



Canons of the Communion of International Catholic Communities

These Canons guide the Catholic ministries affiliated and in communion with The Communion of International Catholic Communities. For further information contact The Communion of International Catholic Communities at 972.771.1378 or www.coicc.org



Table of Contents

Preamble		Page 3
Introduction		Page 3
Canon One:	The Ministry	Page 4
Canon Two:	The Archdiocese	Page 10
Canon Three:	The Diocese	Page 11
Canon Four:	The Parish	Page 12
Canon Five:	Worship	Page 15
Canon Six:	Doctrine	Page 16
Canon Seven:	The Sacramental Ministry	Page 17
Canon Eight:	Fundamental Right to Life	Page 19
Canon Nine:	Religious Orders and Communities	Page 20
Canon Ten:	Catholic Concord	Page 20



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Preamble

Our founding vision is to make manifest the Kingdom of God to the nations of the world and to express the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With Sacred Scripture and the traditions of the Church as our guide, we seek to experience the full nature of the living historic Catholic Church in its sacramental communion with a personal God, its charismatic joy in the Spirit, and its evangelistic zeal to share our blessed hope with all people. To those who seek a deeper experience of God in the sacraments, a more profound communion with His Spirit, spiritual growth, community with fellow believers, and service to a broken world, we the Bishops and Priests of the **Communion of International Catholic Communities** (here after referred to as the **COICC**) do hereby present these Canons as a guide for our church. These Canons speak to the particular needs of our present ecclesiastical life and are to be observed under the loving care of our Bishops.

Introduction

The COICC shall be served by Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in Apostolic Succession under the Lordship of Jesus Christ with an Archbishop as a Chief Pastor. Other offices of ministry are recognized, as described in these Canons, and the priesthood of all believers is to be exercised in the whole Church.

Church Structure: The COICC is governed by the College of Bishops, presided over by the Archbishop.

A Diocese is presided over by a Diocesan Bishop. Each Diocese is composed of Parishes and/or Missions. Mission Districts and Deaneries may also be formed within or without a Diocese. Parishes and Missions which may include Minor Orders and Lay Ministries, such as Catechists, Lectors, Lay Preachers, Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Pastoral Leaders are presided over by a Priest, a Deacon or a Bishop. Mission Districts are presided over by an Auxiliary or Coadjutor Bishop, and Deaneries are presided over by a Dean.

Canon Approval and Amendment: These Canons shall be approved by a majority of the Bishops of the COICC and may subsequently be amended by a two-third (2/3) vote of the College of Bishops.



Canon One: The Ministry

I. The Episcopal Office

A. Archbishops

1. The duties of the Archbishop include:
 - a. The setting of vision for the Archdiocese, serving as a “father in the Lord” to the Diocesan Bishops, other clergy and laity of the Archdiocese.
 - b. The calling and oversight of meetings with the Bishops and other clergy of the Archdiocese for the purpose of spiritual nourishment, mutual edification and the implementation of vision for the Archdiocese.
 - c. Visiting the Dioceses of the Church for the purposes of:
 - i. Holding pastoral consultations with the Bishops and, with their advice, with the Lay and Clerical leaders of the jurisdiction,
 - ii. Preaching the Word,
 - iii. Celebrating the Sacraments.
2. The Archbishops shall have the authority to administer guidance and discipline over the bishops, in conformance with Holy Scriptures, apostolic tradition and these Canons of the COICC. Any disciplinary action deemed necessary must be presented to the College of Bishops for ratification.

B. The Presiding Archbishop

1. The presiding Archbishop is appointed by the consensus of the College of Bishops. He serves for life, or until he retires.

C. Diocesan Bishops

1. The Diocesan Bishop shall be first and foremost shepherd of the flock, maintaining the oversight of a parish, developing and initiating its vision and strategy, the said parish being recognized as the Cathedral of the Diocese.
2. No one shall be consecrated Bishop unless he is a priest in the COICC and is thirty years of age or older.



