

VICAR FORANE

A Vicar Forane, who is also called a dean or an archpriest or some other name, is a priest who is placed over a vicariate forane (Can. 553, 1).

Canon 374 requires that a diocese be divided into parishes, and it permits parishes in a certain vicinity to be grouped together in a vicariate forane or a deanery to promote better pastoral care. In his vicariate, the Vicar Forane acts as an “alter ego” of the Bishop. In a limited capacity he assists the bishop in the governance of the diocese.

As an “alter ego” of the bishop, the Vicar Forane must work in concert with the bishop and should exercise whatever authority is delegated to him by his superior (*Christus Dominus*, 29). He has to be a vital channel of communication between the bishop and his priests, parishes and people of the vicariate.

APPOINTMENT/QUALIFICATION/TERM OF OFFICE

Unless it is otherwise prescribed by particular law, the Vicar Forane is appointed by the diocesan bishop, if he has considered it prudent to do so he will have consulted the priests who are exercising the ministry in the vicariate (Can. 553, § 2).

Since the selection of the Vicar Forane is the exclusive prerogative of the bishop, he is free to select any priest he judges to be worthy in view of the circumstances of place and time (cf Can. 554, 1). He may even choose a priest who is not a resident of the vicariate.

In our Archdiocese, the term of office of the Vicar Forane is (2) Two Years unless it is otherwise revoked or he is transferred to another vicariate.

POWER AND JURISDICTION

The Vicar Forane has jurisdiction over all the priests residing in his vicariate. This power of the Vicar Forane is Ordinary and Vicarious. **Ordinary power** means that his power grows out of the office to which it is attached by Law, not be a given person and can be exercised as soon as one is in full possession of the office. **Vicarious power** means that the Vicar Forane acts not in his name but in the name of the bishop. This is in contrast to the **proper jurisdiction** whereby a person acts in his own name e.g., the parish priest.

FUNCTIONS OF THE VICAR FORANE

- A. According to the Common Law (**Can. 555**), the Vicar Forane’s administrative and supervisory powers consists in ascertaining effectively or seeing to it that:
 1. The clergy within his territory lives up to the requirements of the law and that they satisfy their obligations (c. 555, § 1,2) such as those relative to:

- a. Residence (c. 283, § 1)
 - b. Preaching (c. 757)
 - c. Catechetical instruction of children and adults (c. 773)
 - d. Keeping of parochial books (c. 535);
2. The rules concerning the adornment and neatness of churches and sacred furnishings (c. 1220), especially the custody of Blessed Sacrament (c. 931) and the celebration of Mass are observed (c. 555, § 1, 3);
 3. The sacred functions are performed in accordance with liturgical laws (c. 839);
 4. Church Temporalities are carefully administered (cc. 1273-1289), especially during sickness or death of a priest (c. 555, § 3), and that the parochial house is looked after with care (c. 555, §1, 3).

B. Delegated Functions

In addition to the faculties granted him *ex officio*, our Archbishop has delegated to the Vicars Forane the following functions:

1. To preside over the installation ceremonies of new pastors if the bishop cannot make it.
2. Together with the incoming and outgoing pastors, he is to conduct the inventory of the parish properties and canonical records.
3. To correct any abuse by priests or laymen within the vicariate; to mediate in disagreements between priests or between a pastor and the laity; to investigate complaints and denunciations made against any priest and whenever necessary, to report the case to the bishop.
4. To remit the penalty of excommunication due to the crime of abortion.
5. To settle problems of parochial boundaries in his vicariate.
6. To grant permission and to look for substitute for the priests who ask to be absent from the diocese for one week.

DUTIES OF THE VICAR FORANE

The Law is very specific about the duties of the Vicar Forane within his territory. These are the following:

1. To promote and coordinate common pastoral action in the vicariate (c. 555, § 1,1).
2. To encourage the clergy to attend lectures and theological meetings or conferences in accordance with can. 279, 2 (c. 555, § 2, 1).

3. To provide special spiritual assistance to the priests of his district and to show a particular solicitude for those who are in difficult circumstances or are troubled by problems (c. 555, § 2, 1).
4. To assist the sick or dying priests within the district in their temporal and spiritual needs (c. 555, § 3)
5. To visit the parishes of his vicariate every six (6) months.

RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE VICAR FORANE

The rights and privileges of the Vicar Forane are, among others the following:

1. To be convoked for, and to attend the diocesan Synod (c. 464, § 1, 7).
2. To be consulted by the bishop in the provision of pastors of vacant parishes (c. 534).
3. Can be requested to join the consultors meeting in cases of transfers of pastors or erection of new parishes.

(N.B. reprinted from a document made by Rev. Msgr. Bernie Pantin in 1998)

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