

THE KINGDOM OF GOD: EVER ANCEINT, EVER NEW  
REFLECTIONS UPON THE VATICAN II COUNCIL: PRESENTATION 11  
THE DECREE ON BISHOPS: WITNESSES TO THE GREATER KINGDOM

I. Jesus established the office of bishops and the office of the Pope by calling the Twelve Apostles and appointing St. Peter as their head. The understanding of this office has gradually developed over the course of Church history.

A. The bishops are the successors of the Apostles and receive the authority to sanctify, lead and teach the Church that Christ gave to them. Jesus proclaimed some things to the public at large, but at other times, such as at the Last Supper and in the Upper Room after the Resurrection, He spoke specifically to the Apostles. For example, He explained the parables especially to the Apostles; and, in the Upper Room, He specifically gave the Apostles the authority to forgive sins. See, e.g., Mark 4:10-12; John 20:22-23. And at the Ascension, He said to the Apostles, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8.

B. In the early Church, the Apostles appointed other men, such as Saints Paul, Barnabas, Timothy and Titus to lead specific churches, handing a share in their authority to them. The status of the Twelve was not inherited, but the apostolic authority was. This handing on of this authority continued throughout the years in the office we now called bishops (or patriarch, eparchs and others who are in apostolic succession.) Every bishop today was ordained by other bishops, who were ordained by other bishops in succession back to the apostles. Bishops thus share in apostolic authority and in the fullness of the priesthood. Priests who are not bishops assist the bishops and share in some of their authority.

C. Peter led the Apostles in the early Church and his successors lead the Church to this day.

1. Jesus said to the apostle Simon, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it.” Matt. 16:18. (In Aramaic, the word cephas means both Peter and rock.) At the Last Supper, He also spoke of Peter’s role in bringing his brother Apostles back. And then, after the Resurrection, He specifically commissioned Peter as shepherd. See Luke 22:31-32; John 21:1-19.

2. When St. Peter died, the Church selected successors as the bishops of Rome, starting with Saints Linus, Cletus and Clement. There have been 265 successors to Saint Peter as Bishop of Rome up to Pope Francis at this time. In this office as Bishop of Rome and the successor of Peter, the Pope is the leader of the apostles. He is needed to preserve the unity and independence of the Church with his teaching and guidance. See Vatican II Council, Lumen Gentium 18.

3. Thus, for example, when there was a dispute about a bishop in Corinth near the end of the first century, St. Clement, the Bishop of Rome, sent a letter clarifying the matter and giving general instructions for the life of faith and governance of

the Church. And when the heresy of Gnosticism arose in the second century, St. Irenaeus referred to the Church in Rome as always maintaining the true faith under her bishop. See Against Heresies, Book III, chapter 3 (2).

4. Even those who disagreed with the Pope recognized his authority. That is why various monarchs have sometimes tried to establish their own candidates as Pope. They realized that the office could not be ignored, and so tried to get control of it.

5. As the great 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar described in his book The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church, the papacy is needed to keep the Church independent of earthly powers, although it has been varied in its practical ability to keep such powers at bay.

D. There is a distinction between the identity as a bishop, which is given by ordination, and cannot be revoked and the office a bishop has, which can be given, changed, and handed back.

1. The status of bishop is conferred by and only by ordination from other bishops; current law requires three bishops to ordain a new bishop. Ordination brings with it the fullness of priesthood, and includes such things as the ability to administer all of the sacraments and join in the teaching authority of the Church, although the ability lawfully to exercise these capacities depends upon Church law and decrees.

2. People identify bishops most commonly as leaders of dioceses. And, from the early Church, bishops led certain churches in different areas, which would come to be called dioceses in the Latin side of the Church.

3. However, there are other offices that bishops have, such as assignments for the Church at large (e.g., now in the Vatican Curia and papal nuncios, who serve as ambassadors), missionary work (with examples from St. Paul to the American Fulton Sheen) and such offices as auxiliary bishops, who assist diocesan bishops.

4. Even a retired bishop is still fully a bishop by ordination, with the full ability to administer sacraments and participate in church teachings, although he no longer has an office and his ability lawfully to do certain things (such as ordain new clergy) depends upon designation from others.

