



CODE OF CANON LAW

BOOK II. THE PEOPLE OF GOD

- [PART II. THE HIERARCHICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH](#)
 - [SECTION II. PARTICULAR CHURCHES AND THEIR GROUPINGS](#)
 - [TITLE II. GROUPINGS OF PARTICULAR CHURCHES \(Cann. 431 - 459\)](#)
 - [CHAPTER I. ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCES AND ECCLESIASTICAL REGIONS](#)
 - [CHAPTER II. METROPOLITANS](#)
 - [CHAPTER III. PARTICULAR COUNCILS](#)
 - [CHAPTER IV. CONFERENCES OF BISHOPS](#)

PART II. THE HIERARCHICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

SECTION II. PARTICULAR CHURCHES AND THEIR GROUPINGS

TITLE II.

GROUPINGS OF PARTICULAR CHURCHES (Cann. 431 - 459)

CHAPTER I.

ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCES AND ECCLESIASTICAL REGIONS

Can. 431 §1. To promote the common pastoral action of different neighboring dioceses according to the circumstances of persons and places and to foster more suitably the relations of the diocesan bishops among themselves, neighboring particular churches are to be brought together into ecclesiastical provinces limited to a certain territory.

§2. As a rule, exempt dioceses are no longer to exist. Therefore, individual dioceses and other particular churches within the territory of some ecclesiastical province must be joined to this ecclesiastical province.

§3. It is only for the supreme authority of the Church to establish, suppress, or alter ecclesiastical provinces after having heard the bishops involved.

Can. 432 §1. The provincial council and the metropolitan possess authority in an ecclesiastical province according to the norm of law.

§2. An ecclesiastical province possesses juridic personality by the law itself.

Can. 433 §1. If it seems advantageous, especially in nations where particular churches are more numerous, the Holy See can unite neighboring ecclesiastical provinces into ecclesiastical regions at the request of the conference of bishops.

§2. An ecclesiastical region can be erected as a juridic person.

Can. 434 It belongs to a meeting of the bishops of an ecclesiastical region to foster cooperation and common pastoral action in the region. Nevertheless, such a meeting does not have the powers attributed to a conference of bishops in the canons of this Code unless the Holy See has specifically granted it certain powers.

CHAPTER II.

METROPOLITANS

Can. 435 A metropolitan, who is the archbishop of his diocese, presides over an ecclesiastical province. The office of metropolitan is joined with an episcopal see determined or approved by the Roman Pontiff.

Can. 436 §1. In the suffragan dioceses, a metropolitan is competent:

1/ to exercise vigilance so that the faith and ecclesiastical discipline are observed carefully and to inform the Roman Pontiff of abuses, if there are any;

2/ to conduct a canonical visitation for a cause previously approved by the Apostolic See if a suffragan has neglected it;

3/ to designate a diocesan administrator according to the norm of cann. 421, §2, and 425, §3.

§2. Where circumstances demand it, the Apostolic See can endow a metropolitan with special functions and power to be determined in particular law.

§3. The metropolitan has no other power of governance in the suffragan dioceses. He can perform sacred functions, however, as if he were a bishop in his own diocese in all churches, but he is first to inform the diocesan bishop if the church is the cathedral.

Can. 437 §1. Within three months from the reception of episcopal consecration or if he has already been consecrated, from the canonical provision, a metropolitan is obliged to request the pallium from the Roman Pontiff either personally or through a proxy. The pallium signifies the power which the metropolitan, in communion with the Roman Church, has by law in his own province.

§2. A metropolitan can use the pallium according to the norm of liturgical laws within any church of the ecclesiastical province over which he presides, but not outside it, even if the diocesan bishop gives his assent.

§3. A metropolitan needs a new pallium if he is transferred to another metropolitan see.

Can. 438 The titles of patriarch and primate entail no power of governance in the Latin Church apart from a prerogative of honor unless in some matters the contrary is clear from apostolic privilege or approved custom.

CHAPTER III.

PARTICULAR COUNCILS

Can. 439 §1. A plenary council, that is, one for all the particular churches of the same conference of bishops, is to be celebrated whenever it seems necessary or useful to the conference of bishops, with the approval of the Apostolic See.