D. Auxiliary and Coadjutor Bishops

- 1.** Auxiliary Bishops shall be nominated by Diocesan Bishops and elected by the consensus of the College of Bishops. The Auxiliary Bishop serves at the direction of a Diocesan Bishop and shall not possess the right of succession.
- 2.** Coadjutor Bishops are nominated by the Diocesan Bishop with the affirmation of the clergy and laity. Coadjutor Bishops are in all ways like Auxiliary Bishops, except they shall possess the right of succession.
- 3.** The duties of Auxiliary and Coadjutor Bishops include:
 - a.** The setting of vision for the Mission.
 - b.** The calling and oversight of meetings with the Clergy of the Mission, both publicly and privately, for their spiritual nourishment and mutual edification.
 - c.** Serving in the College of Bishops
 - d.** The administration of the Mission.

II. Priests

- A.** The candidate for Priesthood shall be a communicant in good standing in the COICC, having reached the age of 24 years, and having completed the preparatory requirements for priesthood during a period of postulancy. (See requirements for ordination).
- B.** Before ordination to the Priesthood, there shall be submitted to the Diocesan Bishop a letter of application from the Candidate and a letter of recommendation from the priest(s) giving pastoral oversight during postulancy. The Candidate shall be recommended to the Bishop by Priests within the Diocese who attest to the call of God on the Candidate's life and abilities to respond to the call.
- C.** The ministry of the Priest shall include:
 - 1.** Pastoral oversight of a Parish and/or other ministries.
 - 2.** Administration of the Sacraments.
 - 3.** Teaching and preaching the Word of God.
 - 4.** Serving the Diocese by working closely with the Bishop in unity with other Priests and Deacons.
 - 5.** Pastoral oversight of those preparing for the Diaconate.

6. A priest may serve in his ministry for life, until retirement.



III. Deacons

- A.** The Candidate for the Diaconate must be a communicant, at least 21 years of age, and in good standing in the COICC, having completed the preparatory requirements for the Diaconate during a period of formation.
- B.** Before ordination to the Diaconate, there shall be submitted to the Bishop a letter of application from the Candidate and a letter of recommendation from the priest(s) or deacon(s) giving pastoral oversight during a period of formation.
- C.** The ministry of the Deacon includes:
 - 1.** Caring for the sick, poor and needy.
 - 2.** Assisting the Priest or Bishop in the administration of the Sacraments.
 - 3.** Teaching and preaching the Word of God.
 - 4.** Assisting in Parochial administration.

IV. Candidacy for Holy Orders

- A.** Upon receipt of application for Holy Orders, the Bishop and at least two priests shall interview the applicant. Upon the acceptance of the application for Holy Orders, the Bishop shall admit the applicant to Formation, working closely with the Candidate to the order of Priest to develop and monitor a program of preparation for Holy Orders. The Bishop or a Priest or a Deacon may work closely with a Candidate to the order of Deacon to develop and monitor a program of preparation for Holy Orders.
- B.** Preparation for Holy Orders shall include theological training, practical experience, psychological evaluation, and spiritual formation, with pastoral guidance provided throughout the period of preparation, including forensic background check.



- C.** If the Candidate does not hold a baccalaureate degree, but has shown such proficiency in an occupation or profession as gives promise of usefulness in Holy Orders, the Candidate shall be required to obtain a baccalaureate degree, or to read for Holy Orders and pass an examination on essential subjects.

V. Receiving Clergy from Other Christian Bodies

A. Non-Apostolic Succession

- 1.** If a person ordained or licensed by another Christian body not in apostolic succession of Bishops should apply to the COICC for Holy Orders, a Bishop and at least two priests shall interview said clergy, giving consideration to his knowledge of Scripture, theology, Church history, liturgy and practical pastoral experience.
- 2.** The Candidate having fulfilled the requirements of Candidacy, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate to the office to which he is called.

B. Apostolic Succession

- 1.** If a person ordained in apostolic succession should apply to the COICC for Incardination, a Bishop and at least two priests shall interview said clergy. If the Candidate has met the requirements for ordination, his orders shall be received.
- 2.** If the candidate has not met the requirements for incardination, he may be received as a Candidate.

