

Roman Rota rather than the Bishop's own tribunal. In addition, certain matrimonial matters must come to the Roman Rota rather than the local tribunal (i.e., those involving Royalty).

Pontifical Councils

Pontifical Council for the Laity

This council is responsible for matters relating to the coordination and promotion of the apostolate and Christian life of the laity.

Pontifical Council for Christian Unity

This Council is responsible for ecumenical dialogue and relations with other Christian Churches.

Pontifical Council for the Family

This Council is responsible for protecting and promoting the Family. It assists Bishops throughout the world in Family matters, organizes conferences on Family issues, etc.

Pontifical Council for Life

This Council was constituted by Pope John Paul II to advise him on issues relating to the sanctity of human life. Its members are bishops, theologians and laypeople whose expertise or talents lie in the development of the culture of life the Holy Father called for in *Evangelium Vitae*.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

This Council is responsible for promoting peace and justice in the world according to the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching.

Pontifical Council "Cor Unum"

This Council is responsible for expressing the care of the Church toward those in need. It fosters charitable works by the faithful, assists those in urgent or calamitous situations, and those in special need of assistance.

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples

This Council is responsible for the care of people who are transient (such as the gypsies in Europe) and who are not readily cared for within traditional diocesan structures.

It is also responsible for the Apostleship of the Sea.

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health-Care Workers

This Council is primarily responsible for assisting Health-Care Workers, their spiritual needs and those of their patients, assisting local churches to train and regulate the activities of hospital chaplains, etc.

Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts

This Council's role is to advise on matters of the interpretation of canon law.

Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue

This Council is responsible for ecumenical matters concerning the Church's relations with non-Christian Faiths.

Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers

This Council is responsible for the Church's relations with those who do not believe.

Pontifical Council for Culture

This Council facilitates relations between the Holy See and the Cultural World.

Pontifical Council for Social Communications

This Council is responsible for matters relating to the use of the media for the spreading of the Gospel.

Offices

Office of the Camerlengo

This Office takes on importance during the vacancy of the Holy See (after a Pope dies and before a new Pope is elected).

Office for the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See

This Office is responsible for administering the Holy See's property and goods.

Office for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See

This is essentially the Vatican Treasury, administering funds donated by the Dioceses around the World, income from investments and the proceeds of the annual Peter's Pence collection.

Other Curial Bodies

Prefecture of the Papal Household

The Prefect of the Papal Household is responsible for arranging all audiences with the Pope and administering the Papal apartments.

Pontifical Master of Ceremonies

The Pontifical Master of Ceremonies is responsible for organizing all papal liturgies and assisting the Pope at those liturgies. He also organizes the Wednesday General Audience in the Pope Paul VI Auditorium. This is open to the General public (but you must obtain tickets, they are free, but have to be requested in advance).

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The Roman Curia

The Roman Curia is the ensemble of the dicasteries and bodies that assist the Pope in the exercise of his supreme pastoral office for the good and in service of the Church throughout the world and of the particular Churches, assisting in the maintenance of the unity of the Faith and the communion of the People of God and in the promotion of the proper mission of the Church in the world.

There are a number of departments of the Roman Curia, each with their own responsibilities and competencies. The most important parts of the Curia are the Secretariat of State and the various Congregations. Then, there are Pontifical Councils and Pontifical Commissions.

Secretariat of State

The Secretariat of State is headed by the Cardinal Secretary of State. This is the most important body within the Roman Curia. It is divided into two sections.

The first section (the "General Section") is responsible for:

Affairs relating to the day-to-day service of the Papal office; examining matters which fall outside the competence of any of the other dicasteries of the Holy See and the bodies of the Holy See; regulating the functions and activities of representatives of the Holy See; distributing encyclicals, apostolic constitutions, apostolic letters and the like to the bishops throughout the world; publication of the "Acta Apostolicae Sedis" -- the official record of all official documents and acts; the official communication of Pontifical acts and activities of the Curia (the Press office); overseeing the official media organs of the Holy See, the daily newspaper "L'Osservatore Romano", Vatican Radio and the Vatican Television Center; maintaining the statistical bureau of the Church and publishing the data from time to time.

The second section (the "Section for Relations with States") is responsible for the Holy See's diplomatic corps, its relations with civil society, negotiating concordats with States relating to the Church's position and status, ensuring representation of the Holy See before international organizations.

Congregations

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is the next most important dicastery of the Roman Curia.

This Congregation used to be called the "Holy Office" and before that it was known as the "Holy Roman Inquisition" (not to be confused with the Spanish Inquisition!).

The primary duty and responsibility of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and preserve the Catholic Faith throughout the Church. Anything touching on the doctrine of the faith or on morals is within the competence of this dicastery.

