

The Church is
Hierarchical

The Visible Church

- We said before that the Church is “more than what you see”
- It is comprised of all the blessed in heaven, all the souls in Purgatory and all the baptized on earth - all corporately known as the “Body of Christ.”
- But while the Church is a spiritual communion of all these, there is a visible Church on earth, and such a visible Church has a hierarchy of leaders, dating from the time of the Apostles.

The Pope

- The visible head and shepherd of the entire Catholic Church
- Successor to the Apostle Peter, who was named by Christ as the leader of the Twelve
- Exercises supreme jurisdiction over all temporal and spiritual goods of the Church
- Referred to as the “Vicar of Christ,” the Supreme Pontiff, the Bishop of Rome
- Elected by the Cardinals of the Church (known as the “College of Cardinals”) and serves until his death or resignation

The Pope

- Sovereign of the Vatican City State or Holy See
 - In the secular world, he is considered a Head of State
- Approves all ordinations of bishops and appoints bishops to their territories
- The office of the papacy is the visible principle of unity in faith and communion in the Church
- Addressed as the “Holy Father” or “His Holiness” and wears white
- By tradition, he takes a new name upon his election

Pope Francis

- Elected March 13, 2013 after the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI
- 266th successor to St. Peter
- First pope from the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), first pope from the New World, first pope from the Southern Hemisphere, first non-European pope since the 8th century.

Bishops

- Successors of the Apostles
- Appointed by the Pope
- All bishops were first priests
- Typically appointed as head of a geographic territory called a “diocese,” where he exercises full authority to govern, teach and sanctify the People of God
 - Larger dioceses (by Catholic population or geographical importance) are called archdioceses and are headed by archbishops
 - Archbishops have a higher ecclesial rank, but they are not the bosses of other bishops

Bishops

- Report directly to the Pope
- Ordain and appoint priests/deacons within his own diocese
- Distinctive liturgical garb: zucchetto, miter, crozier, pectoral cross, ring, fuchsia-colored cassock
- Addressed as Bishop, Archbishop, His Excellency
- The office of Bishop is often called the Episcopacy, from the Greek word meaning “overseer”
- As the head of a diocese, the bishop is often referred to as the “Ordinary”

Archbishop Wenski

- Was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Miami in 1974.
- Was appointed auxiliary bishop of Miami in 1997 and Bishop of Orlando in 2003
- Was appointed Archbishop of Miami in 2010
- In the Eucharistic prayers of the Mass, both his name (Thomas) and Pope Francis are mentioned. This reflects both their position in the hierarchy and also through them, our connection to Peter and the Apostles in the unity of our faith.

Bishops

- Some (arch)bishops are appointed by the pope to the College of Cardinals, whose primary task is the election of the new pope.
- They also traditionally serve as primary advisors to the pope
- There are approximately 120 active cardinals worldwide
- Typically come from major archdioceses from around the world
 - Others are appointed to head major Vatican departments
- Addressed as “His Eminence” and wear red
- The Archbishops of New York, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Washington, Newark are all Cardinals

Priests

- Co-workers with the bishops in their ministry of leading, teaching and sanctifying the People of God
- A priest is ordained and appointed to his assignment by his bishop, to whom the priest promises respect and obedience.
- Empowered by his ordination and the permission of the bishop to celebrate Mass and administer the other Sacraments
- Some priests are appointed as Pastor of a geographical area within a diocese called a parish
 - Other priests are assigned under the Pastor as associate pastors or parochial vicars.
 - The word pastor is from the Latin, meaning “shepherd”

Priests

- Addressed as Reverend or Father
 - Some senior priests are recognized by the Pope for their work and are granted the honorific title “Reverend Monsignor”
- Every priest was first a deacon, typically for one year
- The Office of Priest is often referred to as the presbyterate, from the Greek word meaning “elder”

Deacons

- Ordained and appointed by the bishop as helpers to the priests in a parish
- Granted permission by the bishop (and his pastor) to proclaim the Gospel at Mass, to baptize, perform weddings and preach.
 - Their primary role is the corporal and spiritual works of mercy (feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, teaching the ignorant, etc.)
- Some deacons are called “permanent deacons” and may be married men with families and secular careers. They will remain deacons and will not become priests
- Other deacons are called “transitional deacons” and are celibate men who will later be ordained to the priesthood

Deacons

- Transitional deacons make promises of chastity and obedience to the bishop upon their ordination
- The Office of Deacon is often called the diaconate, from the Greek work meaning “servant”

Seminarians

- Men who are studying for the priesthood attend a special school called a seminary, where they formally discern Christ's call together with the Church.
- Typically, seminary formation lasts 7-9 years.
- During their final year, and upon the recommendation of the seminary and the call of the bishop, they are ordained to the diaconate.
- Seminary involves rigorous training in human, pastoral, spiritual and academic formation

Other Ministries

- Reader or Lector
 - A ministry officially given by the bishop, usually to men in seminary formation
 - A reader is empowered to proclaim the Word of God (except for the Gospel) during the liturgy
 - Extraordinary readers from among the laity, appointed and trained by the pastor, are typical in most parishes
- Acolyte or Server
 - Another ministry given by the bishop, usually to men in seminary formation
 - Empowered to serve the celebrating priest during the Mass
 - Extraordinary servers from among the laity, usually children, appointed and trained by the pastor, are typical in most parishes

Other Ministries

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
 - A bishop, priest or deacon is the ordinary (usual, normal) minister of Holy Communion
 - For a serious reason, the bishop may appoint and train extraordinary ministers from among the laity to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass
 - Sometimes called “Eucharistic Ministers”
 - An innovation after the Second Vatican Council