

THE ARCHDIOCESAN VICARIATE STRUCTURE

Revised Spring of 2007

I. THE VICARIATE

The Archdiocesan Vicariate is a geographical area consisting of a grouping of parishes and Catholic Schools, Institutions and Agencies where support, pastoral planning and resources can be identified and shared for the benefit of the faithful within its boundaries.

II. THE VICARIATE LEADERSHIP AND ITS STRUCTURES

A. The Authority of the Vicar Forane (referred to below as Vicar)

1. The authority of the Vicar is derived but real. Essentially, the Vicar has whatever authority the Archbishop has given to him via Particular Law allowed for in Canon Law.
2. The authority of the Vicar is essentially “pastoral” in nature, both at the archdiocesan and local vicariate levels. In each case, the Vicar has the responsibility of carrying out the pastoral, ministerial, and administrative concerns of the diocesan bishop.

B. General Responsibilities of the Vicar

1. While canonically the Vicar exists at the will of the Archbishop through Particular Law, traditionally one of the responsibilities of the Vicar has been to voice the concerns of the priests and people of his vicariate at the Vicars’ table, and, likewise, to voice appropriate concerns of the Vicars and Archbishop to the priests and people of the vicariate. This responsibility is derived by virtue of his election and appointment and mission.
2. At the archdiocesan level, he shall make every effort to attend scheduled meetings, serve on appropriate Vicars’ Committees and participate in Regional Meetings. Within this interaction, one of his principal responsibilities shall be to personally contribute to, and call others to, a climate of accountability of service to the people of the Archdiocese. This movement toward creative accountability shall be reflected in the interaction of the Vicar with the Archbishop, Regional Bishops, other Vicars, and with Archdiocesan Departments and Offices.
3. On the local vicariate level, the Vicar shall contribute to, and call others to, a climate of creative accountability of service to the people of the vicariate and archdiocese. This shall be reflected in the interaction of priests, deacons, religious, and laity through a VPC.
4. The Vicar shall establish or continue a VPC for person-to person contact with a representative body of the people of the vicariate and shall meet on a regular basis (minimally every two months) with these lay leaders and priests.

C. Pastoral Care

1. The Archdiocesan Vicar is a priest appointed by the Archbishop, after consultation with priests and other members of the faith community, to share the pastoral leadership of the Archbishop as his representative in the Vicariate. The Archdiocesan Vicar exercises pastoral leadership within the Vicariate and:
 - a. Promotes the planned growth and development of the Vicariate, and makes possible a greater degree of collaboration among the Vicariate's parish communities and all those who engage in pastoral ministry;
 - b. Makes himself available for regular contact and consultation with each parish including the parish council and parishioners as needed;
 - c. Gives advice and counsel to priests who desire it or who are in difficult circumstances or are otherwise in special need;
 - d. Collaborates with the APC (APC) Representative to facilitate the planning process in the Vicariate;
 - e. Mediates conflict as the first level of conciliation (with the knowledge, consent and in consultation with the Regional Bishop) for conflict mediation when difficulties arise in or between parishes, and provides for follow-up and referral.

D. Extending Episcopal Authority - The Archdiocesan Vicar:

1. Grants priestly faculties of the Archdiocese of Detroit that are not provided for by the Code of Canon Law of the Church to priests from dioceses in the United States or Canada on a temporary basis (for 30 days), provided they enjoy the faculties of their own diocese; and
2. In extraordinary circumstances (see Vicar's appointment letter):
 - a. grants permission to witness the marriage of a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic (or a Catholic who has left the Church by a formal act), and
 - b. grants the dispensation from certain impediments to marriage.

E. Communication

1. The Archdiocesan Vicar accurately and faithfully portrays the consensus of the faithful in the Vicariate to the Archbishop through the Council of Vicars.
2. The Vicar also communicates the pastoral judgment of the Archbishop and the developments at the Council of Vicars' meetings to the Vicariate through the presbyterate gatherings and the Vicariate Pastoral Council (VPC).