In particular, the Congregation has the responsibility of examining the writings of theologians to ensure that they are not inconsistent with Catholic doctrine and, even, of disciplining theologians who refuse to retract views considered erroneous or perilous to the Faith.

If required, the Congregation may publish declarations dealing with certain questions of faith and morals. The Congregation has issued a number of particularly important documents over the years such as the "*responsum ad dubium*" clarifying that in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* the Holy Father was merely restating a teaching which is part of the infallible Deposit of Faith, the Declaration on Certain Questions of Sexual Ethics, the Declaration on Euthanasia.

There is also a section of the Congregation responsible for the investigation and verification of private revelations (such as Marian apparitions). The Congregation has recently declared that the writings of Mrs. Vassula Ryden (widely disseminated throughout the world) are not the result of revelations by Our Lord to her.

The Congregation is responsible for the Pontifical Biblical Commission and the International Theological Commission.

Congregation for the Eastern Churches

This Congregation has full responsibility for matters pertaining to any of the Eastern Rites of the Church and their governance. It has competence over all matters (which in the Latin rite would be governed by one of the other dicasteries). The only dicasteries that retain their competence with respect to the Eastern Churches are the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the Apostolic Penitentiary, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Tribunal of the Roman Rota and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. So, all matters which would normally be within the competence of say, the Congregation for Bishops or the Congregation for the Clergy, are dealt with by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

Congregation for Divine Worship and

the Discipline of the Sacraments

This Congregation has primary responsibility (subject to any competency of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) for the Sacred Liturgy and the Sacraments. They must prepare all rubrics, approve translations, etc.

As an example, though, of the overriding competency of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the recent rejection of use of the New Revised Standard Version of Scripture in the liturgy in the United States was a directive from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith based on theological difficulties with the text rather than a directive of this Congregation.

The Congregation also has competency in anything that regards Sacred Art or Sacred Music. It is responsible for regulating the veneration of holy relics and confirming Patron Saints.

Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei"

This Commission was established by Pope John Paul II in 1988 when he introduced the indult for priests to say the Tridentine Mass as a response to the ex-communication of Archbishop Lefebvre and the members of the Society of St. Pius X. The role of the commission is to assist the faithful in the establishment of Indult masses and parishes in their dioceses.

Congregation for the Causes of Saints

This Congregation is responsible for the investigation and examination of the lives and the writings of candidates for beatification and canonization. It is responsible for verifying and preserving sacred relics.

Congregation for Bishops

The Congregation for Bishops is responsible for the delineation, division, establishment and merging of Dioceses, for the consideration of candidates to be appointed to Dioceses and the recommendation of candidates to the Holy Father. It is also responsible in a more general sense for assisting the Bishops in their governance of their own Dioceses. It receives their quinquennial reports and organizes their visits "*ad limina Apostolorum*".

Pontifical Commission for Latin America

This Commission is charged with assisting the various Dicasteries of the Roman Curia by studying the life of the Church and its development in Latin America. It operates under the auspices of the Congregation for Bishops.

Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

This is the Congregation responsible for missionary activity throughout the world. It is the Congregation which used once to be called the *Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith).

Congregation for the Clergy

This Congregation is responsible for matters relating to secular priests and deacons (i.e., those incardinated in particular Dioceses not members of Religious Orders). One of its chief roles is to try and ensure a more equitable distribution of priests throughout the world. It is also responsible for the laicization of priests wanting to leave the priesthood.

Pontifical Commission for the Preservation of the Artistic and Historical Patrimony of the Church

Operating under the aegis of the Congregation for the Clergy, this Commission is responsible for preserving the artistic and historical heritage of the entire Church, including the Vatican Archives and the Vatican Library.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

This Congregation has responsibility for matters concerning religious orders and the priests and religious belonging to them. It is also responsible for the establishment of new orders, and for reviewing changes to the constitutions of orders (where approval by Rome is required).

It is also responsible for those members of the laity who are members of Tertiary Orders, and for associations of the faithful which qualify for official recognition.

Congregation for Catholic Education

This Congregation is responsible for seminaries, Catholic Universities, Pontifical Institutes and Catholic Education generally.

Tribunals

Apostolic Penitentiary

The Apostolic Penitentiary is responsible for all matters concerning the "internal forum" and indulgences. It is also responsible for providing priests to hear confessions to the Patriarchal Basilicas of Rome. During a Conclave, the Major Penitentiary (the Cardinal who heads the Apostolic Penitentiary) is one of the only Cardinals permitted to receive messages from his office or to return to it if required.

Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signature

This is a tribunal of appeal from the Tribunal of the Roman Rota. It is the highest court of appeal available in matters concerning the Church's tribunals.

Tribunal of the Roman Rota

This is a court of appeal from local Tribunals, and a court of first instance where there is no competency with local Tribunals. For example, any matter concerning a bishop would have to be dealt with by the