



STATUTES OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

CHAPTER I: STRUCTURE

Art. 1 The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, established by law as a permanent institution with juridical personality, is the assembly of bishops and those Ordinaries equivalent to bishops of these two countries exercising together certain pastoral offices for Christ's faithful of their territory.

The purpose of the Conference is to promote, in accordance with the law and with the form of the apostolate adapted to the circumstances of time and place, the mission and activity of the Church in favour of all people (Canon 447).

Art. 2 The members of the Bishops' Conference in virtue of the law are as follows:

- a. Diocesan Bishops, those equivalent to them in law, including the diocesan administrator of a vacant See and coadjutor bishops;
- b. Auxiliary bishops;
- c. Other titular bishops who exercise within the jurisdiction of England and Wales a special office assigned to them by the Holy See or by the Bishops' Conference (Canon 450§1).

Art. 3 The Eparchial Bishop for the Ukrainian Community in Great Britain, the Eparchial Bishop for the Syro-Malabar Community in Great Britain and the Ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham are invited to accept full membership of the Conference with a deliberative vote (cf Canon 450§1).

The Prefect (or Apostolic Administrator) of the Falkland Islands and the Ecclesiastical Mission *sui iuris* of St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Island, and the Bishop of Gibraltar are invited observers to the Plenary Assemblies of the Bishops' Conference but without deliberative vote.

Art. 4 The Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain, because of the particular office he exercises in England and Wales, shall be invited by the President of the Conference to attend the inaugural session of each meeting of the Plenary Assembly, without prejudice to further participation in other acts of the Conference.

Art. 5 Members of the Conference whose resignation from office has been accepted by the Supreme Pontiff shall offer their resignation from any Department, Committee or office of the Conference. They are invited to attend all meetings of the Plenary Assembly with the right to speak but without a deliberative vote.

When a diocesan bishop is impeded from attendance at a Plenary Assembly by grave cause, such as prolonged serious illness, the President may invite the Vicar General (cf Canon 413) of the diocese concerned to be present as an observer to the Plenary Assembly.

- Art. 6 The Bishops' Conference shall consist of the following sections:
- a. The Plenary Assembly;
 - b. The Standing Committee (or Permanent Council);
 - c. The General Secretariat;
 - d. The other Offices and Commissions (cf Canon 451), namely the Departments, Committees and Agencies of the Conference.

CHAPTER II: THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Art. 7 The members of the Plenary Assembly are those noted in Art. 2 and Art. 3.

- Art. 8 All those noted in Art. 2 and Art. 3 assigned as members with deliberative vote may exercise such a vote with two exceptions:
- a) The making or changing of these Statutes of the Conference, which will further require the *recognitio* of the Dicastery for Bishops following a proposed change.
 - b) The determination or allocation of the financial patrimony of the Conference. This includes the determination of the annual budget of the Conference and its Secretariat, the acquisition or alienation of property in the name of the Conference and any acts of change to the financial patrimony proposed by or to the Board of the Catholic Trust for England and Wales (which acts as the Financial Council for the Bishops' Conference).

In these two matters, only the diocesan bishops, those equivalent to them in law, and coadjutor bishops have the deliberative vote.

- Art. 9 The Plenary Assembly shall meet at least twice a year, but the President or, in his absence, the Vice-President, after consultation with the Standing Committee, has the power to convene further meetings during the year.

- Art. 10 There shall be no voting by proxy.

- Art. 11 The Plenary Assembly shall elect the President and the Vice-President (cf Canon 452§1). The term of office for the President and Vice-President shall be for five years.

Following the Letter from the Congregation for Bishops 3rd March 2022 (Prot. N. 42/2022), the Bishops' Conference shall not elect as President nor as Vice-President Bishops, who would reach seventy-five years of age during their mandate.

In the event of the death or the resignation of the President during his term of office, the Vice-President assumes the role of President *ad interim* until the next scheduled Plenary Assembly of the Bishops. At that meeting, an election for the President will be held, and the appointed bishop will act as President to complete the period of time until the existing mandate for Officers expires.

Art. 12 The Plenary Assembly shall also elect the General Secretary and the Chairmen of Departments of the Conference (Permanent Commissions) at the same meeting as the election of the President and Vice-President. Those elected shall hold office for a term of five years.

The Departments of the Bishops' Conference are:

- a) The Department for Evangelisation and Discipleship
- b) The Department for Christian Life and Worship
- c) The Department for Catholic Education
- d) The Department for Social Justice
- e) The Department for Dialogue and Unity
- f) The Department for International Affairs

Art. 13 The elections in Art. 11 and Art. 12 shall be by an absolute majority of those present with deliberative vote.

