clearly on theological concepts of the church: the church as a community of God's people, a focus on the sacraments as the basic life of the church, the value and importance of the local church.

—The new code carefully links authority in the church to pastoral care and responsibility. The pastor receives the authority he needs to carry out his pastoral responsibilities effectively for the spiritual good of the people entrusted to him.

—For most of God's people, the laity, the new code spells out rights as well as duties, where the old code focused almost exclusively on obligations. The new code, for example, states clearly the rights of all baptized people to hear God's word, to receive the sacraments, to participate actively in the church's mission and to have a voice in church affairs

affecting them.

—Virtually all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex are eliminated systematically from the new code. Ordination and those positions of authority in the church linked with it are limited to men. But in other regards the new code makes almost no distinctions between men and women in the application of its laws.

Probably there is scarcely anyone dealing with the new Code of Canon Law who would say it is perfect. But most find in this new code a sincere and largely successful effort to renew church laws in accord with the Gospel and the council.

Many hope that the new code will help Catholics to avoid the extremes of legalism on the one hand and total disregard for laws on the other hand, and to be able to say with St. Paul:

"Now we have been released from the law...and we serve in the new spirit, not the antiquated letter...Yet the law is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good." (Romans 7).

(Filteau is on the staff of NC News Service.)

FOOD...

...for thought

During the 1980 Synod of Bishops in Rome, Ukrainian-Rite Archbishop Maxim Hermaniuk of Winnipeg, Manitoba, spoke eloquently in favor of the need for a Charter of Family Rights.

Speaking for the Canadian assembly of Ukrainian-Rite bishops, the archbishop noted that governments too often put the family in peril by their policies. He remarked pointedly that the "well-being of the individual, and of human and Christian society are very closely connected with the healthy condition of the community formed by marriage and the family."

Archbishop Hermaniuk's suggestion fell on responsive ears, during the synod and afterward. In his 1981 apostolic exhortation on the family, Pope John Paul II committed the Vatican to prepare a Charter of Rights of the Family.

That Charter — a Bill of Rights for the Family — was released by the Vatican Nov. 24, 1983. It is addressed principally to governments. It is offered to them as a "model and a point of reference for the drawing up of legislation and family policy, and guidance for action programs."

Its authors take care to identify exactly what the charter is. They observe first that it's neither a set of laws nor "a code of conduct" for people and institutions.

Instead, these are rights that precede human law, the charter indicates. They include "the fundamental rights that are inherent" in the family.

Where do these rights come from? The charter says they can be found in "the conscience of the human being." They arise "from that law which is inscribed by the Creator in the heart of every human being."

The 12 articles in the Charter cover a wide assortment of rights. Articles 1-2 deal with people's right to choose a state in life and to marry freely. Articles 3-8 discuss people's rights to bear, raise and educate children. Articles 9-12 cover the role of the government, especially through economic and social policies, in creating an environment in which the family can develop freely and flourish.

Often it is said that to best understand laws, it is necessary to know why they originated in the first place.

The bishops at the synod, the pope and the actual charter all expressed concern for modern families. Families throughout the world, because of their rights, deserve the protection of law, they said.

The protection of rights is among the basic reasons why laws first came to exist.

...for discussion

1. Have you ever been in the position of rule-maker — at home, for children, at work, in your neighborhood? What rules did you help to formulate? What was the original intent behind the rule? Did others benefit from it?

2. Are there any rights in your city or neighborhood that you feel are overlooked or abused? Would it be best if these rights were protected by law, in your opinion? Are they already protected by law, even though they are abused?

3. After reading the story that appears in these pages by David Gibson, think back in your own life. Was there ever a time when you felt impelled to help someone else under difficult circumstances? Why did you do it? In your opinion, does this say anything about what it means for the law of the Gospel to be written into one's heart?

SECOND HELPINGS

"Code, Community, Ministry," edited by Father James Provost, executive coordinator of the Canon Law Society of America. This book is intended for parish ministers who want to introduce the new Code of Canon Law to parishioners. Father Provost, realizing how formidable the code can seem, discusses it in ways that make it easier to understand. He recommends approaching the new code the way one would a new wine — by sipping slowly at first and taking time to savor it. Pointing out that the roots of canon law stretch back into Scripture, he notes that the 1983 code spells out the "responsibilities and rights of all Christians" in a new way. The code "is directed toward fostering the mission of all the people of God," he writes. (Canon Law Society of America, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064. \$4.50.)

salvation in the early church

has its origin in God and is based on faith" (Philippians 3).

Paul's personal experience was reinforced when he preached to the gentiles — people who were not Jews. Obviously God accepted these people quite apart from the law of Moses. Paul became their champion when others insisted they could not be Christians unless they submitted to the demands of the law.

Paul's letter to the Galatians was an impassioned defense of their freedom. At the end of Chapter 2 he explains: "If justice is available through the law, then Christ died to no purpose." And he tells them: "It was for liberty that Christ freed us. So stand firm, and do not take on yourselves the yoke of slavery a second time" (Chapter 5).

However, Paul wrote this letter in the heat of controversy. He made some statements which could be misinterpreted.

A more balanced presentation of his view is given in the letter to the Romans. There he admits, among other things: "The law is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good (Chapter 7).

He had not meant to imply that Christians, just because they were not to look for salvation in

the observance of the law, were thereby free from all law. Liberty was not license.

For Paul, the bottom line was the fact that salvation is a completely free gift from God. We do not earn it by any works of our own, even those involved in keeping the law.

As long as one accepted and lived by this basic truth, Paul was more than ready to admit that law played an important role in Christian life. He would have liked a situation in which Christians lived so perfectly by the fundamental law of love that there would be no need for law. But he was no wild idealist.

Paul had both feet on the ground and knew that people did need directives, guidelines. He certainly offered his share of them in his letters.

Still, for him, compliance with law should be motivated by love, not fear.

"You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, 'Abba!' that is, 'Father'" (Romans, Chapter 8).

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