

[Help](#)

Code of Canon Law

[IntraText - Text](#)

- BOOK II. THE PEOPLE OF GOD LIBER II. DE POPULO DEI
 - PART II. THE HIERARCHICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH
 - SECTION II. PARTICULAR CHURCHES AND THEIR GROUPINGS
 - TITLE I. PARTICULAR CHURCHES AND THE AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED IN THEM (Cann. 368 - 430)
 - CHAPTER II. BISHOPS
 - Art. 2. DIOCESAN BISHOPS

[Previous](#) - [Next](#)

[Click here to show the links to concordance](#)

Art. 2.

DIOCESAN BISHOPS

Can. 381 §1. A diocesan bishop in the diocese entrusted to him has all ordinary, proper, and immediate power which is required for the exercise of his pastoral function except for cases which the law or a decree of the Supreme Pontiff reserves to the supreme authority or to another ecclesiastical authority.

§2. Those who preside over the other communities of the faithful mentioned in [⇒](#) can. 368 are equivalent in law to a diocesan bishop unless it is otherwise apparent from the nature of the matter or from a prescript of law.

Can. 382 §1. One promoted as bishop cannot assume the exercise of the office entrusted to him before he has taken canonical possession of the diocese. Nevertheless, he is able to exercise offices which he already had in the same diocese at the time of promotion, without prejudice to the prescript of [⇒](#) can. 409, §2.

§2. Unless he is prevented by a legitimate impediment, one promoted to the office of diocesan bishop must take canonical possession of his diocese within four months of receipt of the apostolic letter if he has not already been consecrated a bishop; if he has already been consecrated, within two months from receipt of this letter.

§3. A bishop takes canonical possession of a diocese when he personally or through a proxy has shown the apostolic letter in the same diocese to the college of consultors in the presence of the chancellor of the curia, who records the event. In newly erected dioceses, he takes canonical possession when he has seen to the communication of the same letter to the clergy and people present in the cathedral church, with the senior presbyter among those present recording the event.

§4. It is strongly recommended that the taking of canonical possession be done within a liturgical act in the cathedral church with the clergy and people gathered together.

Can. 383 §1. In exercising the function of a pastor, a diocesan bishop is to show himself concerned for all the Christian faithful entrusted to his care, of whatever age, condition, or nationality they are, whether living in the territory or staying there temporarily; he is also to extend an apostolic spirit to those who are not able to make sufficient use of ordinary pastoral care because of the condition of their life and to those who no longer practice their religion.

§2. If he has faithful of a different rite in his diocese, he is to provide for their spiritual needs either through priests or parishes of the same rite or through an episcopal vicar.

§3. He is to act with humanity and charity toward the brothers and sisters who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church and is to foster ecumenism as it is understood by the Church.

§4. He is to consider the non-baptized as committed to him in the Lord, so that there shines on them the charity of Christ whose witness a bishop must be before all people.

Can. 384 With special solicitude, a diocesan bishop is to attend to presbyters and listen to them as assistants and counselors. He is to protect their rights and take care that they correctly fulfill the obligations proper to their state and that the means and institutions which they need to foster spiritual and intellectual life are available to them.

He also is to take care that provision is made for their decent support and social assistance, according to the norm of law.

Can. 385 As much as possible, a diocesan bishop is to foster vocations to different ministries and to consecrated life, with special care shown for priestly and missionary vocations.

Can. 386 §1. A diocesan bishop, frequently preaching in person, is bound to propose and explain to the faithful the truths of the faith which are to be believed and applied to morals. He is also to take care that the precepts of the canons on the ministry of the word, especially those on the homily and catechetical instruction, are carefully observed so that the whole Christian doctrine is handed on to all.

§2. Through more suitable means, he is firmly to protect the integrity and unity of the faith to be believed, while nonetheless acknowledging a just freedom in further investigating its truths.

Can. 387 Since the diocesan bishop is mindful of his obligation to show an example of holiness in charity, humility, and simplicity of life, he is to strive to promote in every way the holiness of the Christian faithful according to the proper vocation of each. Since he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, he is to endeavor constantly that the Christian faithful entrusted to his care grow in grace through the celebration of the sacraments and that they understand and live the paschal mystery.

Can. 388 §1. After the diocesan bishop has taken possession of the diocese, he must apply a Mass for the people entrusted to him each Sunday and on the other holy days of obligation in his region.

§2. The bishop himself must personally celebrate and apply a Mass for the people on the days mentioned in §1. If he is legitimately impeded from this celebration, however, he is to apply the Masses either on the same days through another or on other days himself.

§3. A bishop to whom other dioceses besides his own have been entrusted, even under title of administration, satisfies the obligation by applying one Mass for all the people entrusted to him.