5. All bishops belong to the “college of bishops,” which is meant together to guide the Church in their sanctifying, teaching and governing roles.

E. Throughout Church history, there has been a balancing act with respect to many issues, such as the authority of the Pope and the Vatican generally vis a vis the authority of bishops, the role of bishops in their own diocese and their calling to cooperate together, the role of national churches in reference to the whole Church

1. The Pope has always been the leader of the Church, but his practical ability to guide bishops has varied.

a. In the early Church, the Popes provided general leadership, but persecutions sometimes made practical control difficult. But the Pope was considered central. Thus, for example, when the issue of how to bring lapsed Christians back (or even whether they could come back) the Popes, cooperating with various bishops such as St. Cyprian, worked out the solution. Similarly, when the issue of what books are in the Bible was being heavily debated in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Damasus I consulted with St. Jerome, and approved of what is now called the Vulgate.

b. When the bishops have come together for an ecumenical council (the highest level of Church Council, of which there have been twenty-one) it has been understood that, while the Popes did not attend themselves, their approval was essential for any decree to take effect.

c. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern era, the Popes sometimes cooperated with secular powers to help govern the Church, as with Charlemagne and the Germanic emperors Otto I, II, III and Henry II. At other times, the Church fought with secular powers for control of the Church and especially the ability to appoint and govern over bishops; these conflicts especially arose when bishops began becoming a part of the feudal structure in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Starting with the reign of Pope Pius VII (1800 – 1824) the Popes and bishops became more successful in wresting control of the Church and appointment of bishops from secular powers.

d. There have been varying degrees of control that Popes have asserted over the bishops. With modern communications and transportations, as well as the recognition of the need for the Pope to keep secular powers at bay, the Popes increased in their control of the Church dramatically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This increased control partially reflected the increased reverence Catholics had for the Papacy, especially as Popes defied worldly powers. Paradoxically, this prestige increased after the Popes lost control of the Papal States in 1870 for they were no longer seen as worldly powers, and did not need worldly powers as much. In addition, the Vatican I Council's affirmation of Papal infallibility both resulted from and added to the prestige of this office.

e. But as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed some argued for less papal and Vatican control. Thus, for example, the more detailed governance of seminary instruction and the disciplining of such theologians such as French Jesuit Henri de Lubac, the French Dominican Yves Congar, and the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray caused some opposition from bishops in the years before the Vatican II Council.

2. There has also been a balancing between the each diocesan bishop's role in running his own diocese and the call to cooperate together. Related to that issue

is the authority of national churches vis a vis the authority of individual bishops and the unity of the entire Church together.

a. From near the beginning, there has been an understanding that there is one Church, but also that each area of the Church has its own identity. Thus, for example, St. Paul spoke both of the one Church and of each area as its own Church. Compare 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:1-16, 5:21-32; Col. 1:15-20; see also 1 Tim. 3:5, 15 with 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1.

b. As the nations of Europe formed, the bishops had a loyalty to the whole Church, but also tended to build up national churches as well. Thus, for example, before the Council of Trent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, each nation tended to have its own liturgy. Starting with the Council of Trent, there was much more of a focus on the unity of the Church, but national councils of bishops (sometimes called by the monarchs) would also define national policy. In many cases, this unity led to great advancement, such as the American bishops' call at the Third Council of Baltimore to promote Catholic schools and publish a national catechism, which would come to be known as the Baltimore Catechism. At other times, the specific authority of a national church could be seen as a threat to the unity of the Church and to the authority of the Pope. Thus, for example, in the later half of the nineteenth century, Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII both commended the creativity and apostolic zeal of the Church in America, but also criticized what they called "Americanism," a view that involved among other things lay control of churches and secularization of society.

c. There were also many issues regarding the authority that bishops had over aspects of the Church as opposed to the authority of other people, such as religious orders and local leaders. Thus, for example, the early Irish tradition tended to be centered on monasteries and convents, rather than dioceses. However, especially with the Synod of Whitby in 664 (which was called for different reasons) the English Church stayed with the more Roman model of more control by diocesan bishops. Nevertheless throughout the Middle Ages, bishops and leaders of religious orders often competed for authority. And, partially because bishops and abbots were often a part of the feudal system, monarchs and lords often played a large role in church affairs. In the more modern era, their influence has declined, but the issue of how much lay control there would be in church affairs continued apace.

