

Fall 2017 – Permanent Deacons

Topic Parish life and administration

I. Bishop/Diocese

Canon 369: (CD 11): descriptive of a diocese: portion of a people of God entrusted to a bishop constituting a particular Church.

II. Dioceses & parishes

Grouping of parishes together = Diocese (specified by territory typically)

Grouping of Dioceses = Province (such as Province of Detroit under the Archdiocese)

Grouping of Provinces in a country typically under Bishop's Conference

Canon 374 provides that each diocese is to be divided into distinct parts or parishes (include vicariates or deaneries). Parishes were recommended during Council of Trent (mid-1500s). Under canon 515, the pastoral care is entrusted to the pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop.¹

1. Canon 518 is based on territory or territory and another characteristic (language)
2. Canon 516 describes an assembly of the faithful which is not yet established as a parish (ex: mission); lacks stability because of particular circumstances, but it is entrusted to a priest.
3. Canon 516 - If a particular community of the faithful cannot be established as a parish or quasi-parish, then the bishop is to make provision in other ways (ex: chaplains – prisons/hospitals/schools)

What is the legitimacy and value of parish memberships? 1) It provides a clearer responsibility of individual pastors and 2) there is a system of informing the pastors when a parishioner has changed parishes. *Sacrosanctum Concilium 4* favors participation in one's own parish as:

1. The pastor takes place of bishop in care of souls – therefore, accepting the pastor expresses esteem of the bishop.
2. The individual is a part of the visible Church constituted throughout the world, even in acceptance of imperfect parochial situations.
3. The faithful have an obligation to build the parochial community.

Establishment of parish boundaries assists pastor in knowing for whom he has responsibility; he has responsibility for **everyone** (Catholic or not) within the parish boundaries.

For the Faithful, the benefit of parish boundaries is clarity of the person to whom they can have just expectations. If a parish accepts those from outside into the parish boundaries, then the pastor has a moral responsibility for those individuals' care of souls. So, when we look at such canons as the ability to express to pastors specific needs, we should consider the current difficulty of defining the congregation. While crossing parish boundaries is now common, increasingly common is crossing the boundaries of a diocese.

¹ James Conn: *Parishes of Choice: Periodica* 92 (2003) 257-304

III. Communion in Church

The Christian faithful share in common a bond of dignity and common salvific mission.

Lumen Gentium 14 describes the people of God: "...possessing the spirit of Christ, (they) accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who - by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government and communion - are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops."

Canon 204: "Christ's faithful are those who, since they are incorporated into Christ through Baptism, are constituted the people of God. For this reason, they participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called, each according to his or her particular condition, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world."

As we are constituted, we are brought into "communion" — with the bonds of profession of faith (the first occurring at Baptism with the invocation of the Trinity, the simplest, yet a true profession of faith), the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance.

- Note that these are all objective - perhaps, to a degree, measurable. One either is receiving the sacraments (and is able to receive) or not, in union with ecclesiastical governance or not. Now the degree of communion may have gradations - less than full communion or incomplete communion is often the reference.
- The rights entail the means to attain sanctification, especially in the right to that which pertains to divine worship, especially the sacraments
- A key goal of parish life is to increase level of communion with the Church as a means of salvation.

Pastoral relationship

Canon 519 – pastor has parish entrusted to him under the authority of the Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, in carrying out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling.

- Canon 517 provides for priest moderator when parish cannot be entrusted to a priest.

Canon 530 – entrustment to the pastor of sacramental responsibilities

IV. Obligations and Rights of the Faithful

Canon 212 provides that when exercising rights in the Church, individuals are to show respect for individual dignity & the common good. Only the right/duty of communion is considered fundamental². Rights are inherent or intrinsic to being Christian. For every right, there is a corresponding duty and vice versa. At times an individual has a duty to exercise his own right. The duty of maintaining communion (canon 209) pre-exists the exercise of any rights and obliges submission to ecclesiastical governance.

² Cardinal R. Lara, "Some General Reflections on the Rights and Duties of the Christian Faithful," *Studia Canonica* 20 (1986) 7 – 32).

- The profession of faith at Baptism incorporates an individual into the Church, for those who are choosing to enter the Church.
- From the profession of faith and Baptism, canon 214 provides a proper form of spiritual life; this is necessary for the life of the Church.
- Canon 210 describes the obligation for all to lead a holy life.
- From this comes the right to receive the message of the word of God and sacraments (if properly disposed, without juridical restriction and within proper place/time). Complementing this is canon 212 with each individual's interior adherence to that which is taught. This is considered with canon 218 in respect of the magisterium and prudence in manifestation of thoughts.
- Canon 213 does not give a right to the sacraments. The right is specifically toward assistance by pastors.
- Canon 219 – immunity from coercion in choosing a state of life
- Canon 221 – right to vindicate their rights
- Canon 222 – obligation to provide for the needs of the Church & to promote social justice
- Canon 223 – obligation to take account of the common good

Each right demands a fulfillment of connected obligations (canon 209§2). If not fulfilled, then the rights cannot be exercised. An absolute right within the Church is to receive the whole faith from the Church; absolute obligations are to seek salvation and to maintain communion with the Church.