Art. 14 A copy of the agenda for the Plenary Assembly, prepared by the Standing Committee, must be sent to all the members of the Conference and to the Apostolic Nuncio before the meeting in sufficient time to permit its appropriate study.

Art. 15 The Bishops' Conference has the power to make general decrees (Canons 29-33) only in the following cases:

- a. Where the universal law has so prescribed;
- b. Where there is a special mandate of the Holy See, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Conference (Canon 455§1).

Such a decision requires two-thirds of the votes of those who belong to the Conference with a deliberative vote. The decree does not oblige until the Holy See has reviewed it, issued the appropriate *recognitio* and it has been lawfully promulgated (Canon 455§2).

Art. 16 Apart from the two cases mentioned in Art. 15, the competence of each diocesan bishop remains intact (Canon 455§4). A general decree of the Conference beyond those limits requires the consent of each and every bishop.

Art. 17 In order to constitute authentic Magisterium and be published in the name of the Conference, doctrinal declarations must be approved in the Plenary Assembly by unanimous vote of the Bishop members, or by a majority of at least two-thirds of the bishops holding deliberative vote. In the latter case, the *recognitio* of the Holy See must precede promulgation (cf *Motu Proprio Apostolos Suos* §22, (21 May 1998)).

Art. 18 Proposals approved by an absolute majority of those present with a deliberative vote at the Plenary Assembly become the official Conference resolutions. Although lacking juridical binding force, those resolutions will normally be observed by all members of the Conference in the spirit of collegial unity. Such observance will be presumed, unless on occasion individual bishops indicate otherwise, either during the Plenary Assembly or later by informing the President in writing.

Art. 19 At least two-thirds of members with a deliberative vote must be present in order to constitute a quorum for a Plenary Assembly.

Art. 20 After each Plenary Assembly of the Conference, copies of the Acts of the Assembly are to be sent to the Holy See for information, together with copies of any decrees for review (cf Canon 456).

CHAPTER III: THE STANDING COMMITTEE (OR PERMANENT COUNCIL)

Art. 21 The Standing Committee (or Permanent Council) of the Bishops' Conference shall consist of the President of the Conference, the Vice-President of the Conference, the Metropolitan Archbishops and the Chairmen of the Departments of the Conference elected by the Plenary Assembly.

Two additional members of the Conference who do not hold any of the offices of the Conference noted above are elected for a five-year term at the same Plenary Assembly which elects the President and Vice-President.

The Bishop Chair of the Catholic Trust for England and Wales (the legal entity representing the Bishops' Conference in civil law) is appointed to the Standing Committee *ex officio*.

Art. 22 The Standing Committee shall normally meet at least four times a year.

Art. 23 The Standing Committee shall, by virtue of the delegation given to it by the Conference, have general responsibility for continuity and policy between the Plenary Assemblies of the Conference, and for the preparation of the agenda and implementation of Conference decisions (Canon 457). The Standing Committee shall report its decisions to the Conference but has no power to reverse the decisions of the Conference.

The Standing Committee also acts as the Theological Commission for the Bishops' Conference and may ask experts in theology to inform its work as necessary.

CHAPTER IV: THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Art. 24 The General Secretariat of the Bishops' Conference shall consist of the General Secretary who coordinates the staff appointed to work in the Conference Secretariat. As per Art. 12, the General Secretary shall be elected by the Conference for a period of five years.

Art. 25 The duties of the General Secretary are to prepare the Acts and Decrees of the Plenary Assemblies of the Conference, as well as the Acts of the Standing Committee, and to communicate these to all members of the Conference. Also, to record whatever other Acts are entrusted to it by the President or the Standing Committee.

The General Secretary is charged with providing support and necessary services to the Departments of the Conference, any associated Committees and other bodies, and ensuring the efficient coordination of the work undertaken by them.

Art. 26 The legal seat of the General Secretariat is 39 Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1BX.

CHAPTER V: DEPARTMENTS COMMITTEES AND AGENCIES

Art. 27 The Episcopal Commissions and other Offices of the Conference shall be regulated by the terms of reference approved by the Conference for each body.

Art. 28 In addition to the Commissions and Offices required by law, the Conference may create others as pastoral needs demand.

CHAPTER VI: VARIOUS NORMS

Art. 29 The expenses of the Bishops' Conference and its Secretariat shall be met by the Conference itself, according to rules agreed upon by the members.

Art. 30 Those elected to an office are eligible for re-election notwithstanding the conditions set out in Art. 11.

Art. 31 Any change to these Statutes will require a two-thirds majority of the votes of diocesan bishops, of those equivalent to them in law, and of coadjutor bishops, and review by the Holy See (cf Canons 454§4, 451).

FINAL

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