

Lay people work “as human beings of the Church in the middle of the world and as human beings of the world within the Church”. (Puebla¹ Nr. 786)

1. Basis for our work as ELF in the Church and in the world

In our commitment as Catholic lay organisations we partake in the salvific mission of the Church to which we have been called by baptism and confirmation, as the Second Vatican Council has recalled forcefully.² By means of our individual talents we cooperate in the building up of the Church and for the good of human beings. We accept the duty, because we are conscious of partaking in the role of Christ as priest, prophet and king.³ That is the basis for our apostolate both in the Church and in the world. Our acting in society and in the Church lives on the sources of our faith. Therefore “the joys and the hopes, the grieves and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, ... are the joys and hopes, the grieves and anxieties of [us the] the followers of Christ.”⁴ In order to be able to pass on the message of Jesus Christ effectively, we are integrated in communities and organisations, which work in their respective local churches⁵ and search for common actions in the “European house” by means of the ELF.

2. In the middle of the world

As Christians we again and again become aware of the contrast between the realities of society and the respect of human dignity, as we find it expressed in the gospels. We trust in God’s love enabling us to see God’s face in every human being – especially in the weak and poor ones.

- In this spirit we attentively care for **fellow human beings nearby and worldwide: for** the young and the old and especially for those whose life is threatened by poverty, marginalization, exploitation and violence.
- As **matrimony and family** are of irreplaceable importance for an authentic development of human communities⁶, we support and defend the value of the family as the fundamental core of society and the Church in miniature.
- Faced by the manifold challenges of human communities we are called to act in a constructive way. We commit ourselves to promoting and spreading a Christian **culture of solidarity** and mutual acceptance, respect and openness in society. Fundamentally the principles of Catholic social doctrine (personality, subsidiarity, solidarity, common good, sustainability) are guidelines for our acting and commitment (in the individual national organisations and in the union of the ELF).
- We pay attention to the **social media of communication**, promote their correct use with respect to every individual human being and avoid their risks.
- Individualism and pluralism mark the developments in our societies and make humans lack orientation more and more. In our national organisations we offer **orientation based on our Christian commitment** and exert influence on the shaping of political opinions and decisions [e.g. relating to human rights, religious freedom, persecution and discrimination on religious grounds, questions of values, education/formation, social policies, marriage/family, justice between generations and genders, medical ethics, work place conditions (hygiene), sustainable and social economy (ecosocial market economy)].
- While growing together Europe is also characterized by **differences** in culture, history and economy. We appreciate the values of the particular cultures, respect the differences as enriching and support any form of growing together marked by a Christian spirit.

3. Within the Church

Through baptism and confirmation all members of the Church have been called to common priesthood⁷, they have the same dignity and share in the responsibility for the mission of the Church according to their respective charismas. We have been called by Jesus Christ to be his disciples and also to contribute as live members of the Church to her growth and sanctification⁸.

▪ **Lay people in leadership roles**

In parishes and dioceses lay people are increasingly being given tasks and positions of leadership. The practical assignment of tasks and responsibilities depends decisively on the concrete situation and on the persons available and willing to do the work. In order to better prepare the Church to face the future, the services and positions for lay people envisaged in the current Code of Canon Law will need to be opened up further to employed and voluntary lay people. In order to promote and further develop successful models, we speak up for making them known as well.

▪ **Cooperation between bishops, priests, deacons and lay people**

The shared service to God's mission as Church in the world is the decisive basis for cooperation in parishes, dioceses, associations, church organisations, and spiritual communities. We as ELF support all efforts at mutual acceptance and appreciation. We speak up for a culture of dialogue and constructive dealing with conflicts.

We call attention to the need for forming lay councils and for co-responsible collaboration of lay people in all parishes and dioceses. Through the collegiality of the bishops the engagement of the lay people is supported as well.

As national lay councils or committees we are networks for mutual information and serve as advisory bodies of the bishops' conferences, also in questions of Church life.

Stockholm, June 2013

¹ Final document of the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) at Puebla/Mexico 1979ⁱ

² Cp. Lumen Gentium (LG) 33: "The lay apostolate ... is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. ... Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. Thus every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself "according to the measure of Christ's bestowal" (Eph 4,7)."

³ Cp. Apostolicam Actuositatem (AA) 3: "From the acceptance of these charismas ... there arise for each believer the right and the duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the building up of the Church." and AA 10: "As sharers in the role of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, the laity have their work cut out for them in the life and the activity of the Church."

⁴ Cp. Gaudium et spes 1

⁵ Cp. AA 15: "The laity can engage in their apostolic activity either as individuals or together as members of various groups or associations."

⁶ Cp. Apostolic Exhortation "Familiaris Consortio" Nov. 22, 1981(FC) 42f.

⁷ Cp. LG 10: ... "The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood ..."

⁸ Cp. LG 33: Lay people "are called upon, as living members, to expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification."
