



# The Holy See

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## I

### GENERAL NORMS

#### **Notion of Roman Curia**

Art. 1 — The Roman Curia is the complex of dicasteries and institutes which help the Roman Pontiff in the exercise of his supreme pastoral office for the good and service of the whole Church and of the particular Churches. It thus strengthens the unity of the faith and the communion of the people of God and promotes the mission proper to the Church in the world.

#### **Structure of the Dicasteries**

Art. 2 — § 1. By the word "dicasteries" are understood the Secretariat of State, Congregations, Tribunals, Councils and Offices, namely the Apostolic Camera, the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, and the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See.

§ 2. The dicasteries are juridically equal among themselves.

§ 3. Among the institutes of the Roman Curia are the Prefecture of the Papal Household and the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff.

Art. 3 — § 1. Unless they have a different structure in virtue of their specific nature or some special law, the dicasteries are composed of the cardinal prefect or the presiding archbishop, a body of cardinals and of some bishops, assisted by a secretary, consultants, senior administrators, and a suitable number of officials.

§ 2. According to the specific nature of certain dicasteries, clerics and other faithful can be added to the body of cardinals and bishops.

§ 3. Strictly speaking, the members of a congregation are the cardinals and the bishops.

Art. 4. — The prefect or president acts as moderator of the dicastery, directs it and acts in its name.

The secretary, with the help of the undersecretary, assists the prefect or president in managing the business of the dicastery as well as its human resources.

Art. 5 — § 1. The prefect or president, the members of the body mentioned in art. 3, § 1, the secretary, and the other senior administrators, as well as the consultants, are appointed by the Supreme Pontiff for a five-year term.

§ 2. Once they have completed seventy-five years of age, cardinal prefects are asked to submit their resignation to the Roman Pontiff, who, after considering all factors, will make the decision. Other moderators and secretaries cease from office, having completed seventy-five years of age; members, when they have completed eighty years of age; those who are attached to any dicastery by reason of their office cease to be members when their office ceases.

Art. 6 — On the death of the Supreme Pontiff, all moderators and members of the dicasteries cease from their office. The camerlengo of the Roman Church and the major penitentiary are excepted, who expedite ordinary business and refer to the College of Cardinals those things which would have been referred to the Supreme Pontiff.

The secretaries see to the ordinary operations of the dicasteries, taking care of ordinary business only; they need to be confirmed in office by the Supreme Pontiff within three months of his election.

Art. 7 — The members of the body mentioned in art. 3, § 1, are taken from among the cardinals living in Rome or outside the city, to whom are added some bishops, especially diocesan ones, insofar as they have special expertise in the matters being dealt with; also, depending on the nature of the dicastery, some clerics and other Christian faithful, with this proviso that matters requiring the exercise of power of governance be reserved to those in holy orders.

Art. 8 — Consultants also are appointed from among clerics or other Christian faithful outstanding for their knowledge and prudence, taking into consideration, as much as possible, the international character of the Church.

Art. 9 — Officials are taken from among the Christian faithful, clergy or laity, noted for their virtue, prudence, and experience, and for the necessary knowledge attested by suitable academic degrees, and selected as far as possible from the various regions of the world, so that the Curia may express the universal character of the Church. The suitability of the applicants should be evaluated by test or other appropriate means, according to the circumstances.

Particular Churches, moderators of institutes of consecrated life and of societies of apostolic life will not fail to render assistance to the Apostolic See by allowing their Christian faithful or their members to be available for service at the Roman Curia.

Art. 10 — Each dicastery is to have its own archive where incoming documents and copies of documents sent out are kept safe and in good order in a system of "protocol" organized according to modern methods.

### **Procedure**

Art. 11 — § 1. Matters of major importance are reserved to the general meeting, according to the nature of each dicastery.

§ 2. All members must be called in due time to the plenary sessions, held as far as possible once a year, to deal with questions involving general principles, and for other questions which the prefect or president may have deemed to require treatment. For ordinary sessions it is sufficient to convoke members who reside in Rome.