VI. Minor Orders and Ministries

- A.** Minor orders and Ministries including Catechists, Lector, Acolyte, Eucharistic Ministers, and Pastoral Leaders may be appointed by the Bishop, with guidelines for the training and selection of such persons being established by the Bishop.
- B.** The ordained ministry is called chiefly to equip and lead the Church. The whole people of God are a royal and priestly company who offer to God the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving through the stewardship of their time, energy, money, and spiritual gifts. In all its life and work the COICC shall encourage the ministry of the whole Church of God.



VII. Correction and Grievance

- A.** The correction of communicants, Deacons, Priests, and Bishops shall be administered by the authoritative council or body immediate to the situation, and in consultation with the Bishop immediate to the situation.
- B.** Grievances shall also be heard by the authoritative council immediate to the situation, with consultation with the Bishop immediate to the situation.
- C.** All corrections and grievances may be appealed to the next higher level of authority, and may, at that authority's discretion, be entertained or dismissed.

VIII. Presiding bodies of Ministry

- A.** The College of Bishops
 - 1.** The College of Bishops is comprised of all active Bishops of the COICC.
 - 2.** The College of Bishops shall have jurisdiction throughout the COICC.
 - 3.** The College of Bishops shall meet at least annually.
 - 4.** The College of Bishops shall be presided over by the Archbishop.
- B.** The Parish Council
 - 1.** The Parish Council is comprised of the Pastor of the Parish, and additional members appointed by the Pastor, or as directed by the By-Laws of the Parish.
 - 2.** The Parish Council shall have jurisdiction over the parish in accordance with the bi-laws of the local parish.
 - 3.** The Parish Council shall meet at least annually.
 - 4.** The Parish Council shall be presided over by the Pastor.



Canon Two: Archdioceses

Summary: An Archdiocese consists of all Dioceses in a defined geographic area, and shall be under the direction of an Archbishop. The Archbishop, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons shall work together to establish and prosper God's Church in the area of the Archdiocese.

I. The formation of an Archdiocese

- A.** Additional Archdioceses may be formed when several dioceses have sufficient need to work together for the greater good of the Church.
- B.** An Archdiocese is formed by the consensus of the College of Bishops.

II. The Archbishop

- A.** The Archbishop of an Archdiocese shall be elected by the College of Bishops from nominees submitted by the ordinary Bishops of the dioceses of the new archdioceses.
- B.** An Archbishop shall have oversight of the Archdiocese but, shall also have particular leadership in the life of his Diocese and Parish.
- C.** The duties of the Archbishop include the pastoral care of the Diocesan Bishops within the Archdiocese, working closely with them to establish and implement the vision and work of the Church at both archdiocesan and diocesan levels.
- D.** The Archbishop shall be under the authority of the presiding Archbishop and the College of Bishops.

III. Funding

- A.** The Archdiocese shall be funded from the Tithe of the Dioceses.
- B.** The Archdiocese shall tithe to the COICC.



IV. Recordkeeping

- A.** The Archdiocese shall present an annual report to the office of the presiding Archbishop based on the compilation of diocesan reports by April 30th.

Canon Three: The Diocese

Summary: A Diocese shall be formed within geographical boundaries established by the College of Bishops and shall be formed under the direction of a Diocesan Bishop. The Bishop shall chair the Bishop's Council, and the Bishop, Priests and Deacons shall work together to establish and prosper God's Church in the area of the Diocese. It is the goal of the COICC that the Diocese shall be of such size and organization as to facilitate meaningful pastoral oversight of the Parishes and Clergy by the Diocesan Bishop.

