



BACKGROUND/FACT SHEET

AUXILIARY BISHOP

Introduction

In the Catholic Church most of the world is geographically divided into dioceses, the local Church. Each diocese has a bishop or Ordinary appointed to lead it. An Auxiliary Bishop is a bishop who is appointed to assist the diocesan bishop. In assessing matters of importance, especially those of a pastoral nature, the diocesan bishop will consult his auxiliary bishops before all others. It is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop to request and to explain to the Pope his need for an auxiliary bishop.

With the appointment of Bishop-designate Wayne Kirkpatrick, the Archdiocese of Toronto will have four Auxiliary Bishops with various responsibilities, including the pastoral care of specific geographic regions: the Central Pastoral Region, which presently includes the Scarborough portion of the Eastern Region (93 parishes), the Northern Region, which presently includes the Durham portion of the Eastern Region (64 parishes), and the Western Pastoral Region (66 parishes). The Archdiocese of Toronto is divided into 14 Pastoral Zones and each Zone is comprised of parishes within a set boundary.



Bishop's Coat of Arms

Each Bishop has his own coat of arms. The shield of arms (blank space shown at left) uses symbols that represent significant spiritual influence and religious symbolism specific to an individual Bishop.

The green hat (the crest) and six green tassels (the supporters) in three rows on each side, gold cross with a single crossbeam, and motto below, are the constant elements in a bishop's coat of arms.

Address on an envelope: Most Reverend N____ N____

Salutation: Your Excellency

- The ordination of a bishop must take place within three months of his episcopal appointment.
- The principal consecrator must be assisted by at least two other consecrating bishops to ordain the bishop-designate.
- The blessing of the ring-pectoral staff, and mitre, which are symbols of his ministry, ordinarily takes place at a convenient time prior to the ordination service.
- The ordination of the bishop begins after the gospel readings during celebration of the Eucharist (Mass).
- Since an auxiliary bishop is appointed as an auxiliary and not the diocesan bishop, the Pope assigns a titular see, that is, dioceses in North African, the Middle East or elsewhere that has been abandoned as active sees for a variety of historical reasons.
This is similar to an honorary title over which he exercises no pastoral authority.

How a Bishop is Selected

At least every three years, the Bishops of an ecclesiastical province meet to draw up a list of priests who are suitable candidates for the episcopate. This discussion is limited to the merits of individual priests proposed by their bishops as possible candidates for the episcopate. After this meeting, the list is sent to the Canadian Apostolic Nuncio (based in Ottawa) who in turn forwards it to the Holy See (Vatican).

When an auxiliary bishop is needed, the diocesan bishop puts forth his own recommendations and prepares a list of at least three candidates from either inside or outside of the diocese. He sends this to the Apostolic Nuncio, who in turn forwards it to the Holy See, after reviewing the list and adding his own opinion. This list can incorporate candidates from his own diocese, candidates discussed by the bishops of the ecclesiastical province to which he belongs or he may suggest names of possible candidates for the first time.

The 'terna' is the shortlist of three names determined by the Holy See. After the terna has been decided, the papal representative, the Apostolic Nuncio, is instructed to commence an extensive investigative process on the Episcopal suitability of each of the candidates on the terna. On average, this process may take two to six months. Confidential advice is sought through letters and other documentation from those who have worked closely with the proposed candidate. When the Apostolic Nuncio has concluded his investigative process he forwards his final report containing his recommendation to the Holy See, usually to the Congregation of Bishops.

The primary responsibility of the Congregation of Bishops is to examine all the documentation presented to the Holy See by the Apostolic Nuncio and to advise the Holy Father, who alone decides the appointment of a bishop. The Congregation fulfills this function by meeting in a session where the documentation gathered by the Apostolic Nuncio is presented. Several Episcopal appointments from throughout the universal church may be discussed at this one meeting. The advice of the Cardinal Prefect and Bishop members of the Congregation is then communicated to the Holy Father. At a later time, the Holy Father makes his decision. In reaching his decision the Holy Father is not bound by the advice presented to him.

After the pope has made his decision the Prefect for the Congregation of Bishops informs the Papal Nuncio of his decision, who in turn, contacts the appointed candidate to ask if he will accept the appointment. Through a letter, the Papal Nuncio officially informs the Bishop and the candidate of the appointment, requesting strict confidentiality of the information until the Vatican makes the announcement.

Terms

- **Terna** – is the short-list of potential bishops to be investigated from Rome.
- **Titular See** – a diocese, now nonexistent, to which an auxiliary bishop is given as an honorary title.
- **Apostolic See** – The Apostolic See is the governance of the Universal Church under the Petrine ministry centred in Rome.
- **Holy See** – The terms Holy See and Apostolic See refer to the governance of the Universal Church under the Petrine ministry centred in Rome. Holy See is the more commonly used term.
- **Congregation of Bishops** – Consists of Cardinals and Bishops from the Roman Curia or dioceses around the world.
- **Prefect** – It is the title given to those who head Vatican congregations.
- **Holy Father** – A title of respect referring to the pope.
- **Apostolic Nuncio** – Also referred as the papal nuncio, he is a Vatican diplomatic representative with the rank of ambassador. In addition, the Nuncio is also the personal representative of the Holy Father to the bishops of the country.
- **Code of Canon Law** – ie - Canon 377§1 – A reference to the Code of Canon Law, the general laws governing the Latin rite of the Catholic Church. Ecclesiastical Province – The suffragan dioceses gathered around an Archdiocese (major diocese); they are geographically connected.
- **Laying on of Hands** – The laying on of hands by the bishop, with the consecratory prayer, constitutes the visible sign of an ordination. The unbroken succession going back to the beginning, the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit and through the imposition of hands this gift of the Spirit was passed down. The bishops are regarded as transmitters of the apostolic line.

References

The Code of Canon Law
Office of the Apostolic Nunciature of Canada
CNS – Stylebook on religion
The Rites – Volume Two
Catechism of the Catholic Church