F. There have also been continuous calls for bishops to live in a fashion that leads to good example for others. Thus, for example, in its final session in 1563, the Council of Trent calls for bishops (and also priests) to govern the Church better and provide more holy examples, by such things as living more simply, to avoiding the preference of friends and relatives in appointments and being devoted to charity.

II. From the beginning, there were plans for the Vatican II Council to issue a decree on the role of bishops. There was a heated debate at the Council and many amendments to the original draft, but the final decree was approved by almost unanimous consent.

- A. The Preparatory Commission on Bishops, with later governance by the Coordinating Commission, prepared a 37 paragraph Decree on Bishops, which they presented to the Second Session of the Council on November 5, 1963, right after its third consideration of the Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium. The document was juridical in nature, describing the various roles and duties of bishops, individually and together.
- B. At that time, there had just been a series of four votes regarding Lumen Gentium that affected the theology and understanding of bishops. There were overwhelming votes in favor of the proposition that episcopacy is the highest grade of holy ordered and that all legitimate bishops in union with the Pope are members of the College of bishops. (Those votes were 2123 – 34 and 2154 – 204 respectively.) There were also two votes by very large margins that: (1) the College of Bishops, in union with the Pope, is successor to the Apostles and “enjoys full and supreme power over the universal church”; and (2) that this power belongs to it by divine institution and thus not merely by papal authority. Those votes, which were 2148 – 336 and 2138 – 408 respectively, were taken to affirm the principle of “collegiality,” that is the idea that the College of Bishops should govern together with the Pope, as opposed to having merely authority designated by the Pope. Like the draft of Luman Gentium, the decree on bishops had not initially focused on this issue.
- C. There was an initial vote to accept the draft as the basic text. But it was then followed by discussions that would lead to many changes in it.
  1. After Cardinal Paolo Marella, the Chairman of the Commission on Bishops, and the secretary Bishop Luigi Carli presented the decree and its explanation, there were some speeches in favor of the overall document but criticizing it for not being pastoral enough and for presenting the role of bishops as more of a concession from the Pope than flowing from ordination itself. Cardinal Michael Browne, an Irishman and former Master General of the Dominican Order, said that the Council should not now consider the issue of collegiality, but rather let a commission discuss it.
  2. After two days of debate there was a large majority in favor of keeping the draft as the base document. The debate then focused primarily on the provisions dealing with the relationship of the bishops to the universal Church.
  3. The draft proposed adding more diocesan bishops to the Roman Curia, the offices that govern the whole Church. Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh, the Melkite patriarch of Antioch, argued that this reform was too timid. He proposed that there be a permanent synod of bishops, with membership rotating through the ranks, to help the Pope govern the Church. Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, the archbishop of Bologna, was sympathetic but proposed

that a new commission be appointed to deal with the issue of the cooperation between diocesan bishops and the Curia.

4. Cardinal Joseph Frings (whose peritus was Fr. Joseph Ratzinger) gave a more dramatic speech in which he argued that: (1) that the votes on collegiality from the previous month indicated clearly that the Council wanted to focus more on that issue; (2) that the document should recognize that the Vatican Curia has limited enumerated powers; and (3) that the Curia had overused its powers often in a secretive way. Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, the Prefect of the Holy Office (the precursor to the Current Congregation on the Doctrine of the Faith) which Cardinal Frings had most directly criticized, then gave an impassioned defense of the Curia and of the Holy Office in particular. He also argued against having a commission decide the issue of collegiality, but here on the grounds that the Pope and the Holy Office should decide the issues.
5. As the discussions continued, the overall consensus was somewhere in the middle, emphasizing the importance of the Curia, but calling for a more decentralized structure. There were also calls for national bishops' conferences and for more emphasize on the pastoral role of bishops.

