

REVISED GUIDELINES FOR DEANS

15/1/1996

I. Aims for Establishing Deaneries:

The main aim for establishing deaneries is to promote contacts between neighbouring parishes and their cooperation in pastoral and missionary work (cf. Vatican II, *Christus Dominus*, n. 30; Code of Canon Law, can. 374:2). “The deanery has as its aim that the pastors and pastoral officials of one and same territory or social region form among themselves, with the dean’s help, a kind of vital cell of the diocesan presbytery, around which the apostolate of religious men and women and of the laity working in the area or in a pastoral office may be conveniently co-ordinated, and thus a common pastoral action may be conveniently coordinated, and thus a common pastoral action may be suitably fostered and organized (*Ecclesiae Sanctae* I, 19, 1).” [Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, 31 May 1973, n. 185]

In order to achieve the above aim, the diocesan Bishop, in establishing deaneries, should take into consideration parishes with similar backgrounds, e.g., similar geographical, social, historical or traditional backgrounds, and the fact whether there has been a tried and long-standing custom of pastoral co-operation among them. The Bishop should also bear in mind another factor: that practically speaking it should be relatively easy for priests belonging to a future deanery to meet together frequently with the dean (cf. *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, n.185).

Another aim for establishing deaneries is to promote a spirit of unity and mutual encouragement in priestly life among the clergy of neighbouring parishes, under the animation of the dean (cf. *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, n. 187; can. 555)

II. Appointment and Team of Office of the Dean (cf. cann. 553:2 & 554:1-2)

- 1) In consultation with parish clergy in the deanery, and taking into consideration the candidates nominated by them, the Bishop freely appoints from among them a Parish Priest or Moderator of a parish

pastoral team as dean. The dean shall remain in office as Parish Priest or Moderator.

- 2) A dean shall serve for a term of 2 years, renewable once.

III. Responsibilities of the Dean (cf. cann. 555:1-4, 524)

- 1) To assist in promoting within the deanery pastoral priorities set by the diocese.
- 2) To coordinate pastoral and missionary work within the deanery.
- 3) To remain in close contact with the Vicar General for Parish Affairs.
- 4) To convene regular meetings (e.g., bimonthly) of priests within the deanery who are serving in parishes or other pastoral organizations (e.g., Catholic schools), and also to convene regular (e.g., bimonthly) meetings of parish councils within the deanery, so as to promote interchange of ideas and cooperation on pastoral care, missionary work and social witness.
- 5) To visit every parish within the deanery at least once a year. (Notes: These visits may take different forms, e.g., attendance at a meeting of the parish council, or a meeting with the parish clergy.)
- 6) To see that the priests of the deanery live a life befitting their state, discharge their obligations diligently, and constantly develop themselves spiritually and by ongoing formation.
- 7) To show special concern for his confreres in the deanery who are in difficulty or troubled in mind or body.
- 8) To be an ex officio member of the Council of Priests.
- 9) To advise the Bishop on the appointment of parish priests within the deanery.
- 10) To be a contact person between the priests of the deanery and the diocese.
- 11) To mediate disputes (jointly with the Vicar General for Parish Affairs, if necessary) involving pastoral officials, diocesan employees and laity in the parishes within the deanery.
- 12) To discuss any necessary changes in parish boundaries within the deanery and submit any relevant suggestions through the Vicar General for Parish Affairs to the Council of Priests for approval.
- 13) To administer the sacrament of confirmation within the deanery if so required.

IV. Relationship Between the Dean and the Parish Priests or Parish Moderators within the Deanery

If a Parish Priest or Parish Moderator happens to take his annual vacation, becomes sick or if some other important matter occurs concerning the parish, he should notify the dean as soon as possible. The dean (in consultation with the Vicar General for Parish Affairs, if necessary) will then make appropriate arrangements for pastoral work (e.g., Sunday Mass and sacramental services).

V. Relationship Between the Deans and the Bishop and Between the Deans Themselves

With the assistance of the Vicar General for Parish Affairs, the Bishop convenes a joint meeting of all the deans at half-yearly intervals to receive their reports and to foster their interchange of ideas and cooperation. The deans can also reflect the views of their own deaneries by participating at the meeting of the Council of Priests and by inviting the Bishop and the Vicar General for Parish Affairs to deanery meetings.

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N.B. The above Guidelines only deal with matters relating to the ministry of deans. Other matters on the relationship between parishes and the diocese, the conduct of parish clergy, and the pastoral care, administration and financial arrangements of parishes, are to be handled in compliance with diocesan regulations and approved practices.