§2. The norm established in §1 is valid also for the celebration of a provincial council in an ecclesiastical province whose boundaries coincide with the territory of a nation.

Can. 440 §1. A provincial council for the different particular churches of the same ecclesiastical province is to be celebrated whenever it seems opportune in the judgment of the majority of the diocesan bishops of the province, without prejudice to can. 439, §2.

§2. When a metropolitan see is vacant, a provincial council is not to be convoked.

Can. 441 It is for the conference of bishops:

1/ to convoke a plenary council;

2/ to select the place to celebrate the council within the territory of the conference of bishops;

3/ to select from among the diocesan bishops a president of the plenary council whom the Apostolic See must approve;

4/ to determine the agenda and questions to be treated, set the opening and duration of a plenary council, transfer, extend, and dissolve it.

Can. 442 §1. It is for the metropolitan with the consent of the majority of the suffragan bishops:

1/ to convoke a provincial council;

2/ to select the place to celebrate the provincial council within the territory of the province;

3/ to determine the agenda and questions to be treated, set the opening and duration of the provincial council, transfer, extend, and dissolve it.

§2. It is for the metropolitan or, if he is legitimately impeded, a suffragan bishop elected by the other suffragan bishops to preside over a provincial council.

Can. 443 §1. The following must be called to particular councils and have the right of a deliberative vote in them:

1/ diocesan bishops;

2/ coadjutor and auxiliary bishops;

3/ other titular bishops who perform in the territory a special function committed to them by the Apostolic See or the conference of bishops.

§2. Other titular bishops, even retired ones, living in the territory can be called to particular councils; they also have the right of a deliberative vote.

§3. The following must be called to particular councils but with only a consultative vote:

1/ the vicars general and episcopal vicars of all the particular churches in the territory;

2/ major superiors of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life in a number for both men and women which the conference of bishops or the bishops of the province are to determine; these superiors are to be elected respectively by all the major superiors of the institutes and societies which have a seat in the territory;

3/ rectors of ecclesiastical and Catholic universities and deans of faculties of theology and of canon law, which have a seat in the territory;

4/ some rectors of major seminaries elected by the rectors of the seminaries which are located in the territory, in a number to be determined as in n. 2.

§4. Presbyters and other members of the Christian faithful can also be called to particular councils, but with only a consultative vote and in such a way that their number does not exceed half the number of those mentioned in §§1-3.

§5. Moreover, cathedral chapters and the presbyteral council and pastoral council of each particular church are to be invited to provincial councils in such a way that each of them sends two of their

members designated collegially by them; however, they have only a consultative vote.

§6. Others can also be invited as guests to particular councils, if it is expedient in the judgment of the conference of bishops for a plenary council, or of the metropolitan together with the suffragan bishops for a provincial council.

Can. 444 §1. All who are called to particular councils must attend them unless they are prevented by a just impediment, about which they are bound to inform the president of the council.

§2. Those who are called to particular councils and have a deliberative vote in them can send a proxy if they are prevented by a just impediment; the proxy has only a consultative vote.

Can. 445 A particular council, for its own territory, takes care that provision is made for the pastoral needs of the people of God and possesses the power of governance, especially legislative power, so that, always without prejudice to the universal law of the Church, it is able to decide what seems opportune for the increase of the faith, the organization of common pastoral action, and the regulation of morals and of the common ecclesiastical discipline which is to be observed, promoted, and protected.

Can. 446 When a particular council has ended, the president is to take care that all the acts of the council are sent to the Apostolic See. Decrees issued by a council are not to be promulgated until the Apostolic See has reviewed them. It is for the council itself to define the manner of promulgation of the decrees and the time when the promulgated decrees begin to oblige.

CHAPTER IV.

CONFERENCES OF BISHOPS

Can. 447 A conference of bishops, a permanent institution, is a group of bishops of some nation or certain territory who jointly exercise certain pastoral functions for the Christian faithful of their territory in order to promote the greater good which the Church offers to humanity, especially through forms and programs of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of time and place, according to the norm of law.

Can. 448 §1. As a general rule, a conference of bishops includes those who preside over all the particular churches of the same nation, according to the norm of can. 450.