I. The Formation of the Diocese

- A.** A Diocese shall be formed of Parishes and/or Missions within geographical boundaries established by the College of Bishops.
- B.** A Diocese may be formed from:
 - 1.** The whole or any part of one or more Missionary Districts.
 - 2.** The division of an existing Diocese when such division would better facilitates the Ministries of the Church.
- C.** A geographic area may be designated a Missionary District with an Auxiliary or Coadjutor Bishop being appointed by the Diocesan Bishop until the development of sufficient Parishes and Missions to constitute the formation of new Dioceses.
- D.** Deaneries may be established within the Dioceses, with Deans being appointed by the Diocesan Bishop to administer oversight in his jurisdiction. The Deanery shall receive a portion of funds from the tithes of the Parishes to the Diocese, that portion being established by the Diocesan Bishop.
 - 1.** A Dean shall be a Priest of that diocese.



II. The Diocesan Bishop

- A.** The Bishop of the Diocese (also known as the Ordinary) shall not only have oversight of the many Parishes of the Diocese but, shall have particular leadership in the life of his Parish.
- B.** The Parish of the Diocesan Bishop shall be recognized as the Cathedral Church of the Diocese.
- C.** The Bishop is the ordinary authority on all matters of doctrine, worship, pastoral care, church order and discipline within the Diocese.
- D.** The Diocesan Bishop shall be under the authority of the Archbishop of the Archdiocese in which the Diocese resides, and shall look to him for pastoral oversight and shared vision.
- E.** No Bishop may perform Episcopal ministry in a Diocese without the express permission of the Diocesan Bishop.

III. Funding

- A.** The Diocese shall be funded from the tithe of member parishes and missions. The Diocese shall in turn tithe to the COICC.

IV. Recordkeeping

- A.** The Diocese shall present an annual report to the Archdiocese based on the compilation of Parochial Reports and including other information concerning Diocesan life.
- B.** This report shall be delivered to the Archdiocese no later than March 31st.

Canon Four: The Parish

Summary: The Parish as the local expression of the COICC shall consist of at least seven families who under the direction of the Bishop covenant to share in the life of the Diocese through worship, ministry, financial support and prayer.



I. The Formation of the Parish

- A.** A Parish shall not have geographical boundaries and shall consist of all persons enrolled as communicants therein.
- B.** Any congregation desiring to be received into union with the Church shall declare its desire thereof, duly certified of said congregation by means of the Letter of Intent. This being done, it shall be at the discretion of the Bishop to admit the Parish into union with the Diocese as either a Mission or Full Communion Parish.
- C.** In the organization of a new Parish, the Parish shall be a Mission Parish for at least six months and maintain a membership of at least seven families.
- D.** The Parish shall begin tithing to the Dioceses upon beginning a formal relationship. Missionary Priests who serve Parishes that are not yet tithing shall personally tithe to the Diocese until the Parish begins tithing. Unique situations will be addressed individually by the Diocesan Bishop.

II. The Full Communion Parish

- A.** A new Parish having participated in the life of the Diocese for at least six months maintaining at least seven families and having covenanted to tithe to the Diocese from the tithes and general offerings collected, the Parish shall be received as a Full Communion Parish.
- B.** The reception of the Parish into Full Communion shall be witnessed by the visitation of the Bishop for the confirmation and/or reception of the communicants.

III. The Calling of a Pastor

- A.** The Pastor must be approved by the Diocesan Bishop.
- B.** The Parish Council may submit their recommendation (if any) of a new pastor, looking to the Diocesan Bishop for fatherly direction and oversight.



IV. Ownership of Property

- A.** The ownership of the property of the Parish shall be determined by the Constitution and By-Laws of the local Parish.