- D. The Commission on Bishops, which was now (like the other commissions) augmented by five members, then set out to revise the draft. The Commission emphasized more about collegiality and added sections on the notion of synods of the bishops, but without saying that they should be ongoing. It presented the three chapter revised decree to the Third Session of the Council on September 18, 1964. There were four days of debates with speakers calling for specific changes on a number of topics. The votes were in favor of each chapter and of the whole document, but with calls for some changes.
- E. The final decree was then brought before the Council on October 28, 1965. The Council promulgated it by a vote of 2139 – 2.
- F. The decree has an introduction and then three chapters: (1) on the relationship of bishops to the universal church; (2) on the relationship of bishops to their own diocese; and (3) on the cooperation of bishops in specific areas.

III. The introduction describes the theological basis for bishops and carefully balances the role of the Pope with the rights and dignity of bishops.

- A. It begins by describing the theological basis for the episcopacy by speaking of how Jesus appointed the Twelve to carry out His mission through the Church.
- B. Section 2 then begins with outlining the role of the Pope as the successor to Saint Peter and thus the leader of the entire Church. It then speaks of bishops as the successors to the Apostles. Their role comes from Christ Himself as part of the order.

- C. Section 3 describes the importance of the entire college of bishops together, but also of the need for loyalty to the guidance of the Pope. The decree is meant to specify more clearly the role of each bishops and of the entire college of bishops.

IV. Chapter I describes the interaction of bishops and the entire church. There are two subchapters, on the college of bishops together throughout the entire world, and of the relationship between bishops and the Vatican.

- A. Subchapter I describes the role of all of the bishops together in what is called the college of bishops.

1. Section 4 speaks of the role of the college of bishops throughout the world, which is always exercised under the authority of the Pope. The highest level of authority comes in an ecumenical council, of which there have been 21, including the Vatican II Council. The section specifies that all bishops in union with the Pope have a right to be at the Council. Until the First Vatican Council in 1869-70, transportation issues prevented most bishops from actually attending the ecumenical councils.
2. Section 5 calls for there to be regular universal synods of bishops. Now such synods meet every few years. The last synod was on the family and the next one will be on youth in the Church. These synods cannot themselves pronounce doctrine or issue new legislation, but they are important in guiding the Church. This section responded to calls at the Council for such synods to take a substantial role in the Church.
3. Sections 6 and 7 speak of the importance of bishops taking responsibility not only for their own area, but for the entire church, especially in areas of physical need, mission countries and places where the Church is being persecuted.

- B. Subchapter II describes the role of the Apostolic See. The term “see” comes from the Latin word “sedes,” which means chair, seat, or home. A bishop’s see is the place from which he governs a diocese. The Apostolic See is the place from which the Pope governs the Church, now the Vatican City States.

1. Section 8 speaks of the fact that a diocesan bishop has the ordinary right to govern over his own diocese, always in union with the Pope, and can in most cases given dispensations from universal law for extraordinary situations.
2. Sections 9 and 10 complements this focus with describing the governing role of the Roman Curia through which the Pope generally governs the church. It commends the Curia, but also recommends improvements including: (1) defining more precisely the roles of the Curial offices and “papal legates,” which would include the nuncios, or ambassadors, to each nation; (2) having a more international focus when selecting the members of the Curia, as opposed to having the offices dominated by Italian members; (3) giving diocesan bishops more roles in the Curia; and (4) consulting lay experts more.

IV. Chapter 2, which comprises over half of the decree, describes the role of a local bishop in his own diocese. It is divided into three subchapters: (1) on the role of the diocesan bishop himself; (2) on diocesan boundaries; and (3) on the cooperation between diocesan bishops and others in his diocese.

A. Subchapter I outlines the role of diocesan bishops in terms of their teaching, sanctifying and governing role and then contains two sections on the appointment of bishops.