F. Meetings

1. Meets with other Vicars of the Archdiocese as a body, the Council of Vicars. This important function gives the Vicar the opportunity to provide consultation to the Archbishop and to collaborate with colleagues in pastoral planning, to attend the monthly meetings and to participate fully in the work of the committees.
2. Vicars in a given region meet with their respective Regional Bishop at bi-monthly meetings.
3. The Vicar draws the priests of the Vicariate together as a presbyterate and exercises leadership in their regular gatherings. He also works with the Officers of the VPC on the preparation of the agenda for these meetings of the presbyterate.
4. The Vicar in consultation with the VPC initiates discussion and schedules speakers from time to time concerning pastoral planning, common problems and projects in order to advance the faith life of the parishes in the Vicariate.
5. The Vicar encourages regular joint meetings between the priests and VPC, one of which will be to discuss and approve the Vicariate Budget by March of each year.
6. The Vicar encourages, along with the VPC's Officers, the promotion and facilitation of the VPC. The Vicar attends this council's meetings and acts as a liaison between it and the priests of the Vicariate. The Vicar also works with the VPC Officers on the preparation of the agenda for regular and special meetings of the VPC.

G. The Term of the Vicar

1. The term of Vicar shall be flexible and shall reflect the needs of the archdiocese and the vicariate.
2. In general, the term of Vicar shall be one three year term, determined by a process of selection/election! appointment, and renewable once by the same process. The subsequent extension of the term of Vicar shall be determined by the Archbishop and shall reflect special needs or circumstances within the archdiocese or vicariate.

H. The Selection, Election, Appointment and Preparation Process

There shall be flexibility in the selection/election/appointment and preparation process. Each vicariate shall determine the specific local process both of nomination procedure and election process within the following guidelines:

1. The names of prospective candidates must be approved by the Archbishop before they are asked if they will accept nomination. Once the Archbishop has approved the names, then the priests can be invited to run for election. Hopefully, at least three vicariate priests will be willing to accept nomination; at least two candidates are required. After the election has taken place, the results should be communicated to the Chancellor's Office, so that the new Vicar can be officially appointed.
2. In submitting a list of prospective candidates to the Archbishop the following should be kept in mind. To be qualified to serve as Vicar:
 - a. An archdiocesan priest must meet the qualifications for a pastorate, and have successfully completed two assignments; and
 - b. A religious priest must also hold an assignment from the Archbishop.
3. Care shall be taken in the election process that the electing body be representative of Vicariate priests, Religious, duly-designated representatives of Catholic institutions, and members of the VPC.
4. Subsequent to the election and appointment of the new Vicar, a letter of appointment, outlining the role of Vicar shall be sent to the newly appointed Vicar.
5. In the event that two viable nominees do not come forward from among the priests of the Vicariate, the Chancellor shall be informed of this circumstance. In turn, the Bishop for the Region, together with the incumbent Vicar and the vicariate priests, shall then address the problem in dialogue toward resolving the problem. The problem may be resolved in one of the following ways:
 - a. By the dialogue described above, two nominees may be encouraged to come forward.
 - b. If the above dialogue does not produce at least one viable candidate, the Regional Bishop shall inform the Archbishop of the Archdiocese who shall directly appoint the Vicar or deal with the situation at his discretion.
6. In any event it must be made clear to all candidates the responsibilities of the Vicar.

III. THE VICARIATE PASTORAL COUNCIL (VPC)

The purpose of a Vicariate Pastoral Council is to serve as a representative, collaborative and consultative body to the parishes, Catholic schools, institutions and agencies, in the ministry of education, service, worship, and stewardship relative to the efforts of these key groups as they carry out the mission of the Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit and to assist in ensuring the growth of the Catholic community in their respective geographical areas. This takes place through a process of discernment.

A. Function

1. Implement the Vicariate Together In Faith Strategic Planning Process.
2. Encourage maximum and most effective use of existing and potential resources available to the Vicariate and its parish members.
3. Implement appropriate communications at the Vicariate level to ensure that all Catholics and others are aware of the opportunities to participate in education, worship, service and stewardship activities that build up the faith community.
4. Serve as a source of feedback to the Archbishop and assisting the Council of Vicars and APC in carrying out the mission of the Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit.
5. Select the APC Representative from its Vicariate.
6. Create a functional budget to financially support the implementation of the Together In Faith Strategic Planning Process.
7. Pursue personal growth as vicariate leaders and stewards by:
 - a. Attending as many vicariate functions as possible, especially those not previously attended;
 - b. Enrolling in training/growth opportunities.