§ 3. The secretary participates in all sessions with the right to vote.

Art. 12 — Consultors and those who are equivalent to them are to make a diligent study of the matter in hand and to present their considered opinion, usually in writing.

So far as opportunity allows and depending on the nature of each dicastery, consultors can be called together to examine questions in a collegial fashion and, as the case may be, present a common position.

For individual cases, others can be called in for consultation who, although not numbered among the consultors, are qualified by their special expertise in the matter to be treated.

Art. 13 — Depending on their own proper field of competence, the dicasteries deal with those matters which, because of their special importance, either by their nature or by law, are reserved to the Apostolic See and those which exceed the competence of individual bishops and their groupings, as well as those matters committed to them by the Supreme Pontiff. The dicasteries study the major problems of the present age, so that the Church's pastoral action may be more effectively promoted and suitably coordinated, with due regard to relations with the particular Churches. The dicasteries promote initiatives for the good of the universal Church. Finally, they review matters that the Christian faithful, exercising their own right, bring to the attention of the Apostolic See.

Art. 14 — The competence of dicasteries is defined on the basis of subject matter, unless

otherwise expressly provided for.

Art. 15 — Questions are to be dealt with according to law, be it universal law or the special law of the Roman Curia, and according to the norms of each dicastery, yet with pastoral means and criteria, attentive both to justice and the good of the Church and, especially, to the salvation of souls.

Art. 16 — Apart from the official Latin language, it is acceptable to approach the Roman Curia in any of the languages widely known today.

For the convenience of the dicasteries, a centre is being established for translating documents into other languages.

Art. 17 — General documents prepared by one dicastery will be communicated to other interested dicasteries, so that the text may be improved with any corrections that may be suggested, and, through common consultation, it may even be proceeded in a coordinated manner to their implementation.

Art. 18 — Decisions of major importance are to be submitted for the approval of the Supreme Pontiff, except decisions for which special faculties have been granted to the moderators of the dicasteries as well as the sentences of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota and the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura within the limits of their proper competence.

The dicasteries cannot issue laws or general decrees having the force of law or derogate from the prescriptions of current universal law, unless in individual cases and with the specific approval of the Supreme Pontiff.

It is of the utmost importance that nothing grave and extraordinary be transacted unless the Supreme Pontiff be previously informed by the moderators of the dicasteries.

Art. 19 — § 1. Hierarchical recourses are received by whichever dicastery has competence in that subject matter, without prejudice to art. 21, § 1.

§ 2. Questions, however, which are to be dealt with judicially are sent to the competent tribunals, without prejudice to arts. 52-53.

Art. 20 — Conflicts of competence arising between dicasteries are to be submitted to the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, unless it pleases the Supreme Pontiff to deal with them otherwise.

Art. 21 — § 1. Matters touching the competence of more than one dicastery are to be examined

together by the dicasteries concerned.

To enable them to exchange advice, a meeting will be called by the moderator of the dicastery which has begun to deal with the matter, either on his own initiative or at the request of another dicastery concerned. However, if the subject matter demands it, it may be referred to a plenary session of the dicasteries concerned.

The meeting will be chaired by the moderator of the dicastery who called the meeting or by its secretary, if only the secretaries are meeting.

§ 2. Where needed, permanent interdicasterial commissions will be set up to deal with matters requiring mutual and frequent consultation.

### **Meetings of Cardinals**

Art. 22 — By mandate of the Supreme Pontiff, the cardinals in charge of dicasteries meet together several times a year to examine more important questions, coordinate their activities, so that they may be able to exchange information and take counsel.

Art. 23 — More serious business of a general character can be usefully dealt with, if the Supreme Pontiff so decides, by the cardinals assembled in plenary consistory according to proper law.

### ***Council of Cardinals***

#### ***for the Study of Organizational and Economic Questions of the Apostolic See***

Art. 24 — The Council of Cardinals for the Study of Organizational and Economic Questions of the Apostolic See consists of fifteen cardinals who head particular Churches from various parts of the world and are appointed by the Supreme Pontiff for a five-year term of office.