1. The subchapter begins in section 11 with an overall outline describing the local bishops, with the assistance of his clergy, as the pastor of a diocese, in his teaching, sanctifying and governing roles, not only for Catholics but for all in his diocese. It also speaks of the importance of living an exemplary life.
2. Sections 12 - 14 then speak of the teaching role of bishops.
  - a. Section 12 describes the direct preaching and teaching role of bishops, not only in explaining Catholic doctrine, but also in defending the rights and dignity of people and families and of how societies should develop.
  - b. Section 13 describes the importance of maintaining a dialogue with the world in which the bishop is at the same time decisive and yet also respectful of other people's views.
  - c. Section 14 speaks describes the bishop's role in making sure that the diocese and her teachers provide good catechetical instruction to people of all ages that is based above all "on holy Scripture, tradition, liturgy, and on the teaching authority and life of the Church."
3. Section 15 describes the sanctifying role of bishops in their role of having the fullness of Holy Orders. They do so: (1) by selecting and governing the other clergy; (2) by promoting and safeguarding the liturgies of the Church; (3) by helping the people understand and appreciate the liturgies and especially the sacraments of the Church; and (4) by promoting the universal call to holiness.
4. Sections 16 – 19 describe the governing role of the diocesan bishop.
  - a. Section 16 speaks of bishops as both pastors and fathers of their people and of the need for loving service of them. As with section 15 it describes the role of the priests in carrying out this pastoral mission, and of the bishops' call both to guide and care for them. It also describes the importance of consulting lay experts and assistants in governing a diocese. There is also a promotion for dialogue with non-Catholics.
  - b. Section 17 calls upon bishops to promote the various apostolates of the Church, as the decree on the Apostolate of the Laity had already done. The bishop needs to maintain a unity within the Church but also a respect for the diversity of needs and actions.



- c. Section 18 speaks of the need to make sure there is pastoral service for groups that may be underserved, such as the military, sailors, migrants and refugees. It calls upon bishops' conferences (a subject of chapter 3) to arrange inter-diocesan efforts along these lines.
    - d. Section 19 describes the need to cooperate with civil authorities when necessary, but also the need to be independent of their control, a continuing theme of Church history.
  - 5. The subchapter concludes with a discussion of the selection and retirement of bishops.
    - a. Section 20 insists that only ecclesiastical authorities have the right to appoint bishops and that no further concession to civil authorities in this field should be given. It also says that such concessions, where they still exist, should eventually end. The issue of lay control over episcopal appointments has also been a contentious one, and the Church was at that time trying to wrest influence over such appointments from the civil authorities (especially in Communist countries) where they still had it.
    - b. Section 21 describes the call for bishops, diocesan or otherwise, to offer their resignation when they are too old or infirm to carry out their duties. At the time, there was no canonical retirement age for bishops. Now canon law says that bishops will offer their retirement to the Pope at the age of 75, although it may not be accepted at that time.
- B. Subchapter 2 outlines issues regarding diocesan boundaries.
  - 1. Section 22 speaks of the need for clear diocesan boundaries to delineate areas of authority, but also of the need for dioceses to cooperate together.
  - 2. Section 23 calls for a revision of diocesan boundaries to reflect better to reflect the needs of each area.
    - a. The section lists several specific guidelines: (1) that each diocese should have a variety of types of people who can help each other; (2) that diocesan boundaries should in general correspond to civil boundaries (e.g. in the United States dioceses are almost all within a state, and cities counties are rarely divided between dioceses); and (3) dioceses should be both contained enough so that the diocesan bishop can know all of his parishes, clergy and diocesan groups but also large enough to support itself and have enough clergy.
    - b. The section then speaks of the call to appoint specific vicars if they are needed for Eastern churches in Latin dioceses, or vice versa. Vicars may also be needed for different language groups; and in

fact some American dioceses have vicars for Spanish speaking or other immigrant groups.

3. Section 24 calls for bishops' conferences to make recommendations for the needed changes to diocesan boundaries.
- C. Subchapter 3 then describes the cooperation of bishops with various groups in a diocese, including auxiliary bishops, the diocesan curia, the clergy, and religious orders.
1. Sections 25 and 26 speak of the role of auxiliary bishops and coadjutor bishops.
    - a. An auxiliary bishop is fully a bishop, but his authority is only over matters that the bishop designates to him. A coadjutor bishop has specific definite powers, and usually has the right to succeed the bishop when he retires. These appointments are made by the Pope, although often at the request of the diocesan bishop.
    - b. Section 25 describes the need for such bishops when a diocese is so large that the bishop needs assistance in governing it and providing pastoral care. The diocesan bishop is in charge, but there should be a cooperation between them.
    - c. Section 26 speaks of the fact that a bishop should ask for auxiliary bishops when he needs them. If there are auxiliary bishops, at least one of them should be a vicar general (the highest vicar in the diocese) or at least an "episcopal vicar," one who acts with the bishop's authority. A coadjutor bishop must always be the vicar general.
  2. Section 27 describes the role of the vicar general and episcopal vicars, as well as in general the officials of a diocese, called the curia. It also calls for every diocese to have a pastoral council of clergy and laity to assist the bishop.
  3. Sections 28 – 31 describe the cooperation between a bishop and his clergy.
    - a. Section 28 describes the need for the bishop to be free and willing to appoint diocesan priests to the role where they best serve the Church and for the need for dialogue and cooperation between the bishops and his priests and among the priests themselves.
    - b. Section 29 recognizes that some priests are appointed to diocesan wide roles, or special ministries (e.g., school chaplains or hospital ministries.)
    - c. Section 30 describes the need for the priests of a diocese to be co-workers with the bishop and to guide each parish and to cooperate well with each other emphasizing the universality of the Church. It describes this calling in terms of the teaching, sanctifying and

