

# SOROTI CATHOLIC DIOCESE

## LAY APOSTOLATE COMMISSION

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Your Ref: .....

Our Ref: **LAC/SCD/IL001/20**

P.O. BOX 650,

**SOROTI – UGANDA.**

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. 2020

### History of the Lay Apostolate Commission

Lay Apostolate Commission (LAC) is one of the commissions in the Catholic Diocese of Soroti. It has its beginnings with the first appointment of the first coordinator, Fr. Achedu Patrick Opi, in 2007. Awareness was created throughout the Diocese through visits to different Parishes with the aim of mobilizing, electing and training leaders for the operation of the Commission.

Being a new commission by that time, the coordinator adopted the Catholic Charismatic Renewal programs to popularize the Commission. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, by then, was well organized from outstation level to the national level. A program of open-air public conferences was adopted for the different interest groups (women, men, youth and Catholic Charismatic Renewal) to provide a platform for awareness raising and formation of potential lay leaders for the Commission.

Different departments of the Commission began to organize conferences in different Parishes and Deaneries. Youth conferences were among the first to be organized, followed by women's conferences, Catholic Charismatic Renewal conferences, children conferences (under the department of PMS) and, recently, men's conferences. These conferences are guiding the Lay Faithful towards understanding and appreciating the mandate of the Commission.

### Departments of the commission

From the time of its establishment, the Commission has had no defined departments, until the current Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Eciru Oliach, clearly defined them and appointed chaplains and directors to oversee their operation. The following, therefore, are Departments or Desks that fall under the Lay Apostolate Commission, with their respective Coordinators/Directors/Chaplains.

S/N	Department	Chaplain/Spiritual Director	Assistant(s) Chaplain/ Spiritual Director
1	Youth Apostolate	Fr. Ongereny Gonzaga Waziwazi	1. Fr. Opure Deo 2. Fr. Diyuo Josephat <i>M.Afr.</i>
2.	Women's Guild	Fr. Oryangatum Deogratius	
3.	Men's Guild	Fr. Okella Edmond	
4.	Catholic Charismatic Renewal	Fr. Okella Edmund	
5.	Emmaus Community Soroti	Fr. Okella Edmund	
6.	Marriage and Family Apostolate	Fr. Etwap Romanus	
7.	Divine Mercy Devotion	Fr. Obore Frederick	
8.	Legion of Mary	Fr. Oryangatum Deogratius	

Each department is empowered to build its leadership structure, develop its pastoral program, mobilize finances and manage its own budget. Each department has a bank account to which the principal signatory is the Director or Chaplain of the Department.

### Mandate of the Lay Apostolate Commission

Although each department of the Commission has its own specific mandate, which, above all, is for the salvation of all souls, the Commission's general mandate is to:

1. Ensure that wholehearted effort to lead holy lives and promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification is instilled among the lay faithful (Can.210).
2. Promote free establishment and running of such Associations which serve charitable or pious purposes, or which foster the Christian vocation in the world (Can.215).
3. Promote the participation of the Lay Faithful in Catechetical instruction, in the Church's liturgical and sacramental life, in missionary works, in works of mercy, charity, and in human and social advancement.
4. Offer support to the lay faithful in their obligation to provide for the needs of the Church, in areas of Divine worship, Apostolic and charitable work and the worthy support of its ministers (Can. 222, LG. 31).
5. Coordinate, guide and build capacity of Lay Leaders, Associations and Movements so as to deliver effectively and enthusiastically on their mandates.
6. To oversee the building of communication system and network to ensure efficient and effective coordination and networking between Diocesan desks/departments with their counterparts at the Parish.
7. Enhance collaboration, build synergy, and minimize negative competition, disunity and conflicts among the different Lay movements and associations in the Diocese and Parishes.
8. To oversee and promote efforts for combating fanaticism and empty/ erroneous claims of supernatural powers.

The priests working in the different Parishes oversee that Lay Movements/ Associations/ Devotions move towards this end aimed at saving souls.

### **Organizational structure on the Commission**

In each of the Departments of the Commission, there are committees that provide leadership at different levels, right from the Basic Christian Community Level up to the National level. The Diocese has just carried out elections at Parish Level and inducted the office bearers. These elections, however, have not yet reached Deanery and Diocesan Levels; meaning that the old Deanery and Diocesan Leadership still hold offices until the elections are complete.

### **Office/Secretariat**

The Lay Apostolate Commission has one of the rooms in the Diocesan Administration block reserved as an office. The office is currently used by the Program for Campaign against Domestic Violence. This means that establishment of offices that accommodate all other departments of the Commission is in plan, though this may not happen immediately due to financial constraints.

### **Achievements**

Among the many achievements of the Commission, so far, are the following:

- Establishment of Administrative Structures of the Commission in the Diocese.
- Mobilization and involvement of the laity in the Commission's programs at Parish, Deanery and Diocesan levels.
- The different programs and teachings from the conferences have helped the laity to become more active and vibrant participants in liturgical and spiritual functions in the Church. This is visible in their readiness to take readings and petitions in the liturgy, and their regular participation in liturgical processions and singing, and in Eucharistic adoration and Devotions.

- The organizational structure of the Commission has become a channel to mobilize the laity for Church functions and programs at Parish, Deanery and Diocesan levels.
- Through the Commission, working relationships between the clergy and the laity has greatly improved.
- The different programs of the Commission are helping in building confidence among the laity in the promotion of Catholic identity and values.
- Successive conduction of conferences by different departments of the Commission have seen great increase in numbers of the laity in participation.

### **Challenges affecting the Commission**

- Lack of office space for all the departments of the Commission.
- Lack of a stable financial base to run and manage the activities of the Commission.
- Poverty is still a biting factor that affects the participation of the laity in the different programs organized by the Commission.
- Overwhelming numbers of participants in the different programs such as the conferences. This poses a big challenge in the management and control of the crowds, especially in terms of conference shelter, accommodation and basic facilities.
- Domestic violence is still very strong in many parts of the Diocese, mainly caused by overdrinking of alcohol (drunkenness) and superiority complex among the men. This has affected a certain section of the laity (especially women), and prevented them from attending programs organized by the different departments of the Commission.
- Mushrooming sects that distort the Catholic values and teachings pose a challenge to the different programs organized by the Commission.
- Mobility of the coordinators/ Directors/ Chaplains and other leaders, to different deaneries and parishes to carry out the different programs of the Commission, has been and is still a great challenge.

### **Future plans**

Note should be taken here that each Commission and Department makes its own plans, which are later integrated into the master plan of the Diocese.

- Creation and establishment of other lay Associations like; Catholic Bodaboda/ Transporters' Associations, Catholic Traders' Association, Catholic Professionals' Association, Catholic widows' and widowers' Association, Catholic Elders Association.
- Establish Lay Apostolate associations and movements in all schools, since the future of the Church lies in the young persons, who spend most of their time at school.

### **Rev. Fr. Deogratias Oryangatum**

(Lay Apostolate Coordinator)