

Office of the Archbishop

An Archbishop, in some cases called a metropolitan, is a bishop who governs his own Archdiocese, and also supervises all the other bishops in his archiepiscopal province. The major city of the region is typically part of the Archdiocese. In some countries, the Senior Archbishop is considered the spiritual leader of the country. Some archbishops are elected, others are appointed by the pope, depending on the country and the religion. A few Archbishop positions are more honorary in nature, as they no longer have a diocese to administer.

Archbishops and Bishops are the successors of the apostles, and their basic duty is to guide the flock of Christ and maintain the unity of Christians. By the same token, archbishops are the primary ministers of the sacred liturgy and principal dispensers of the sacraments. Archbishops often participate in confirmations in parish churches, as well as performing the ordinations of deacons and priests. In the United States, the archbishop is responsible for appointing an administrator of a vacant diocese when a bishop leaves office.

Ecumenical Duties

Modern Archbishops are also responsible for both ecumenical relations and inter-religious relations. In practice, this typically means that Archbishops sponsor interfaith conferences or lead ecumenical Christian organizations that seek to improve relations among various faiths. In many cases, Archbishops meet with leaders of other churches, and experience first-hand the ministry of other faiths.

Administrative Duties

Anglican Archbishops tend to have significant administrative authority relative to other Archbishops. In Britain, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York chair the General Synod, the national assembly of the Church of England, and have a wide range of other political and supervisory duties. Consultation and coordination with lay bishops, archdeacons and various diocesan offices are also part of the job of all Archbishops. Archbishops have similar duties to other

Archbishops, but have different relationships and jurisdictions with bishops as well as other church and government authorities of the primate or patriarch

Other Duties and Authority

Archbishops preside over a provincial council with their bishops at least every three years, often more frequently, in order to make decisions on important administrative and religious matters. They can also instruct bishops to attend to their episcopal duties, in particular of holding diocesan synods and of maintaining diocesan seminaries. Archbishops also hold jurisdiction over errant members of the clergy or the faith in some civil religious matters.

An archbishop or metropolitan, in the present sense of the term, is a bishop who governs a diocese strictly his own, while he presides at the same time over the bishops of a well-defined district composed of simple dioceses but not of provinces. Hence none of these subordinate bishops rule over others. These bishops are called the Suffragans or Ordinary. The Archbishop's own Diocese is the Archdiocese. The several dioceses of the district form the Archiepiscopal, metropolitan or province of the Primate or Patriarch.

Jurisdiction

The jurisdiction of the archbishop is twofold, episcopal and archiepiscopal. The first extends to his own diocese exclusively and comprises the rights and powers of the fullest government of the diocese, clergy and laity, spiritual and temporal, except as restricted by Church Canon. Unless such restriction is clearly stated in Canon, the presumption is in favor of the episcopal authority. The contrary holds in regard to the archiepiscopal authority. It extends to the province and the Suffragan or Ordinary bishops only in as far as it is explicitly stated in the Canons. Where the law is silent, the presumption is against the Archbishop. Be it remembered, however, that rightfully established and approved custom obtains the force of law. Archiepiscopal jurisdiction, being permanently attached to the office as such, is ordinary jurisdiction, not merely delegated or vicarious. It reaches immediately the Suffragan bishops, and mediately the faithful of their

dioceses. However, it has not always been the same either in regard to time or place. While the metropolitan office was everywhere the same in character, the extent and measure of its right and power would be greatly modified by local conditions, particular laws and customs. The (metropolitan) primate or patriarch could confirm, consecrate, and transfer the bishops of his province, accept from them the oath of allegiance and fidelity, summon them singly or collectively to his metropolis (even outside of a council) at his pleasure, cite the Suffragans into his court in civil and criminal trials, give them leave of absence from their dioceses and letters commendatory in their travels, allow them to dispose of church property, regulate the Church calendar of the province by fixing and announcing the date of Easter, administer the Suffragan dioceses in case of vacancy, and, finally, receive appeals lodged with him from any part of his province. But this extensive power of archbishops. Described as follows:

(1) In regard to his Suffragan Bishops the metropolitan may compel them to assemble in provincial council every three years, and to attend faithfully to their episcopal duties, in particular those of residing regularly within their own diocese, of holding diocesan synods, and of maintaining diocesan seminaries (where clerical candidates cannot otherwise receive an ecclesiastical training). In the provincial council the Archbishop is invested with all the rights of the presiding officer. Modern practice has it also that when the Archbishop's warning is not heeded by the delinquent Suffragan, he will not himself use compulsory measures, e.g. censures, but report the case only civil, not criminal, cases of Suffragans come within the competency of the archbishop.

