

Role of Bishop

“By divine institution, Bishops succeed the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who is given to them,” explains Canon 375 of the Code of Canon Law. “They are constituted Pastors in the Church, to be the teachers of doctrine, the priests of sacred worship and the ministers of governance.”

These are the tasks Bishop Christopher J. Coyne, undertakes as the 10th Bishop of Burlington.

To be a suitable candidate for the episcopate, a person must:

- + be outstanding in strong faith, good morals, piety, zeal for souls, wisdom, prudence and human virtues and possess those other gifts which equip him to fulfill the office;
- + be held in good esteem;
- + be at least 35 years old;
- + be a priest ordained for at least five years;
- + hold a doctorate or at least a licentiate in sacred Scripture, theology or canon law from an institute of higher studies approved by the Apostolic See, or at least be well versed in these disciplines.

According to Canon Law, unless prevented by a lawful reason, one who is promoted to the episcopate must receive episcopal consecration within three months of receiving the apostolic letters and before he takes possession of his office.

“In exercising his pastoral office, the diocesan Bishop is to be solicitous for all Christ’s faithful entrusted to his care, whatever their age, condition or nationality, whether they live in the territory or are visiting there,” Canon Law states. “He is to show an apostolic spirit also to those who, because of their condition of life, are not sufficiently able to benefit from ordinary pastoral care, and to those who have lapsed from religious practice.”

He is to act with humanity and charity to those who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church; “he should also foster ecumenism as it is understood by the Church,” the law continues.

In addition, the Bishop is to have a special concern for the priests, to whom he is to listen as his helpers and counselors. He is to see that they have the means and the institutions needed for the development of their spiritual and intellectual life. He is to ensure that they are provided with adequate means of livelihood and social welfare, in accordance with the law.

Canon Law also states that the Bishop must in a very special way foster vocations to the various ministries and to consecrated life, having a special care for priestly and missionary vocations.

He also is charged to preach frequently, and He is frequently to preside at the Eucharistic celebration in the cathedral church or in some other church of his diocese, especially on holydays of obligation and on other solemnities.