# Week 13 Episcopal Formation Chapters 15 thru 20

**Scripture Reading: Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:1,2**

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# The Diocese

Whether you are Anglican, Roman Catholic or Orthodox one thing you would note among the various churches is the unique understanding that the Bishop is the pastor or shepherd of the Diocese. The diocese among your churches is considered the LOCAL CHURCH. This is why according to the aforementioned churches the bishop is said to have to be bishop of a church – a diocese – a local church express of the Church Catholic. The clergy of those churches understand that. Matter of fact, it has only been Second Vatican Council that priests in the Roman Church that pastored the parish churches were called pastors. Before they were called parish priest, rector, vicar, curates, parson or some other name. Because they understood the parish was a division of the local church which the bishop was a pastor of and that they were just extensions of his pastoral ministry.

This is also why among those aforementioned churches their diocesan offices are sometimes called The Diocesan Pastoral Center.

This is a far from the definition of a bishop taught by some of your colleges of bishops and the various reformations today.

A catholic friend in a discussion with me pointed out that – no one person is called pastor in scripture as a title, but they are called Bishop. Acts 20:28 confirms this when the episcopos or bishops [KJV says overseers] are told to pastor the church of God. Keep in mind what I have taught you earlier the scriptures speak of two types of elders [one teaching/preaching – the bishop and the ruling elders – one who rules only] – 1 Timothy 5:17.

Bishops are meant to pastor the church of God, not rule over the church as LORDS over God’s Heritage. They are servants in the truest sense of the word.

The Methodist system bears this out in a unique way. The Methodists are Connexional and have a unique systems of conferences – general, conference, annual, quarterly and charge (church people worship in). It is the Annual Conference led by its bishops which is the basic unit of organization and not the local charge conference of the Methodist church. This is a byproduct of Methodist being descendants of Anglican Church.

The Bishop then does not have to pastor a local congregation, because HIS LOCAL CHURCH IS THE DIOCESE he pastors.

## The Overseers

The Overseers are not a lower house of the episcopacy. This has created much error and strip the temporary appointive character from the office of overseer – also called superintendent, presiding elder, and district elders in some churches. The office does not find its roots in the monsignor of the Roman Church, it actually finds its genesis in the vicar forane (dean of deanery) who oversaw a district of the diocese for the bishop. The office is appointive and without consecration and does not have any episcopal rights given to it. The person is still an elder of the church nor should the person dress as one. They should serve for a term and can be reappointed or another appointed in their place.

Anglicanism has no prelate of honor so no overseers should be wearing Episcopal garb unless they have been consecrated bishop. They can be honored with a colored shirt – blue. A colored cord pectoral with silver cross. They can wear a black cassock with the blue buttons and piping and blue cincture.

It must be understood that when the appointment ceases the use of the special cassock does as well.

## Organization

The Diocese should be organized for Growth. It should have those offices needed for its proper growth and development. All authority in the diocese comes from the bishop and all officers assist him in his pastoral ministry.

Most protestant dioceses do not need multiple auxiliary bishops because our bishops usually do not mediate salvation they simply pastor the church committed to their care. So administrative assistants can be appointed to help the diocesan bishop such as **Vicar General** – the main executive assistant to the bishop who is like the Vice President of the diocese – who works and operate in the diocesan name and **Episcopal Vicars** who assist the bishop and are assigned to regions or vicariates of the diocese. The latter is good when your diocese spans a very large territory. These vicars do not have to be bishops they can be presbyter/elders.

## Ministerial Formation

Your diocese should have a program of study for new clergy and current clergy who shall be license and ordained and who are license and ordained. Such a program should be based on that of the communion of churches you are connected to.

# The Communion

Most communions, reformations, alliances and fellowships today operate as a MEGA DIOCESE. Where the bishops have a title but very little authority to operate beyond consecrating other bishops. Usually one the presiding bishop has any real episcopal authority.

Note whether you called yourself a communion, church, denomination, fellowship, alliance or reformation – you are a denomination in the strictest sense of the word. You all usually hold a common bond of faith, practice, dogma, polity, and discipline. You have a group of clergy and churches so you are a denomination.

Denomination is not necessarily a bad word unless we use it to further division in the body of Christ. Having a tribe isn’t bad…but remember we are many members but yet ONE BODY in Christ.

Your communion needs rules of order to operate and guidelines that your clergy, churches and people will be able to determine what the ethos of the organization is. Such as can your bishops consecrate other bishops without or with your permission that do not belong to your fellowship? Can your bishops ordained clergy for their diocese and are the license uniform or can each diocese issue their own license which must be registered with your communion office? These are important Questions that must be answered.

A communion should issue credential cards to all of its clergy and membership certificates to all of its churches. They should be renewed by a credential fee and report annually.

A communion is led by its presiding bishop who is primate, chief pastor and chief apostle [missionary and church planter] of that organization. He also chairs the House of Bishops and the Annual Convocation of the Communion.

There should be a standard of membership in place for churches, ministries and clergy for your communion. Your communion rules and practices should not be burden to the people of God.

There is no need for multiple assistant presiding bishops. An organization can run without them. The Episcopal Church in the USA has a Presiding Bishop, a Vice-President who is the President of the House of Deputies who is a presbyter and a Vice-President of Operations which is the Executive director of the church and they have over 2.5 million members.

# The Episcopal Ceremonial

Chapter 17 outlines the ceremonial aspect of the office and the forms that need to be use in the life of a bishop. The forms can be used as is or worded to your reformation unique testimony of faith.

After the consecration of a new bishop, it is the custom for a new bishop to write a pastoral missive for his people. This usually begins with an official greeting by the new people mentioning to whom the letter is written to and then with numbered paragraphs the letter is written addressing a specific point.

## Annual Ministerial Report

Churches and clergy need to submit annual report on their ministry annually to their bishop and to the communion. The Assemblies of God require all of their credential holders to submit one annually to keep their credentials current and to stay in good standing.

# Homework

Do a report on how you would organize a diocese and a communion. List the officers and give a brief description of their duties.

Also describe a study program for your clergy. Be Brief.