V. Parish Government

- A.** The Pastor of the Parish has full authority in all Parish concerns in conformance with the Holy Scriptures, Apostolic Tradition and the Canons of the COICC as well as the Parish By-Laws.
- B.** Councils – The Parish Council shall function according to the By-Laws of the local Parish.
 - 1.** New members shall be confirmed by the Pastor.
 - 2.** The Pastor shall be an ex officio member of the Parish Council.
- C.** The spirit of government in every Parish should be that of selflessness with the Clergy and other leadership working together in a spirit of concord, a bonded community freely and generously consenting to the Lord’s leadership under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

VI. Recordkeeping

- A.** Parishes shall keep an accurate Parish Register, recording baptisms (with parentage, date of birth, sponsors or witnesses, date of rite, etc.), confirmations, marriages, burials, number of communicants and other important information.
- B.** Parishes shall keep accurate records of financial contributions.
- C.** Parochial Reports:
 - 1.** It shall be the duty of every Pastor to deliver to the Dioceses a report of the preceding year including the following information:
 - a.** Number of Baptisms.
 - b.** Number of Confirmations.
 - c.** Number of Marriages.
 - d.** Number of Burials.
 - e.** Number of Communicants within the Parish.
 - f.** Treasure’s report for the past year.
 - g.** Other official acts.
 - h.** Other information concerning the state of the Parish life.



2. The year reported shall be the calendar year.
3. The report should be received by the Diocese no later than February 15th.

Canon Five: Worship

Summary: Worship in the COICC shall be liturgical, charismatic, and evangelical with suitable vestments worn by the Clergy.

I. Liturgical

- A. The principal worship service in the COICC Church shall be the weekly Celebration of Holy Eucharist on the Lord's Day.
 1. The service shall follow the shape of the historic liturgy of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.
 2. The Eucharist shall be celebrated with the elements ordained by Jesus Christ himself, bread and wine.
- B. The Approved Rites of the Church include those found in the Anglican, Roman and Eastern Rites, and other traditional/historic rites, as approved by the Diocesan Bishop.
- C. In keeping with the spirit of the early church, the shape of the historic liturgy shall be followed, always maintaining "that blessed liberty where with Christ hath made us free." We reject the introduction or use of any modern liberal liturgical revisions which detract from the historic faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.
- D. Vestments which are suitable to an occasion of high praise should be worn by the Clergy. The normative attire for the principal Sunday service is:
 1. **Priests:** Alb and Stole
 2. **Deacons:** Alb and Stole or Cassock, Surplice and Stole.
 3. **Celebrant:** In addition to Priest's attire, the Celebrant wears a Chasuble.
 4. Other forms of traditional vesture are suitable.



II. Charismatic

- A. The worship offered to God in the COICC is not only liturgical but also charismatic. As such, the worship event should lend itself to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the congregation. This includes freedom of prayer and praise, operation in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and regular prayer for the sick accompanied by anointing of oil.
- B. All worship music should bring glory to God. Recognizing the various backgrounds and cultures of the individual parishes, it is nevertheless desirable that the worship music should represent both the rich tradition of the historic faith and the contemporary expressions of praise.

Canon Six: Doctrine

Summary: The COICC adheres to the unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first eleven centuries of its existence.

I. The Authority of Holy Scriptures

- A. The COICC recognizes the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God.
 - 1. The Holy Scriptures and Apostolic Tradition serve as the authority on all matters of faith and practice.

II. Catholicity

- A. The essentials for Catholicity are:
 - 1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God are the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
 - 2. The Apostles' Creed as the Baptismal Profession and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.



3. An Episcopate which must be able to trace its Apostolic Succession back to the Apostles.
4. The seven Sacraments of the historic Catholic Church are affirmed and practiced.

III. The Spirit of Theology

- A. The COICC recognizes that doctrine is not only intellectual assent but, a living relationship with Almighty God and His Church.
- B. It is incumbent upon the leadership of the COICC to develop and maintain an atmosphere for growth and understanding in theology and doctrine. We adhere to the classical statement of ecumenicity. "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." While celebrating the diversity within orthodoxy, we also strive to avoid a schismatic spirit which would elevate non-essentials or non-consensual beliefs and practices above the Father's will that there be a spiritual and visible unity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Canon Seven: The Sacramental Ministry

I. Baptism

The first rite of initiation into the church, which signifies the cleansing from original sin, and conferral of sanctifying grace through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

II. Confirmation

Through the anointing with oil and the laying on of hands, the bishop or duly authorized priest confers the graces of the Holy Spirit upon a Christian. In receiving the Spirit, the Christian is strengthened with the gifts he will need to take on an adult role in the Christian community.