governing role of pastors and or curates, whom we often call associate pastors.

- d. Section 31 outlines both the need of the bishop to have authority to appoint “parish priests,” i.e. pastors, that he thinks best, but also of the need for parish priests to have stability in office. It abolishes the idea of “irremovable pastors” and speaks of the need of parish priests to retire when the time comes. Most dioceses now have retirement ages for priests.
  - e. Section 32 speaks briefly of the bishop’s role in establishing or suppressing parishes. There are very specific canonical procedures for doing so.
4. Sections 33-35 describe the relationship of bishops with religious orders in their dioceses.
- a. Section 33 calls for religious orders to uphold their lives of prayer, penance exemplary lives and promotion of the apostolates of the Church.
  - b. Section 34 recognizes that religious orders, both priests and brothers and sisters, often play a large role in dioceses.
  - c. Section 35 then sets forth some principles for cooperation between the bishops and religious orders.
    - i. It says that religious orders should respect the local bishop’s role in governing the diocese and be willing to help him when he requests them to participate in the apostolates.
    - ii. Religious orders should at the same time be faithful to their own rule.
    - iii. Some religious orders are directly under the Vatican, i.e., are of “pontifical rite.” That means that they govern themselves with respect to their internal activities, independent of the bishop. Nevertheless, when engaging in pastoral work they must be guided by the bishop
    - iv. This role of the diocesan bishop extends to public worship, catechetics and schools, among other areas.
    - v. Diocesan priests and religious priests and brothers and sisters should actively cooperate together.

vi. Bishops and the leaders of religious should regularly meet together.

V. Chapter 3 describes the cooperation of bishops within a specific area.

A. Section 36 describes in general terms the historic tradition of bishops in the same area cooperating together for mutual goals.

B. Section 37 supports the calling for regional councils of bishops. In the United States, for example, there is the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

C. Section 38 sets forth specific guidance for the episcopal conferences.

1. The conference is an assembly of bishops from a region or a country.

2. All local bishops, including auxiliary bishops, are members of the conference; other bishops, such as retired bishops and papal legates may be members. The diocesan bishops have the right to vote on issues. Other bishops may have this right.

3. The conferences will have statutes approved of by the Vatican.

4. Promulgations become effective if passed by a two-thirds majority and given recognition by the Vatican, or otherwise authorized by it.

5. Different countries can join together in one conference. And the eastern Catholic bishops can also form their own conferences.

D. Sections 39 and 40 describes the role of provinces and regions in the Church.

1. Several dioceses come together to form a province, which has an archbishop (or metropolitan bishop) and other diocesan bishops. The archbishop does not rule over the other bishops but rather presides at their gatherings and is a sort of first among equals. Several provinces then come together to form a region of the church in a country or area. In the United States, there are 32 provinces (plus the Archdiocese of the Military Services) and 14 regions.

2. Section 39 describes the overall need for provinces and regions. Sections 40 and 41 calls for the revision of boundaries to reflect current needs.

E. Sections 42 and 43 describes the call for bishops with national or regional roles, such as the heads of national offices and military bishops.

VI. Section 44 concludes the decree with a call for revisions in canon law to implement the provisions promulgated by the Council and for new directories that will help in pastoral care. The universal Code of Canon Law was revised in 1983. There is now a National Directory for the United States.