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Editorial Comment

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

This issue of *The Catholic Lawyer* features the papers presented at the fifteenth annual meeting of the Diocesan Attorneys held in New Orleans, Louisiana. Of particular interest to readers should be the material dealing with the analysis of recent decisions concerning the relationship between church and state.

These papers appear annually in *The Catholic Lawyer* in line with its editorial policy that distribution of the information made available by diocesan attorneys in these meetings will result in greater awareness among all Catholic lay attorneys of the legal problems presently facing the parishes across our nation. Reader comment on the content of these papers is therefore invited and will be published in subsequent issues.

The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Jean Jadot, in a previous meeting of the Diocesan Attorneys, set the keynote for the annual meeting with his remarks on the role of attorneys in bridging the separation between church and state. Although last year's Editorial Comment contained an excerpt of those remarks, it deserves repetition since it is especially meaningful with respect to the subject of this year's meeting.

As lawyers, you have the duty to promote mutual understanding between church and state, and when necessary, to defend the right of any citizen to act responsibly according to his own conscience as well as the freedom of the Church to preach the gospel in season and out of season.

As lay men and lay women in the Church, you also have a duty which is summarized in the definition of your role as given in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: "Secular duties and activities belong properly, although not exclusively, to the laity. Therefore, acting as citizens of the world, whether individually or socially, they will observe the laws proper to each discipline, and labor to equip themselves with a genuine expertise in their various fields. They will gladly work with others seeking the same goals. Acknowledging the demands of faith 'and endowed with its force,' they will unhesitatingly devise new enterprises, where they are appropriate, and put them into action (n.43)."

The Council clearly states that the laity are to look to their priests for spiritual light and nourishment, but not for expert solutions to every problem that arises. It is the distinctive role of the laity, enlightened by Christian wisdom and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the Church, to seek solutions for the concrete problems of the communities of which they are a part.


Editor