B. Role of the Vicariate Pastoral Council Members

1. Attend the VPC meetings on a regular basis and actively participate;
2. Assure ongoing communication between the VPC and the entity they represent, i.e. parish councils, pastoral ministers, APC, clergy;
3. Provide on going feedback to the VPC regarding the pastoral plan and its impact on the different communities;
4. Participate actively upon request in standing and/or ad hoc committees of the VPC;
5. Read VPC emails, announcements and minutes to be and stay informed.

C. Discernment Process

1. For the discernment process to succeed there must be a desire and freedom to follow the Spirit's guidance (which includes the good of all) no matter what the outcome of discernment. There also must be continual intercessory prayer for divine guidance, trust in God to lead us to right decisions, trust in others as persons of intelligence and good will and a willingness to share. There must be agreement that:
 - a. We will work as institution(s), parish(s) or vicariate(s) to keep our focus on the Spirit's guidance and to seek the overall good of all involved;
 - b. We will pray continually for the guidance of the Spirit;
 - c. We will trust that God reveals through our experience as well as the experience of others;

- d. We will trust others in the discernment and will not judge or condemn them;
- e. We will share our thoughts and feelings openly so that there is no “private agenda”, and so that discernment may benefit from our viewpoint.

D. General Recommendations

In establishing a Vicariate Pastoral Council, it is recommended that the following guidelines be kept in mind:

1. Annually each Vicariate will establish the most appropriate representative VPC structure which will meet its needs as well as the needs of the Vicariate. The mission statement, structure and the names of its members will be submitted to the Office of the Chancellor on an annual basis to be shared with the Council of Vicars, the APC and other appropriate resources. These goals will become a part of the Archdiocesan goals.
2. Each Vicariate is to include in its membership the Vicar and APC Representatives. They will be involved in coordinating the affairs of the VPC which is to include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Every effort is to be made to ensure the continuity and continuation of the VPC regardless of personnel changes which may occasionally occur.
 - b. The VPC is to be convened on a regular basis (minimally every two months); September through June of each year. Additional meetings may be convened as necessary.

E. Composition of the Vicariate Pastoral Council

1. The VPC should include the Vicar, the APC Representatives, a representative from each institution within the boundaries of the Vicariate and two lay persons who are members (or who become members) of the Parish Pastoral Council from each parish to ensure continuity, turn over is a challenge for VPC's;. Clustered parishes will each have representatives.
2. Additional members are to be chosen by their peers in their ministerial groups that meet regularly, i.e. one Pastoral Minister, one Religious Education Director, one Principal, one Christian Service Coordinator, one Youth Minister, one Music Director, one Business Administrator, one Deacon, and one Religious from the Vicariate. There will also be one priest representative, who is assigned within the vicariate but is not the Vicar.
3. The majority of members of the VPC are to be laity (non-staff), for laity to have an avenue for relating their needs to the Archbishop. If a Vicariate does not currently provide for this participation/representation, changes are to be made in the existing format to provide for this lay participation.
4. The VPC should be free to constitute itself according to each Vicariate's needs, but must also assure that service, stewardship, worship, education and youth ministries are represented.

F. Vicariate Pastoral Council Executive Committee

The VPC Executive Committee responsibilities are as follows:

