

Council of Priests

The Council of Priests is a group of priests who represent the *presbyterium* (priests of the diocese.) The Council's role is to assist the Bishop, in accordance with Canon Law, in the governance of the diocese, so that the pastoral welfare of that portion of the people of God entrusted to the Bishop may be most effectively promoted. In the words of The Code of Canon Law, the Council of Priests is to be like a 'senate' of the Bishop

As far as the designation of the members of the Council of Priests is concerned:

About half are freely elected by the priests themselves in accordance with Canon Law and with diocesan statutes;

Some priests might, in accordance with diocesan statutes, be members *ex officio*, that is, belong to the Council by reason of the office they hold;

The diocesan Bishop may freely appoint some others.

All secular priests incardinated in the diocese and priests who are living in the diocese and exercise some useful office there, whether they are secular priests not incardinated in the diocese or priest members of religious institutes or of societies of apostolic life have the right to both an active and a passive voice in the election to the Council of Priests.

It is the prerogative of the diocesan Bishop to convene the Council of Priests, to preside over it, and to determine the matters to be discussed in it or accept items proposed by the members. The Council of Priests has only a consultative vote. The diocesan Bishop is to consult it in 'matters of more serious moment', but he requires its consent only in the cases expressly defined in Canon Law.

The Council of Priests can never act without the diocesan Bishop.

The current members of the Council of Priests are Bishop Ralph Heskett, Mgr. Desmond Sexton, Frs. Pat O'Connor, Peter McGuire, Paddy Walsh, Mark McManus, Darren Reid, Damian Humphries, Adrian Tomlinson, Craig Fitzpatrick, Declan Brett, John Adikwu.

College of Consultors

From among the members of the Council of Priests, the diocesan Bishop freely appoints no fewer than six and no more than twelve priests, who are for five years to constitute the College of Consultors. To it belong the functions determined by Canon Law.

“The establishment of the College is intended to guarantee that the Bishop is ably assisted. It expresses its consent and its opinion as required by law when important decisions of an economic nature have to be made and, in the case of a vacant or impeded See, it assures continuity of pastoral governance and correct procedure regarding the succession” (*Apostolorum Successores*, n.183).

The diocesan Bishop presides over the College of Consultors and, although it is drawn from the Council of Priests, the College of Consultors, nonetheless, acts freely and autonomously, according to its statutes and the norm of law, especially the Code of Canon Law currently in force.

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Deans ('Vicars Forane')

The *vicar forane*, known also as the dean, is the priest who is placed in charge of a vicariate forane (or deanery). The *vicar forane* is appointed by the diocesan Bishop who, if he considers it prudent, may consult the priests who are exercising the ministry in the vicariate. The appointment is for a set period of time.

The role of the *vicar forane* includes:

promoting and coordinating common pastoral action in the deanery (*vicariate*);

ensuring that the clerics in his district lead a life befitting of their state;

ensuring that religious functions are celebrated according to the provisions of sacred liturgy, that the churches and sacred furnishings are

properly maintained, that parish registers are correctly entered and duly safeguarded, that ecclesiastical goods are carefully administered and that the parochial house is looked after with care;

ensuring that the clergy attend lectures, theological meetings and conferences;

ensuring that the clergy have access to spiritual assistance and are given support in troubled times;

giving pastoral care to priests who are seriously ill and, in the case of death, ensure that the funeral is worthily celebrated;

In the case of serious illness or death of a priest, the dean is to ensure books, documents, sacred furnishings and other items belonging to the church are not lost or removed.

The deans of the Diocese are:

Fr. Damian Humphries – Barnsley

Fr. Adrian Tomlinson – Chesterfield with responsibilities for Bassetlaw

Fr. Craig Elliott – Doncaster

Fr. Mark McManus – Sheffield

Fr. John Adikwu – Rotherham