



Role of the Dean (*Vicar Forane*)

ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

“A vicar forane, who is also called a dean... is a priest who is placed over a vicariate forane [deanery].”

(Canon 553 § 1)

“The vicar forane (dean) holds an office of considerable pastoral importance: he is a close collaborator with the Bishop in pastoral care of the faithful, and an attentive ‘elder brother’ towards the priests of the deanery, especially those who are ill or in difficult situations. It falls to him to coordinate the common pastoral activity of the parishes, to see to it that priests are living lives in conformity with their state and that parochial discipline is duly observed, particularly with regard to the liturgy.”

(Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, 218)

TERM OF OFFICE

“A vicar forane is to be appointed for a certain period of time determined by particular law.” (Canon 554 § 2)

In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the normal term of appointment is 5 years.

“The diocesan bishop can freely remove a vicar forane from office for a just cause in accord with his own prudential judgment.” (Canon 554 § 3)

QUALIFICATIONS

The dean must possess the following characteristics (cf. Directory, 218):

- He must be a priest resident in deanery.
- He must have earned the esteem of both priests and faithful for his prudence and doctrine, his piety and apostolic zeal.
- He must have the Archbishop’s confidence, so that when necessary the Archbishop can delegate faculties to him.
- He must possess sufficient gifts of leadership and teamwork.

ROLES

Promote and coordinate common pastoral activity in the deanery. (cf. Canon 555 § 1)

- Lead priests, deacons, religious, and laity within the deanery to initiate and carry out needed programs for the good of the deanery, including pastoral planning efforts.
- Convene the priests, deacons, and lay leaders for regular meetings.
- Strive to make parish communities and deanery organizations more aware of their membership in the deanery, the archdiocese, and the universal Church.
- Facilitate opportunities for archdiocesan offices and institutions to share updates and resources with pastors and parish leaders.
- Support the pastors and relevant archdiocesan offices in the merger or suppression of parishes.
- Support the parochial ministry of retired priests within the deanery.

Support the clergy within the deanery.

- Ensure that they “lead a life in keeping with their state and perform their duties diligently.” (cf. Canon 555 § 1)
- Ensure that they “attend lectures, theological meetings, or conferences.” (cf. Canon 555 § 2; Canon 279 § 2)
- Provide access to “spiritual supports.” (cf. Canon 555 § 2)
- Show concern for priests who: (cf. Canon 555 § 2)
 - “Find themselves in more difficult circumstances or are beset by problems.”
 - Are ill or dying
 - Ensure priests who are seriously ill do not lack spiritual and material aids.
 - Ensure that the funeral rites of priests within his deanery are celebrated worthily.
 - Make provision that when a priest is sick or dying that “registers, documents, sacred furnishings, and other things which belong to the Church are not lost or removed.”
 - Take charge as administrator, immediately upon the death of a pastor in a parish with only one priest, both of the parish property until a parochial administrator or new pastor is appointed, and of the pastor’s personal goods, until an executor qualifies.
- Mentor pastors in their first assignment and assist veteran pastors when requested.

Within the parishes: (cf. Canon 555 § 1)

- See to it that “religious functions are celebrated according to the prescripts of the sacred liturgy... especially in the eucharistic celebration and custody of the Most Blessed Sacrament.”
 - Affirm changes to the Sunday Mass schedules of parishes.
 - Support pastors in ensuring that institutions within the deanery with custody of the Blessed Sacrament (e.g. hospitals, schools, etc.) conform to liturgical and canon law.
- Ensure “that the beauty and elegance of churches and sacred furnishings are maintained carefully.”
- Ensure “that parochial registers are inscribed correctly and protected appropriately.”
- Ensure “that ecclesiastical goods are administered carefully.”
- See to it that “the rectory is cared for with proper diligence.”
- When available, ensure suitable retreat and vacation for the pastor (especially in parishes with only one priest) by assuming needed sacramental duties in his absence (e.g. celebrating Mass, hearing confessions, etc.)

Support the Archbishop:

- Meet regularly with the Archbishop.
- Visit each parish within the deanery with some regularity as specified by the Archbishop.
- Provide consultation on the appointment of pastors and parochial vicars within their deanery. (*Directory*, 212)
- Preside at the installation of a new pastor within the deanery.
- Distribute sacred oils after the Chrism Mass to parishes and clergy within the deanery.
- Grant dispensations from the impediments of Mixed Religion and, if need be, Disparity of Cult.
- Coordinate the inter-parochial ministry of permanent deacons as needed.
- Receive and exercise any temporary faculties from the Archbishop (e.g. Confirmation).