1. Vicar
 - a. Provides leadership and support to the VPC & Executive Committee in the implementation of the Mission, Vision, Values and Goals as well as the Objectives, Strategies and Tactics
 - b. Communicates key issues between the Council of Vicar's and the VPC
 - c. Maintains a good working relationship with the Archdiocese of Detroit
2. Chair
 - a. Conducts VPC and Executive Committee meetings
 - b. Assists the Vicar in conducting the VPC's work as directed
3. Vice Chair
 - a. Conducts the VPC and Executive Committee meetings in the absence of the chair
 - b. Assists the Chair in the discharge of his/her duties
 - c. Assists the Vicar in conducting the VPC's work as directed
4. Archdiocesan Pastoral Council Representative (APC)
 - a. Attends all APC meetings
 - b. Communicates key issues between the APC and the VPC
 - c. Assists the Vicar in conducting the Council's work as directed
5. Vicar's Administrative Assistant
 - a. Handles all administrative tasks as directed by the Vicar
 - b. Manages all VPC communications and may serve as Webmaster
 - c. Prepares and distributes VPC minutes within one week of the meeting
 - d. Serves as Editor of the Newsletter
6. Role of the Executive Committee
 - a. Prepare the agenda for each VPC meeting
 - b. Insure good communication among the VPC members
 - c. Meet with other groups, i.e. pastoral team members, ministries etc., upon request or as appropriate
 - d. Coordinate the replacement of VPC members created by vacancies on the VPC

G. Ad Hoc Committees

The VPC may appoint Ad Hoc Committees to serve and advise the VPC. The membership of these committees is not restricted to those who are members of the Council. The Chair of an Ad Hoc Committee, upon the discretion of the Vicar, may be any member of the Vicariate. The Vicar shall be an ex-officio member of all committees.

H. Attendance and Vacancy on the Vicariate Pastoral Council

1. VPC members are expected to attend every meeting. In case of excused absence, the Council member who missed a meeting will make very effort to be informed of the results of the missed meeting. Any member absent from two (2) consecutive meetings, without prior notification to the Vicar or Chairs of the VPC, may be asked to resign from the VPC.
2. In the event a parish representative resigns from the Council, it will be that specific parish's responsibility to replace the representative. In the case of other member vacancies, the VPC Executive Committee will be responsible for replacements. The Administrative Assistant will coordinate each of these issues as directed by the Vicar.

I. Vicars, APC Representatives and the Vicariate Pastoral Councils

1. The Vicars and APC Representatives roles are those of conveners and listeners within the VPC.
2. The emphasis within the VPC is to be one of collaboration, representation and consultation so that consensus can be reached through a process of discernment.

IV. THE ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL (APC) REPRESENTATIVES

A. The Role of the APC Representatives

1. The APC Representatives along with the Vicar promote peace and unity, renewal and growth in the Vicariate, and links the parishes of the Vicariate with the larger Church of Detroit.
2. The APC Representatives are each members of one of the parishes of the vicariate, but are not from the same parish. They are elected or selected by the VPC to participate on the APC. These individuals are expected to fulfill the requirements of the APC related to term of office, attendance, and participation for the period of the appointment.

B. Role of the APC Representatives

1. The APC Representatives are the speaker for the laity in the Vicariate to the APC. As such, they:
 - a. Are proactive with the Vicar in ensuring that there is a representative and inclusive VPC of the laity sharing this responsibility with the Vicar;
 - b. Regularly participate in and assist in coordinating the VPC meetings;
 - c. Are aware that they come to the APC as servants to the church family, not solely as individuals with special or self interests;
 - d. Discern concerns of the laity within all parishes in the Vicariate;

- e. Convey those concerns to the Vicar, the VPC, and/or the Archbishop when appropriate;
- f. Bring the real, experienced needs of the people to the Archbishop in deliberations with him to set direction for the church; and
- g. Recognize that, while representing the Vicariate, their constituency cannot be confined to the parish or Vicariate represented, but now includes the entire Archdiocese.

C. Communication

- 1. The APC Representatives, in conjunction with the Vicar, aware of their responsibility for information sharing:
 - a. Ensure the information from the Archdiocese is passed on to the Vicariate laity, establishing formal or informal procedures for such sharing as needed;
 - b. Ensure they have a way of gathering information from the Vicariate to share with the Archbishop and the APC;
 - c. Communicate regularly with the Vicar and the VPC.

D. Shared Responsibility

- 1. The APC Representatives, upon accepting appointment to the office, take on the sharing of responsibility for the direction and conduct of the Vicariate and the Archdiocese. They:
 - a. Share a mutual concern with the Vicar for the mission of the church;
 - b. Take on the duty of using their gifts in the church for its up building;
 - c. Are a partner with the Vicar for strengthening the church at the Vicariate level; and
 - d. Collaborate with the Vicar to facilitate the planning process in the Vicariate.