

Archdiocese of Newark

Role and Responsibilities of the Dean

Introduction

The Dean (or *vicar forane*) collaborates closely with the Archbishop in the pastoral care of the faithful, while striving to be an attentive “older brother” to the priests of the deanery, especially those who are ill or in difficult situations. He coordinates the common pastoral projects of the parishes, sees to it that priests are living in conformity with their vocation and ensures that parochial discipline is duly observed, particularly with regard to the liturgy.¹ The Dean should reach out to priests who do not regularly attend the Deanery meetings.

I. Appointment

After consulting the priests who exercise ministry in the deanery, the Archbishop chooses the Dean from among the *terna* of names proposed by the priests. Adjunct and retired priests are not eligible for nomination. Religious priests who have served in the Archdiocese at least five years are eligible. The Dean is normally appointed to a three-year term.² The Archbishop may remove a Dean from office for just cause according to his own prudent judgment.³

The Dean should possess these characteristics:

- He should be a priest resident in the deanery, preferably one entrusted with the care of souls;
- He should have earned the esteem of both priests and faithful for his prudence and doctrine, his healthy spirituality and apostolic zeal.
- He should merit the Archbishop’s confidence, so that when necessary the Archbishop can delegate faculties to him;
- He should possess sufficient gifts of leadership and teamwork.

¹ cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 29; *Code of Canon Law (CIC)*, c. 555.

² *CIC* cc. 553 § 2, 554

³ *CIC* c. 554 § 3

II Principal Responsibilities

A) Promotion and coordination of pastoral activity⁴

The Dean will coordinate and evaluate pastoral activity that is undertaken by the parishes of the Deanery, working in pairs, groups of parishes or the entire Deanery. This coordination is not restricted to the ministry of the clergy but extends towards the active involvement of all in the mission of the Church. The Dean will give priority to seeing that the recommendations produced by the archdiocesan pastoral planning process (*New Energies*) and approved by the Archbishop are faithfully implemented.

To this end, the Dean will employ the following strategies:

- 1) He will convene a bi-monthly meeting of the pastors, administrators and parochial vicars of the Deanery. The Dean may invite other pastoral leaders, such as deacons, school principals, catechists, youth ministers, etc., after consulting the pastors, administrators and parochial vicars.

The agenda of the meeting will provide for the exchange of information from the Archdiocese as well as from the individual parishes. The meeting will be an occasion to promote cooperation among the parishes and their ministers as well as an opportunity to evaluate such cooperation.

- 2) He will visit each parish of the deanery at least once a year. During the visit, he will inspect the parish facilities, examine the sacramental records and, meet with the parish staff and pastoral council to hold the parish accountable for archdiocesan goals and objectives. He will submit to the Archbishop a written report of the visit.
- 3) He will participate in the governance of any institution for which the parishes of the deanery share responsibility (e.g., regional high school, consolidated school, pastoral center, etc.).
- 4) The Dean is encouraged to visit the religious houses within his Deanery to reinforce the bonds of communion of the Archdiocese with members of consecrated life.
- 5) He will welcome personally a new pastor, parochial vicar or administrator PLC who has been assigned to a parish in the deanery. The Dean will introduce the new person to the structures, policies and shared projects of the deanery. He will accompany a new pastor in his initial inspection of the parish facilities and remind the pastor of his responsibility to maintain an updated inventory of his personal property, according to diocesan norms. The Dean should request of the pastor an updated copy of this inventory during the annual visit.
- 6) He may dispense from some impediments that regard the sacrament of marriage according to the list of faculties that is given to him at the time of his appointment. He will report to the chancery all dispensations that have been granted.

⁴ CJC c. 555 § 1

b) Attention to the lifestyle and ministry of the clergy⁵

The Dean will display a special concern for priests who live or minister in the deanery. To this end, he will employ the following strategies:

- 1) He will promote the continuing education of the clergy by reminding priests of the archdiocesan policies in this regard, and encourage their participation in programs, study days, retreats and other archdiocesan events.
- 2) He will encourage the priests to live faithfully and joyfully their vocation, and display compassion and understanding to those who are experiencing problems. When circumstances demand it, he should seek the assistance of the Episcopal Vicar or the Vicar for Clergy.
- 3) He will show special solicitude for priests who are ill, elderly or dying by looking after their spiritual and material welfare. He is also charged with overseeing the details of the funeral of priests and presiding at the wake (unless someone else has been designated).

c) Supervision of liturgical functions⁶

The Dean will encourage the pastors to observe faithfully the liturgical norms of the Church and will be attentive to the care of churches, sacramentals and the custody of the Blessed Sacrament.

III Meetings

The College of Deans will meet at least once each quarter. The Archbishop will preside at the meeting and the Vicar General. Episcopal Vicars and the Chancellor will participate. The Chancellor will maintain a record of the meeting.

⁵ *CIC* c. 555 § 2

⁶ *CIC* c. 555 § 3.