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CHAPTER IV.

CONFERENCES OF BISHOPS

Can. 447 A conference of bishops, a permanent institution, is a group of bishops of some nation or certain territory who jointly exercise certain pastoral functions for the Christian faithful of their territory in order to promote the greater good which the Church offers to humanity, especially through forms and programs of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of time and place, according to the norm of law.

Can. 448 §1. As a general rule, a conference of bishops includes those who preside over all the particular churches of the same nation, according to the norm of [⇒](#) can. 450.

§2. If, however, in the judgment of the Apostolic See, having heard the diocesan bishops concerned, the circumstances of persons or things suggest it, a conference of bishops can be erected for a territory of lesser or greater area, so that it only includes either bishops of some particular churches constituted in a certain territory or those who preside over particular churches in different nations. It is for the Apostolic See to establish special norms for each of them.

Can. 449 §1. It is only for the supreme authority of the Church to erect, suppress, or alter conferences of bishops, after having heard the bishops concerned.

§2. A legitimately erected conference of bishops possesses juridic personality by the law itself.

Can. 450 §1. To a conference of bishops belong by the law itself all diocesan bishops in the territory, those equivalent to them in law, coadjutor bishops, auxiliary bishops, and other titular bishops who perform in the same territory a special function entrusted to them by the Apostolic See or conference of bishops. Ordinaries of another rite can also be invited though in such a way that they have only a consultative vote unless the statutes of the conference of bishops decree otherwise.

§2. Other titular bishops and the legate of the Roman Pontiff are not by law members of a conference of bishops.

Can. 451 Each conference of bishops is to prepare its own statutes which must be reviewed by the

Apostolic See and which are to organize, among other things, the plenary meetings of the conference which are to be held and to provide for a permanent council of bishops, a general secretariat of the conference, and also other offices and commissions which, in the judgment of the conference, more effectively help it to achieve its purpose.

Can. 452 §1. Each conference of bishops is to elect a president for itself, is to determine who is to perform the function of pro-president when the president is legitimately impeded, and is to designate a general secretary, according to the norm of the statutes.

§2. The president of a conference, and, when he is legitimately impeded, the pro-president, presides not only over the general meetings of the conference of bishops but also over the permanent council.

Can. 453 Plenary meetings of a conference of bishops are to be held at least once each year and, in addition, whenever particular circumstances require it, according to the prescripts of the statutes.

Can. 454 §1. By the law itself, diocesan bishops, those who are equivalent to them in law, and coadjutor bishops have a deliberative vote in plenary meetings of a conference of bishops.

§2. Auxiliary bishops and other titular bishops who belong to a conference of bishops have a deliberative or consultative vote according to the prescripts of the statutes of the conference. Nonetheless, only those mentioned in §1 have a deliberative vote in drawing up or changing the statutes.

Can. 455 §1. A conference of bishops can only issue general decrees in cases where universal law has prescribed it or a special mandate of the Apostolic See has established it either *motu proprio* or at the request of the conference itself.

§2. The decrees mentioned in §1, in order to be enacted validly in a plenary meeting, must be passed by at least a two thirds vote of the prelates who belong to the conference and possess a deliberative vote. They do not obtain binding force unless they have been legitimately promulgated after having been reviewed by the Apostolic See.

§3. The conference of bishops itself determines the manner of promulgation and the time when the decrees take effect.

§4. In cases in which neither universal law nor a special mandate of the Apostolic See has granted the power mentioned in §1 to a conference of bishops, the competence of each diocesan bishop remains intact, nor is a conference or its president able to act in the name of all the bishops unless each and every bishop has given consent.

Can. 456 When a plenary meeting of a conference of bishops has ended, the president is to send a report of the acts of the conference and its decrees to the Apostolic See so that the acts are brought to its notice and it can review the decrees if there are any.

Can. 457 It is for the permanent council of bishops to take care that the agenda for a plenary session of a conference is prepared and that decisions made in plenary session are properly executed. It is also for the council to take care of other affairs which are entrusted to it according to the norm of the statutes.

Can. 458 It is for the general secretariat:

1/ to prepare a report of the acts and decrees of a plenary meeting of a conference and the acts of the permanent council of bishops, to communicate the same to all the members of the conference, and to draw up other acts whose preparation the president of the conference or the permanent council

entrusts to the general secretary;

2/ to communicate to neighboring conferences of bishops the acts and documents which the conference in plenary meeting or the permanent council of bishops decides to send to them.

Can. 459 §1. Relations between conferences of bishops, especially neighboring ones, are to be fostered in order to promote and protect the greater good.

§2. Whenever conferences enter into actions or programs having an international character, however, the Apostolic See must be heard.

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