



Religious Law and Consultation Newsletter

Upcoming Webcasts

Transitioning Sponsorship
[August 16, 2016](#)

Covenant Project Workshop
[Sept 2016](#)

Canon Law 101 - 4 Sessions
[4 Sessions - On Demand](#)

**Vocation/Formation in the 21st
Century**
[Nov 15, 2016](#)

Taxation of Religious
February 2017

**Vow of Obedience
Civil and Canon Law Issues**
May 20, 2013

Tuesdays, 2:00 pm ET, 11:00 am PT

[For more information and to
Register](#)

Format: Live, On-Demand or CD-
ROM

Cost: \$65 for Live or On-Demand;
\$75 for CD-ROM

Past programs are available [here](#).

Contact

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Transitioning Sponsorship

A fundamental part of the life and work of religious is carrying on the mission of Jesus in the world of today. Most institutes have a specific mission or a particular way of doing ministry that inspired their founding members, and that continues to animate generation after generation:

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. -- Mt 25:36

The Church in the United States is blessed with institutions that provide healthcare, education, social and pastoral services to millions of people. These institutions are rightly credited with building up the people of God, building a more just society and caring for the poorest and weakest among us. As ministries grow and develop, they may need certain structures to provide a more stable foundation for the continuing work.

Sponsorship has developed over time, beginning in the early 20th century with ministries wholly owned and operated by religious institutes. Vatican II spurred a reconnection with the founding charism of religious institutes and a fresh look at the ministries. In addition, the cultural context of the period led to an increasing formalization and specialization of ministries, as is particularly evident in healthcare and education. This, coupled with the decreasing numbers of religious actively involved in ministries, and increasing concerns about liability lead to separate incorporation of ministries, during the very period when canonists were refining their understanding of the interplay between civil and canonical structures. The result was a variety of structures aimed at maintaining a modicum of control over institutions even as the personal presence of religious there diminished. The most common example is the separately incorporated ministry which maintains a relationship with the religious institute.

Ministry Corporations - Many ministries begin as small organizations focussed on a particular service which are housed within the civil and canonical structures of the religious institute. However, as the ministry grew, it needed the benefits of separate incorporation, including separation of liability, separation of administration and compliance with federal and state regulation of the ministry, e.g. in healthcare, education and social services.

When a separate ministry corporation is established, and as it is governed, the religious institute maintains a relationship with the organization; this relationship is often referred to as sponsorship. From a canonical point of view, ministries started by the institute remain an integral part of the religious institute, even if they are separately incorporated under civil law. For this reason, the institute or society retains the canonical responsibility to ensure that the ministry is carried out according to its own mission, in communion with the Church, and that the assets are administered as ecclesiastical goods.

Sponsorship is a structured relationship through which the sponsor, in the name of the Catholic Church, directs and influences a ministry that meets an apostolic need and furthers the mission of Jesus.

Important elements to consider in the development of the sponsorship relationship include:

- Catholic identity
- Responsibility and accountability
- Mission of the sponsor
- Continuation of Jesus' mission
- Mutuality

- Service
- Canonical and civil legal structure(s)

At the dawn of the 21st century, some have begun to explore transitioning sponsorship and new models of sponsorship based on *missio* and *communio*, rather than strict legal control. However, this requires careful planning so that the canonical and civil documents, and the actual practice of the sponsor and the ministry corporation provide the mechanism to enable the relationship to grow.

For additional discussions of transitioning sponsorship, [register here for the webcast in August](#).

[Covenant Project Workshops](#) - There is still time to register for Covenant Project webcast workshops in September 2016. The workshop is designed to help jump-start your leadership team in your completion process. Phase Two of the project assists in engaging communities in this important task. Phase Three looks toward implementation. [For more information...](#)

Look for me in August in Atlanta at the National Assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious - Booth 611. I am always happy to work with you or your community, or to present materials on various topics as you face the challenges of an uncertain and changing future.

Sincerely,
Amy Hereford

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