§2. If, however, in the judgment of the Apostolic See, having heard the diocesan bishops concerned, the circumstances of persons or things suggest it, a conference of bishops can be erected for a territory of lesser or greater area, so that it only includes either bishops of some particular churches constituted in a certain territory or those who preside over particular churches in different nations. It is for the Apostolic See to establish special norms for each of them.

Can. 449 §1. It is only for the supreme authority of the Church to erect, suppress, or alter conferences of bishops, after having heard the bishops concerned.

§2. A legitimately erected conference of bishops possesses juridic personality by the law itself.

Can. 450 §1. To a conference of bishops belong by the law itself all diocesan bishops in the territory, those equivalent to them in law, coadjutor bishops, auxiliary bishops, and other titular bishops who perform in the same territory a special function entrusted to them by the Apostolic See or conference of bishops. Ordinaries of another rite can also be invited though in such a way that they have only a consultative vote unless the statutes of the conference of bishops decree otherwise.

§2. Other titular bishops and the legate of the Roman Pontiff are not by law members of a conference of bishops.

Can. 451 Each conference of bishops is to prepare its own statutes which must be reviewed by the Apostolic See and which are to organize, among other things, the plenary meetings of the conference which are to be held and to provide for a permanent council of bishops, a general secretariat of the

conference, and also other offices and commissions which, in the judgment of the conference, more effectively help it to achieve its purpose.

Can. 452 §1. Each conference of bishops is to elect a president for itself, is to determine who is to perform the function of pro-president when the president is legitimately impeded, and is to designate a general secretary, according to the norm of the statutes.

§2. The president of a conference, and, when he is legitimately impeded, the pro-president, presides not only over the general meetings of the conference of bishops but also over the permanent council.

Can. 453 Plenary meetings of a conference of bishops are to be held at least once each year and, in addition, whenever particular circumstances require it, according to the prescripts of the statutes.

Can. 454 §1. By the law itself, diocesan bishops, those who are equivalent to them in law, and coadjutor bishops have a deliberative vote in plenary meetings of a conference of bishops.

§2. Auxiliary bishops and other titular bishops who belong to a conference of bishops have a deliberative or consultative vote according to the prescripts of the statutes of the conference. Nonetheless, only those mentioned in §1 have a deliberative vote in drawing up or changing the statutes.

Can. 455 §1. A conference of bishops can only issue general decrees in cases where universal law has prescribed it or a special mandate of the Apostolic See has established it either *motu proprio* or at the request of the conference itself.

§2. The decrees mentioned in §1, in order to be enacted validly in a plenary meeting, must be passed by at least a two thirds vote of the prelates who belong to the conference and possess a deliberative vote. They do not obtain binding force unless they have been legitimately promulgated after having been reviewed by the Apostolic See.

§3. The conference of bishops itself determines the manner of promulgation and the time when the decrees take effect.

§4. In cases in which neither universal law nor a special mandate of the Apostolic See has granted the power mentioned in §1 to a conference of bishops, the competence of each diocesan bishop remains intact, nor is a conference or its president able to act in the name of all the bishops unless each and every bishop has given consent.

Can. 456 When a plenary meeting of a conference of bishops has ended, the president is to send a report of the acts of the conference and its decrees to the Apostolic See so that the acts are brought to its notice and it can review the decrees if there are any.

Can. 457 It is for the permanent council of bishops to take care that the agenda for a plenary session of a conference is prepared and that decisions made in plenary session are properly executed. It is also for the council to take care of other affairs which are entrusted to it according to the norm of the statutes.

Can. 458 It is for the general secretariat:

1/ to prepare a report of the acts and decrees of a plenary meeting of a conference and the acts of the permanent council of bishops, to communicate the same to all the members of the conference, and to draw up other acts whose preparation the president of the conference or the permanent council entrusts to the general secretary;

2/ to communicate to neighboring conferences of bishops the acts and documents which the conference in plenary meeting or the permanent council of bishops decides to send to them.

Can. 459 §1. Relations between conferences of bishops, especially neighboring ones, are to be fostered in order to promote and protect the greater good.

§2. Whenever conferences enter into actions or programs having an international character, however, the Apostolic See must be heard.