Art. 25 — § 1. The Council is convened by the cardinal secretary of state, usually twice a year, to consider those economic and organizational questions which relate to the administration of the Holy See, with the assistance, as needed, of experts in these affairs.

§ 2. The Council also considers the activities of the special institute which is erected and located within the State of Vatican City in order to safeguard and administer economic goods placed in its care with the purpose of supporting works of religion and charity. This institute is governed by a special law.

### **Relations with Particular Churches**

Art. 26 — § 1. Close relations are to be fostered with particular Churches and groupings of

bishops, seeking out their advice when preparing documents of major importance that have a general character.

§ 2. As far as possible, documents of a general character or having a special bearing on their particular Churches should be communicated to the bishops before they are made public.

§ 3. Questions brought before the dicasteries are to be diligently examined and, without delay, an answer or, at least, a written acknowledgement of receipt, insofar as this is necessary, should be sent.

Art. 27 — Dicasteries should not omit to consult with papal legates regarding business affecting the particular Churches where the legates are serving, nor should they omit to communicate to the legates the results of their deliberations.

### "Ad limina" Visits

Art. 28 — In keeping with a venerable tradition and the prescriptions of law, bishops presiding over particular Churches visit the tombs of the Apostles at predetermined times and on that occasion present to the Roman Pontiff a report on the state of their diocese.

Art. 29 — These kinds of visits have a special importance in the life of the Church, marking as they do the summit of the relationship of the pastors of each particular Church with the Roman Pontiff. For he meets his brother bishops, and discusses with them matters concerning the good of the Churches and the bishops' role as shepherds, and he confirms and supports them in faith and charity. This strengthens the bonds of hierarchical communion and openly manifests the catholicity of the Church and the unity of the episcopal college.

Art. 30 — The *ad limina* visits also concern the dicasteries of the Roman Curia. For through these visits a helpful dialogue between the bishops and the Apostolic See is increased and deepened, information is shared, advice and timely suggestions are brought forward for the greater good and progress of the Churches and for the observance of the common discipline of the Church.

Art. 31 — These visits are to be prepared very carefully and appropriately so that they proceed well and enjoy a successful outcome in their three principal stages — namely, the pilgrimage to the tombs of the Princes of the Apostles and their veneration, the meeting with the Supreme Pontiff, and the meetings at the dicasteries of the Roman Curia.

Art. 32 — For this purpose, the report on the state of the diocese should be sent to the Holy See six months before the time set for the visit. It is to be examined with all diligence by the competent dicasteries, and their remarks are to be shared with a special committee convened for this purpose so that a brief synthesis of these may be drawn up and be readily at hand in the

meetings.

### **Pastoral Character of the Activity of the Roman Curia**

Art. 33 — The activity of all who work at the Roman Curia and the other institutes of the Holy See is a true ecclesial service, marked with a pastoral character, that all must discharge with a deep sense of duty as well as in a spirit of service, as it is a sharing in the world-wide mission of the bishop of Rome.

Art. 34 — Each individual dicastery pursues its own end, yet dicasteries cooperate with one another. Therefore, all who are working in the Roman Curia are to do so in such a way that their work may come together and be forged into one. Accordingly, all must always be prepared to offer their services wherever needed.

Art. 35 — Although any work performed within the institutes of the Holy See is a sharing in the apostolic action, priests are to apply themselves as best they can to the care of souls, without prejudice however to their own office.

### **Central Labour Office**

Art. 36 — According to its own terms of reference, the Central Labour Office deals with working conditions within the Roman Curia and related questions.

### **Regulations**

Art. 37 — To this Apostolic Constitution is added an *Ordo servandus* or common norms setting forth the ways and means of transacting business in the Curia itself, without prejudice to the norms of this Constitution.

Art. 38 — Each dicastery is to have its own *Ordo servandus* or special norms setting forth the ways and means of transacting business within it.

The *Ordo servandus* of each dicastery shall be made public in the usual manner of the Apostolic See.