

POLICY 7.3 Canonical Visitations

Sources

Ceremonial of Bishops, Part VIII, Chapter 2, Pastoral Visitation, pp. 324-325

Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, Chapter VIII, Section 3, The Pastoral Visit, pp. 249-252

Pastores Gregis, John Paul II (2003), §46

Code of Canon Law, cn. 396

Purpose of the Pastoral Visitation

In the interest of promoting a good and proper relationship between the archbishop and the many parishes, missions and communities in the Archdiocese, the Archbishop will conduct an official visitation of all of the communities in the Archdiocese once every five years.

While there is some formality of structure and goals, the spirit of canonical visits is one of fraternity and pastoral care. This is a privileged opportunity for the Archbishop to exercise his ministry as pastor of the whole Archdiocese.

Prior to the visitation taking place, the Archbishop will meet with the members of the Deanery Pastoral Council to plan the visitation, so as to include all of the parishes and missions, and to make the visitation as fruitful as possible. As well, the Chancellor and the Archdiocesan Finance Administrator will make every effort inspect the parish instruments mentioned in Policy 3.1.5.

Opening of the Visitation

The Deanery Pastoral Council meets in the home church of the deanery.

Celebration (as in *Ceremonial of Bishops*)

- choir dress
- dean greets the bishop
- crucifix; sprinkler
- archbishop prays before the Blessed Sacrament
- opening prayer by dean
- reading from Scripture
- bishop greets the assembly; provides agenda; calendar of pastoral visits; short allocution

Meeting of Deanery Pastoral Council will follow immediately upon the above celebration and any reception that may have been planned.

In the course of the visitation, the Archbishop will seek to accomplish the following in the parishes:

- to meet with the parish priest and his associates or lay pastoral animators, to discuss challenges and successes in the apostolate;
- to meet with the Deanery Pastoral Council;
- to meet with the individual Parish Pastoral Councils and/or Parish Finance Committees, where these exist;

- to meet with any parish groups as may be arranged, such as the CWL, Knights of Columbus, Social Justice Committee, Mouvement des Femmes Chrétiennes, etc.;
- to meet with the staff and children in the local Catholic schools, as may be arranged
- celebrate Confirmation and any other sacraments (such as anointing of sick, in a communal celebration, nursing homes or private residences)

A closing ceremony and reception will end the visitation, at which the archbishop will provide a report of the visitation.

PASTORAL VISITATION AND ARCHBISHOP'S DINNER

By Year and By Deanery

Year	Visitation (Spring)	Dinner (Fall)
1	Deanery 3 (Grande Prairie)	Deanery 1 (McLennan)
2	Deanery 4 (Slave Lake)	Deanery 2 (Peace River)
3	Deanery 5 (High Level)	Deanery 3 (Grande Prairie)
4	Deanery 1 (McLennan)	Deanery 4 (Slave Lake)
5	Deanery 2 (Peace River)	Deanery 5 (High Level)

Accepted by the College of Consultors on 16 February 2011

Amended by the Curia on 07 January 2016

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220. The Nature of the Pastoral Visit. "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". [*Code of Canon Law*, c. 396 § 1.]

The pastoral visit is one of the ways, confirmed by centuries of experience, through which the Bishop maintains personal contact with the clergy and with other members of the People of God. It is an occasion to rejuvenate the energies of those engaged in evangelization, to praise, encourage and reassure them. It is also an opportunity to invite the faithful to a renewal of Christian life and to an ever more intense apostolic activity. The pastoral visit helps the Bishop to evaluate the effectiveness of the structures and agencies designed for pastoral service, taking account of the circumstances and difficulties of the task of evangelization, so as to determine more accurately the priorities and the means required for overall pastoral provision.

The pastoral visit is therefore an apostolic activity to be carried out by the Bishop in true pastoral charity, which reveals him to be the principal and visible foundation of the unity of the particular Church.[cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23.]

For the communities or institutions visited by the Bishop, it is an event of grace, reflecting in some measure that great visit with which the "chief Shepherd" (1 *Pet* 5:4) and Guardian of our souls (1 *Pet* 2:25), Jesus Christ, has visited and redeemed his people (*Lk* 1:68).

[cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pasta res Gregis*, 46.]

"Persons, Catholic institutions, and sacred things and

places, which are located within the area of the diocese " [cf. *Code of Canon Law*, cc. 397 § 1, 259 § 2 (concerning the frequency of visits to the seminary), 305 § 1 (on visits to associations), 683 § 1 (on visits to works entrusted to religious), 806 (concerning visits to Catholic schools)] *are subject* to ordinary episcopal visitation, including autonomous monasteries and the houses of religious institutes of diocesan rite. So too are churches and oratories of pontifical rite, with due regard for the limitations indicated by canon law.[cf. *Code of Canon Law*, cc. 397 § 2, 615, 628 § 2, 637, 683.]

221. *The Procedure for a Parish Pastoral Visit.* In making a pastoral visit, the Bishop should seek to accomplish the following, if time and local circumstances permit:

- a) to celebrate Mass and preach the Word of God;
 - b) to confer the sacrament of confirmation with due solemnity, within Mass if possible;
 - c) to meet the pastor and the other clerics who assist in the parish;
 - d) to have meetings with the pastoral council or, if one does not exist, with the faithful who collaborate in diverse apostolates (clerics, religious and members of societies of apostolic life and the laity) and with associations of the faithful;
 - e) to have a meeting with the parish finance council;
 - f) to have a meeting with children, youth and young adults who are receiving catechetical instruction;
 - g) to visit the school and other Catholic institutions dependent on the parish;
 - h) to visit some of the sick in the parish, insofar as it is possible.
- The Bishop may also choose to be present among the faithful in other ways, considering local custom and apostolic

opportunities: for example, with young people at cultural or sporting events, or in the company of workers and in conversation with them.

During a pastoral visit, the Bishop should be sure to examine the *administration and maintenance* of the parish, including places of worship, liturgical vessels and appointments, parish registers and other goods. Nevertheless, some aspects of this task may be left to the Vicars forane or other suitable clerics [Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 555 § 4] just before or after the visit, so that the Bishop can concentrate on personal meetings during the visit itself, as befits a true Shepherd. [cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, 46.]

222. *Preparation for the Pastoral Visit.* The pastoral visit should be organized well in advance, and the faithful should receive suitable preparation through a special series of talks and sermons on themes concerning the nature of the Church, hierarchical communion, and the episcopate. Pamphlets could be issued and other means of social communication could also be employed for this purpose. In order to highlight the spiritual and apostolic dimension, the pastoral visit may be preceded by a *parish mission* [cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 770] intended to reach all parishioners, whatever their social level, including those who have fallen away from the practice of the faith.

The Bishop should also make suitable preparation for the visit by *informing himself in advance* of the socio-religious situation of the parish. Such information could prove useful to him and to the relevant diocesan offices in forming a true picture of the state of the parish community and in making appropriate provision.

223. The Demeanour of the Bishop during the Visit. As in every exercise of his pastoral ministry, the Bishop should conduct himself with simplicity and kindness during a parish visit, giving an example of devotion, charity and poverty: all virtues which, together with prudence, should distinguish a Pastor of the Church. The Bishop esteems the pastoral visit as *quasi anima episcopalis regiminis*, an extension of his spiritual presence among his people.

With Jesus the good Shepherd as his model, he should present himself to the faithful not "in lofty words or wisdom" (1 Cor 2: 1), nor with an air of mere mechanical efficiency, but rather clothed in humility and goodness, always interested in the individual person and capable of listening and making himself understood.

In the course of the visit, the Bishop should take care not to burden the parish or the parishioners with *unnecessary expenses*. [Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, 46 w. Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 398.] This does not prevent them, however; from organizing simple festivities as a natural consequence of their Christian joy and an expression of affection and esteem for their Pastor.

224. Conclusion of the Visit. After each parish visit, it is recommended that the Bishop prepare a record of the visit that has taken place, expressing appreciation for the various pastoral activities and offering recommendations for certain improvements in the life of the parish, with special reference to the state of divine worship, to pastoral work and any other important initiatives.