

A Lay Association

The Self-Image of the Kolping Society as an Association of Catholic Lay People

1. Fundamentals

The Kolping Society as a Catholic social movement is a free alliance of Catholics; called by baptism and confirmation, they participate in the saving mission of the Church. In and through the Society, its members exercise their apostolate in certain chosen areas of experience, occupation and life. The members exercise their freedom to meet and form an association (Decree on the Laity No. 15, 18 and 19, and CIC cc 215, 299; 321-329).

2. Participation in the Apostolate

The fundamental principles for the aims and activities of the Kolping Society are:

- the person and message of Jesus Christ,
- the Catholic Social Teaching, and
- the ideals and actions of Adolph Kolping.

The personal allegiance to Jesus Christ and the common faith is the basis and the goal for the deliberate actions of the members. As a family-like community, the Kolping Society provides help and guidance in pursuit of that goal; it seeks to encourage those who are striving toward a commitment in faith.

The Kolping Society understands that only in a close and living union with the Church can it fulfil its responsibility to the world and the world's salvation, and that its spiritual roots reside in the Church. It is the responsibility of the leadership to always emphasize this closeness to the Church. At the same time, there must be openness for dialogue and co-operation with people of other religions.

In the accomplishment of this task, the priests working in the Kolping Society have a significant role. Ever since it was founded, the Kolping Society has therefore striven for and achieved partnership between priests and the laity. The Kolping Society will need the co-operation of its priests also in the future and asks the Church to provide able and well-qualified priests even though there might be a shortage of priests.

3. Service to the World: Building the Temporal Order

The lay person has a special responsibility in helping to build the temporal order. Here the Kolping Society acts on its own initiative and responsibility, guided by the light of the Gospel and the spirit of the Church.

Because the Kolping Society is an association of people of many different backgrounds, it is necessarily involved in a variety of social relationships. This is true not only for the individual member, but also for the Society as a whole.

In the spirit of dedication to the ideals of Adolph Kolping and in accordance with its self-image, the Kolping Society sees an opportunity and a challenge in this relationship with society. The fashioning of a temporal society imbued with human dignity requires action and co-operation from individual Kolping members as well as from the Kolping Society. One of the essential tasks of the Kolping Society therefore consists in stimulating and enabling its members to responsible dialogue and interaction with others.

For the Kolping Society, the Social Teachings of the Church are the basis for this co-operation in making the world a better place to live in. From them the members can learn what a social order based upon Christian principles ought to look like. From the Catholic Social Teachings, as defined in the social encyclicals and specified in resolutions passed by regional and national Bishops' Conferences, the members are guided in their values and goals and thus will be able to fulfil their social responsibility.

4. Focus as Profile

In the work of the Kolping Society, all areas in a person's life and their manifold interrelationships receive consideration. In the family-like and life-supporting community, the individual with all his/her needs and interests should find stimulation and help for his/her questions and problems.

The areas of work and occupation as well as marriage and family always were of special importance in the historical development of the Kolping Society. The conditions of our time require even more work in this direction.

As an international organization, the Kolping Society is called especially to solidarity with other nations. The gap between the industrialized nations and the so-called developing countries has increasingly become the international social problem of our time. Just as the Kolping Society has contributed toward the solution of the Social Problem in Europe in the past, it sees as its particular task today to participate in finding solutions to international social problems.

5. Co-operation and Co-Responsibility in the Church

The Kolping Society sees itself as a part of God's people and as such accepts co-responsibility with the Church. The Kolping Society therefore is prepared to co-operate with the Church on all levels and to participate actively in the tasks and initiatives of the Church. The Society's division into individual Kolping Families and Diocesan Kolping Societies - insofar as this conforms to the ecclesiastical structure of parish and diocese - is thereby of advantage.

6. Lay apostolate: Diversity in Unity

As ecclesiastical structures in society and as social structures in the Church, the Kolping Societies strengthen the effectiveness of the individual in the world and bring into the Church the lifestyles, developments, and tasks of society. Here, lay people unite as witnesses to Christ by word and example in order to live, spread and defend their faith.

The Kolping Society realizes the necessity of co-ordinating the many forms of the lay apostolate. At the same time, the variety of spiritual gifts and also the necessary and accepted plurality in the Church is beyond question. An amply diversified lay apostolate enriches the Church. On its part, the Kolping Society is prepared to co-operate with others in the lay apostolate, as long as the freedom of the Kolping Society to make its own responsible decisions concerning the main focus of its work is not endangered.

Resolution of the 28th Convention of the International Kolping Society on May 29th, 1987.