(2) Generally speaking, the metropolitan has no direct jurisdiction over the subjects of his Suffragans. But he acquires such jurisdiction in three ways, namely: by appeal, by devolution, and by the canonical visitation. Today Archbishops cannot visit a Suffragan diocese, unless the matter has been discussed and approved by the provincial council. Matters of episcopal jurisdiction will devolve upon the Archbishop in certain cases mentioned in the Canon, when the Suffragan Bishop neglects to do his duty, e.g. to fill in due time

vacant benefices or parishes, or to absolve from excommunication when the necessary conditions have been complied with. This proceeds on the general principle that superiors ought to remedy the neglect of their inferiors lest too great harm be done to the Church and her faithful children. When a diocese becomes vacant the cathedral chapter is bound to elect a Vicar-Bishop who will act as administrator of the vacant diocese. If such election is not made in eight days the Archbishop of the province will appoint the Vicar-Bishop. In the United States the Archbishop appoints an administrator of the vacant diocese until Archdiocese shall further provide.

(3) If the Archdiocese becomes vacant, the senior Suffragan appoints the administrator. An appeal or recourse, judicial or extrajudicial, lies directly, at least in the regular course of ecclesiastical procedure, from the bishop to his Archbishop, as to the next higher instance. Whenever some disputed matter is thus brought, according to the law, from a Suffragan diocese before the metropolitan for adjudication, he acquires direct jurisdiction over the case.

(4) Appeals and recourses by the Archbishop's own subjects against his judicial sentences, or other ordinances given in the first instance, lie directly, when allowed by Canon, to the Archdiocese, at least in the absence of a proper primate or patriarch. But, to expedite and facilitate matters, other ways are usually granted by Archdiocese, e.g. to appeal from the Archbishop to his senior Suffragan. Since the establishment of the Apostolic Delegation in the United States cases from the Suffragan sees (except matrimonial cases) are usually brought directly before the Counsel of Bishops and no longer before the Archbishop.

(5) Archbishops also have the right and duty of compelling, if necessary, the superiors of religious orders, even those who are otherwise exempt, in charge of parishes or congregations, to have the Gospel preached in such parishes according to the provisions of the Council of Bishops. It may be observed, however that, although such are by law the rights of an archbishop, their exercise

is now seldom called for, so that his more prominent position is rather one of honor and dignity than of actual jurisdiction. Besides the powers of jurisdiction, archbishops also enjoy certain rights of honor within their province. The foremost among these is the right of wearing the pallium. Before receiving the pallium from the archbishop cannot exercise any metropolitan functions nor officiate in vestments within the province, unless by a special privilege from the Archdiocese. Other honorary rights are: to have the processional cross carried immediately before him, to wear the mozetta or short cape, to bless the people, to precede his Suffragans, and to occupy the bishop's throne, all this anywhere in the province. In the archiepiscopal coat of arms the episcopal hat is flanked by ten tassels on each side. His address is "Your (His) Grace", "Most Reverend".

Manner of appointment

The vacancy of an archbishop is filled in the same manner as that of an ordinary bishop, whether it be by an election properly so called, or by a presentation or nomination, or by direct papal appointment. If the new archbishop be a priest, he will receive episcopal consecration; if already a bishop, he will be solemnly installed in the new office. But it is neither the consecration nor the installation which makes the archbishop. It is his appointment to an archdiocese.

Successor to the Apostles

Each Bishop in the Church is a successor to the Apostles. Ordained by fellow Bishops, who were themselves ordained by fellow Bishops, each bishop can trace a direct, unbroken line of ordination back to the Apostles, a condition known as "Apostolic Succession." As with the original Apostles, the office of the Bishop, the episcopate, is reserved to baptized males. While some of the Apostles (notably Saint Peter) were married, from an early point in the Church's history, the episcopacy was reserved to unmarried men.

Visible Source and Foundation of Unity of the Local Church

Just as each of the Apostles went forth from Jerusalem to spread the Word of God by founding local churches, of which they became the head, so,

too, the bishop today is the visible source of unity in his diocese, his local church. He is responsible for the spiritual and, to a certain extent, even the physical care of those in his diocese—first the Christians, but also anyone residing therein. He rules his diocese as a portion of the universal Church.

Herald of the Faith

The first duty of the bishop is the spiritual welfare of those who reside in his diocese. That includes preaching the Gospel not only to the converted but, even more importantly, to the unconverted. In the day-to-day matters of life, the bishop guides his flock, to help them better understand the Christian faith and concretely translate it into action. He ordains priests and deacons to assist him in preaching the Gospel and celebrating the sacraments.

Steward of Grace

"The Eucharist," reminds us, "is the center of the life of the particular Church" or diocese. The bishop, as the supreme priest in his diocese, upon whose authority all other priests of the diocese must depend, holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that the sacraments are offered to the people. In the cases of the Sacrament of Confirmation, its celebration (in the Western Church) is normally reserved to the bishop, to emphasize his role as the steward of grace for his diocese.

Shepherd of Souls

The Bishop does not lead simply by example and by safeguarding the grace of the sacraments, however. He is also called to exercise the authority of the Apostles, which mean governing his local church and correcting those who are in error. When he acts in communion with the whole Church (in other words, when he does not teach something contrary to the Christian faith), he has the power to bind the consciences of the faithful in his diocese. Moreover, when all of the bishops act together, and their action is confirmed by the pope, their teaching on faith and morals is infallible, or free from error.