

YOU ARE LIVING STONES

What is a Diocese?

‘A Diocese is a portion of the People of God, which is entrusted to a Bishop to be nurtured by him, with the cooperation of the presbyterate, in such a way that, remaining close to its pastor and gathered by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular Church, in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ truly exists and functions.’ (Canon 368)



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What is a Parish?

‘A Parish is a certain community of Christ’s faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor’ (canon 515, §1).

A parish is a community
within a Diocese
in communion with the Bishop
parish priest & parishioners together
required



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What is a Territorial Parish?

By and large, a parish is territorial. It must:

- Have established boundaries
- Include all Catholics living within those borders



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What is a parishioner?

A Catholic's status as a parishioner is established by residence – you are a parishioner of the parish in which you are living, even if you decide, for whatever reason, to attend Mass elsewhere or not to attend Mass at all.



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What about Sunday Mass?

Since the celebration of Sunday Mass is ‘the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice’ and the parish ‘is the place where all the faithful can be gathered for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist’, Sunday Mass should be a real celebration of the unity and diversity of the whole community.



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Numbers of Sunday Masses

There should not be an excessive number of celebrations of Sunday Mass in a parish such that Mass cannot be celebrated with dignity and devotion.

- The maximum is
 - Three on a Sunday or holyday
 - Two on a weekday



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Who is the Parish Priest?

The Parish Priest is:

- A priest
- Usually appointed by the Bishop
- The ‘proper pastor’
- To exercise Christ’s threefold ministry of teaching, sanctifying and leading



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Different Models of Parish Priest

- One parish, one priest
- Multiple parishes, one priest
- Team ministry
- Deacon- or lay-led parishes
- A member of a religious institute or society of apostolic life

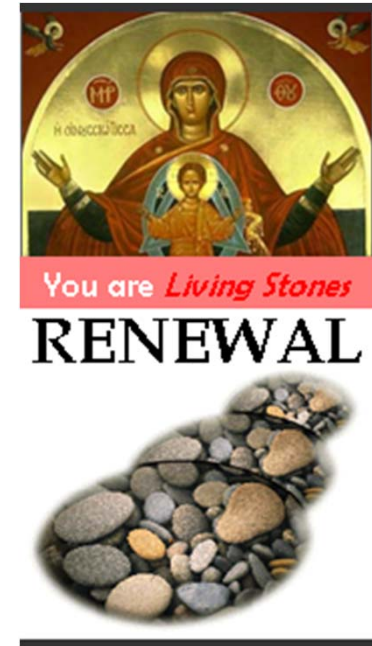
Each parish **must** have a parish priest



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Problems and Difficulties

- Residence
- Churches
- Mass times
- Time management
- Holidays and retreats



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Chaplaincies and Other Ministries

- Nottingham Diocesan Catholic Youth Service
- School chaplaincy
- University chaplaincy
- Hospital chaplaincy
- Prison chaplaincy
- HM Forces chaplaincy



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The Restructuring of Parishes

- Parishes are erected, suppressed or altered by the Bishop – only he can alter the borders of a parish
- The Council of Priests must be consulted before the Bishop erects, suppresses or notably alters a parish
- Territorial parishes cannot be suppressed if there are Catholics living there, but merged or altered
- The only status you never lose in the Church is that of parishioner



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The Restructuring of Parishes

Any proposal concerning the restructuring of a parish must take into account:

- Population
- Geography
- History
- Church and other resources
- Financial viability



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The Restructuring of Parishes

The number of priests is a consideration but a parish is a community and not a benefice

Questions concerning the restructuring of parishes cannot be seen purely through the prism of the number of priests in active ministry, although this is an important consideration



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The Restructuring of Parishes

The merging of parishes does not mean the closure of churches

Often people read 'parish merger' as 'church closure'

These two are very different: the relative shortage of clergy would justify the merging of parishes but not necessarily the closure of churches



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The Role of the Bishop

As the chief pastor of the Diocese, the Bishop has the responsibility of ensuring the pastoral care of the faithful; he is supported in this by the Bishop's Council and Curia



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The Role of the Council of Priests

The Council of Priests is the principal consultative body in the Diocese, consisting of:

- The Bishop
- Thirteen directly elected members, each representing the priests of his deanery
- Members *ex officio* – the Vicars General, Chancellor, Judicial Vicar and Episcopal Vicars



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The Role of the Deaneries

The Dean oversees the consultation within his deanery, and the implementation of the decisions which arise out of the consultation:

- Deanery meetings – meetings of the clergy
- Deanery pastoral councils – meeting of the clergy and lay faithful
- Other meetings



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The Role of the Parish Priest

The Parish Priest oversees the consultation within his parish, and the implementation of the decisions which arise out of the consultation:

- Pastoral Council
- Parish Finance Committee
- Other meetings