III. Holy Eucharist

Holy Eucharist is the celebration through which we renew and participate in Christ's birth, sacrificial death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. During this celebration we receive the Real Presence of the actual Body and Blood of Christ, given to us under the forms of bread and wine for our spiritual nourishment. The practice of the COICC is that all baptized believers are welcomed to the Table of the Lord.

IV. Confession

We acknowledge that a sincere prayer of sorrow to our God will bring the response for His forgiveness. We also believe that Christ left us a special sacrament which is a powerful encounter with Jesus Christ and His loving forgiveness. Also called the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Penance can be celebrated in two ways:

- A.** Individual absolution is usually preceded by a Christian's confession of personal sins. The priest's prayer of forgiveness or absolution is said for each sincere penitent, at which time his additional gift of grace is imparted.
- B.** General Absolution is sacramental absolution, given once to a large number of people, especially when the number of penitents is too great to allow for individual confession of sins.

V. Sacrament of the Sick

The Sacrament of the Sick consists of the anointing of sick members of the Christian community with oil and prayers for their healing and forgiveness. The effects of this sacrament are strength and peace for the Christian in the face of his illness, physical healing and recovery according to God's will.

VI. The Sacrament of Matrimony

Marriage, understood as a permanent covenant between a baptized man and a baptized woman, is a sacrament of the Church. As a covenant, marriage is a lifelong, permanent commitment, embodying obligations that transcend the immediate feelings or wishes of the husband and wife. By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, Christ himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God.



Recognizing the nearly complete breakdown of moral norms in this society, the Church understands that many persons will come to her having experienced the tragedy of divorce. It is the commitment of the Church and her bishops, in every case, to work toward the healing and restoration of the marriage covenant.

VII. Holy Orders

Is the Sacrament through which the Church sets aside people for the special service of ministry to the Christian community. This sacramental act is called ordination. There are three ranks or major orders in the ministry of the Church.

They are: Deacon
Priest
Bishop

Canon Eight: Fundamental Right to Life

- A.** The rights of human beings flow from their transcendent dignity as creatures made in the image and likeness of God. Certain fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person precede those of society. Societies and cultures must recognize that these rights – foremost the right to life – have their foundation in God and are not derived from, nor subject to, the civil order.
- 1.** Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his/her existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person among which, is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life. (Jer. 1.5; Ps. 139.15).
 - 2.** Converts and other persons with previous involvement in the tragedy of abortion must be met with open arms in the love and forgiveness of Christ. Pastoral care must be wisely and carefully applied in these cases with the goal of leading these persons through the sacrament of reconciliation to full communion with the faithful.



B. Euthanasia

Euthanasia is morally wrong. Thus an act or omission Euthanasia itself, or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering, constitutes a murder, gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, the Creator.

Canon Nine: Religious Orders and Communities

Summary: Religious Orders and Communities may be established and maintained according to the approval of the Archbishop and under the direction of a Bishop Visitor or Protector.

I. Religious Orders

- A.** A Religious Order of this Church is a society of Christians in communion with the Archbishop who voluntarily commits themselves for life or a term in years.
 - 1.** To obedience to their Rule and Constitution.
- B.** A Religious Order in order to be recognized must have at least six professed members and must be approved by the Archbishop.
- C.** The Bishop Visitor or Protector shall be the guardian of the Constitution of the Order and shall serve as an arbiter in matters in which the Order or its members cannot resolve through its normal processes.
- D.** Any person(s) under vows in a Religious Order, having exhausted the normal processes of the Order, may petition the Bishop Visitor or Protector for dispensation from those vows.
- E.** The Religious Orders shall tithe to the Bishop Visitor or Protector.

Canon Ten: Catholic Concord

In obedience to the call of our Lord to Christian unity the COICC seeks to have dialogue and fellowship with all Christian bodies everywhere and to enjoy intercommunion with those bodies which hold to the Catholic Faith.