

## LEARNING CANON LAW IN POLAND

(Margarita Khoperia, student of Law in Faculty of Law and Administration)  
University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

Canon law developed from the very beginning of the functioning of the Church. From the beginning of its existence, Church used the regulations it has created next to customary norms. At first, canon law was taught along with theology. The number of regulations increased with the development of church organizations. That created a problem of how to deal with such a huge amount of material. Originally, there has been made abstracts, such as *Dagome Iudex*, for example, which sometimes referred to the state power in Poland. Then came the *Gratian Decree* - the first scientific treatise on canon law, *the Decrees of Gregory IX* - the first official collection of papal legislation, *Liber Sextus* - the collection of papal constitutions, *Clementine* - a collection of papal decrees and conciliar resolutions, *Extravagant*, *Universal Extravagant*. All of them are today called the sources of canon law. In the 16th century after the Council of Trent, all these collections were officially proclaimed a collection of canon law called *Corpus Iuris Canonici*. The collection was in force until 1918. After that came amendments and codifications of the Code of Canon Law, on the basis of which universities in the country teach their students.

Canon law, or church law in Christian churches of different traditions, is a system of legal norms. In other words, it is the norms of conduct that are part of the legal order, which determines the functioning of individual Churches, as well as the rights and obligations of individual clergy and laity. Church law also defines the manner in which the Church is managed, its structure, offenses and penalties for it, and also elementary liturgical provisions. The law is due to the nature of the Church. Its basis should be the authority of jurisdiction given to the Church by Christ, while it is seen as a pastoral concern for achieving eternal salvation. Canon law, among others, highlights the legal nature of the Church, as well as the history of the development of law and collections.

In Poland there are three faculties of canon law of the Catholic Church. They are: Faculty of Law, Canon Law and Administration at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), Faculty of Canon Law at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (UKSW), University of Canon Law of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow (UPJP2). Faculties such as KUL and UKSW have the right to confer degrees in canon law. Teaching there should apply criteria from the *Apostolic Constitution Veritatis gaudium*. The legislator defines the tasks of the faculty or institute of canon law as follows: "cultivating and promoting canonical disciplines in the light of evangelical law, as well as in-depth education of students in them, so that they are formed for scientific research and teaching and prepared for special church tasks" (VG 77). The latter include, first and foremost, marital matters, care for families hurt by the crisis, or marriage breakdown. At the faculties of canon law in Poland, statutory research is conducted in the field of church law covered by long-term research programs. Many issues in the field of canon law, e.g. church system, matrimonial law, substantive and procedural criminal law, church-state relations, theory of law or history of law are closely related to relevant issues in state law. In addition, the

Faculties collaborate internationally with other Faculties of Canon Law through the exchange of professors and research experience and the organization of symposia, which helps in the development of trainees at universities, including the lecturers.

In summary, what is canon law? Where to look for employment after getting a degree at canon law? Canon law covers all matters related to the law of the Catholic Church. In addition, when studying this subject, orientation in areas such as history, philosophy and theology is important. After that type of studies, one can deal with legal and property aspects of Catholic life. Therefore, the vision of an ideal candidate emerges that, in order to come true and fully find himself in this type of studies, needs faith and commitment to church life. It will be difficult to master the program's material without passion and knowledge. The perfect candidate must have an impeccable attitude and moral approach to various spheres. In addition, orientation in religious subjects is highly valued. The graduates of the faculty are characterized by knowledge of basic methodological, ethical, theological and legal issues. This allows them to look for employment in secular institutions, such as law firms or companies dealing with law or banking. For those religiously involved remains being a church advocate or defender of church principles.