§4. A bishop who has not satisfied the obligation mentioned in §§1-3 is to apply as soon as possible as many Masses for the people as he has omitted.

Can. 389 He is frequently to preside at the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist in the cathedral church or another church of his diocese, especially on holy days of obligation and other solemnities.

Can. 390 A diocesan bishop can perform pontifical functions in his entire diocese but not outside his own diocese without the express, or at least reasonably presumed, consent of the local ordinary.

Can. 391 §1. It is for the diocesan bishop to govern the particular church entrusted to him with legislative, executive, and judicial power according to the norm of law.

§2. The bishop exercises legislative power himself. He exercises executive power either personally or through vicars general or episcopal vicars according to the norm of law. He exercises judicial power either personally or through the judicial vicar and judges according to the norm of law.

Can. 392 §1. Since he must protect the unity of the universal Church, a bishop is bound to promote the common discipline of the whole Church and therefore to urge the observance of all ecclesiastical laws.

§2. He is to exercise vigilance so that abuses do not creep into ecclesiastical discipline, especially regarding the ministry of the word, the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals, the worship of God and the veneration of the saints, and the administration of goods.

Can. 393 The diocesan bishop represents his diocese in all its juridic affairs.

Can. 394 §1. A bishop is to foster various forms of the apostolate in the diocese and is to take care that in the entire diocese or in its particular districts, all the works of the apostolate are coordinated under his direction, with due regard for the proper character of each.

§2. He is to insist upon the duty which binds the faithful to exercise the apostolate according to each one's condition and ability and is to exhort them to participate in and assist the various works of the apostolate according to the needs of place and time.

Can. 395 §1. Even if a diocesan bishop has a coadjutor or auxiliary, he is bound by the law of personal residence in the diocese.

§2. Apart from ad limina visits, councils, synods of bishops, conferences of bishops which he must attend, or some other duty legitimately entrusted to him, he can be absent from his diocese for a reasonable cause but not beyond a month, whether continuous or interrupted, and provided that he makes provision so that the diocese will suffer no detriment from his absence.

§3. He is not to be absent from the diocese on Christmas, during Holy Week, and on Easter, Pentecost, and the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, except for a grave and urgent cause.

§4. If a bishop has been illegitimately absent from the diocese for more than six months, the metropolitan is to inform the Apostolic See of his absence; if it concerns the metropolitan, the senior suffragan is to do so.

Can. 396 §1. A bishop is obliged to visit the diocese annually either in whole or in part, so that he visits the entire diocese at least every Five years either personally or, if he has been legitimately impeded, through the coadjutor bishop, an auxiliary, vicar general, episcopal vicar, or another presbyter.

§2. A bishop is permitted to choose the clerics he prefers as companions and assistants on a visitation; any contrary privilege or custom is reprobated.

Can. 397 §1. Persons, Catholic institutions, and sacred things and places, which are located within the area of the diocese, are subject to ordinary episcopal visitation.

§2. A bishop can visit members of religious institutes of pontifical right and their houses only in the cases expressed in law.

Can. 398 A bishop is to strive to complete the pastoral visitation with due diligence. He is to take care that he does not burden or impose a hardship on anyone through unnecessary expenses.

Can. 399 §1. Every Five years a diocesan bishop is bound to make a report to the Supreme Pontiff on the state of the diocese entrusted to him, according to the form and time determined by the Apostolic See.

§2. If the year determined for submitting a report falls entirely or in part within the first two years of his governance of a diocese, a bishop can refrain from making and submitting his report on this one occasion.

Can. 400 §1. Unless the Apostolic See has established otherwise, during the year in which he is bound to submit a report to the Supreme Pontiff, a diocesan bishop is to go to Rome to venerate the tombs of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul and to present himself to the Roman Pontiff.

§2. A bishop is to satisfy the above-mentioned obligation personally unless he is legitimately impeded. In that case, he is to satisfy it through his coadjutor, if he has one, or auxiliary, or a suitable priest of his presbyterium who resides in his diocese.

§3. An apostolic vicar can satisfy this obligation through a proxy, even one living in Rome. This obligation does not bind an apostolic prefect.

Can. 401 §1. A diocesan bishop who has completed the seventy-fifth year of age is requested to present his resignation from office to the Supreme Pontiff, who will make provision after he has examined all the circumstances.

§2. A diocesan bishop who has become less able to fulfill his office because of ill health or some other grave cause is earnestly requested to present his resignation from office.

Can. 402 §1. A bishop whose resignation from office has been accepted retains the title of emeritus of his diocese and can retain a place of residence in that diocese if he so desires, unless in certain cases the Apostolic See provides otherwise because of special circumstances.

§2. The conference of bishops must take care that suitable and decent support is provided for a retired bishop, with attention given to the primary obligation which binds the diocese he has served.

[Previous](#) - [Next](#)

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