

THE GIFT OF A SHEPHERD

Prayers for use at the time of the retirement of a Bishop
and in preparation for the appointment and installation of a successor

Introduction

The appointment of a new bishop is an important moment in the life of a diocese. It will have been preceded by a period of preparation and consultation. The whole process will usually begin with the diocesan bishop either offering his resignation or being transferred to another dioceses. Each of these stages is a time for prayer; in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the regular opportunities which arise within the liturgy or at meetings.

The following suggestions are offered to the parishes, schools and religious communities of a Diocese. It follows three stages:

1. The resignation of the bishop and where the consultation process has begun or the transfer of the bishop to another see — a time of thanksgiving for the ministry of the bishop and the life of the local Church
2. The period of consultation and preparation where the diocese is either the care of the bishop or an administrator — a time for reflection and discernment and for calling upon the Holy Spirit to guide the Church.
3. The announcement of the bishop-elect — a time of prayer for the ministry of the Bishop-elect and God's blessing on the diocese.

Mass Texts

Stage 1

Masses for Various Needs and Occasion, No 49, Mass Text B, Other Prayers – For giving thanks to God

[*Roman Missal*, p.1387]

Common Preface IV – Praise, the gift of God [*Roman Missal*, pp650-651]

or

Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for Various Needs – 2 – God guides his Church on the Way of Salvation [*Roman Missal*, pp810-815] with its own Preface

Every Parish is encouraged at some point to celebrate this Mass on a ferial weekday (with the readings from the ferial day or from the appropriate section in Lectionary Volume 3) to give thanks for the resigning Bishop and his ministry in that Diocese (and also in other Dioceses, if applicable).

Stage 2

Masses for Various Needs and Occasion, No 4, For the Election of a Pope or Bishop
[*Roman Missal*, pp.1308-1309]

Preface 1 of Apostles [*Roman Missal*, pp628-629]

or

Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for Various Needs – 1 – The Church on the Path to Unity [*Roman Missal*, pp804-809] with its own Preface

Every Parish is encouraged at some point to celebrate a Mass on a ferial weekday (with the readings from the ferial day or from the appropriate section in Lectionary Volume 3) to pray for guidance for Holy Father and those responsible to him for finding a suitable candidate to be the next Bishop of the Diocese.

Stage 3

Masses for Various Needs and Occasion, No 3, For the Bishop
[*Roman Missal*, pp.1306-1307]

Preface: The Priesthood of Christ and the Ministry of Priests [*Roman Missal*, pp324-327]

or

Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for Various Needs – 1 – The Church on the Path to Unity [*Roman Missal*, pp804-809] with its own Preface

After the new Bishop has been ordained or installed every Parish is encouraged at some point in the days afterwards to celebrate this Mass on a ferial weekday (with the readings from the ferial day or from the appropriate section in Lectionary Volume 3).

The Eucharistic Prayer

Where the diocesan bishop remains as Ordinary or as Administrator of the diocese he continues to be prayed for in the Eucharistic Prayer in the usual way.

A diocesan bishop who has retired (unless he is diocesan Administrator) is not mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer.

If the Administrator of the diocese is a bishop he is prayed for in the Eucharistic Prayer in the usual way. (e.g. N., our Pope and N., our Bishop)

If the Administrator of the diocese is not a bishop he is not mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer and the phrase is omitted. (e.g. together with N. our Pope and all the clergy.)

Once the name of the Bishop-elect has been announced he is not prayed for in the Eucharistic Prayer until he has taken possession of the Diocese and been ordained or installed in the Cathedral.

Bidding Prayer

Intentions for the new Bishop and his future ministry can be included most aptly in the Bidding Prayer.

Further intentions might include for the retired Bishop(s) of the diocese.

For example:

For N, as he prepares to take up his office
as shepherd of this Diocese,
that, guided by the Holy Spirit,
his ministry among us will be blessed.

For N, our Bishop Emeritus,
as he prepares for the next stage of his priestly ministry,
that he will be sustained by our prayers.

Prayers

The following prayers might also be used at meetings and other gatherings of the faithful as appropriate:

Prayer for the Election of a Bishop

O God, eternal shepherd,
who govern your flock with unflinching care,
grant in your boundless fatherly love
a pastor for your Church
who will please you by his holiness
and to us show watchful care.
Through Christ our Lord.

[From the Mass for the Election of a Pope or a Bishop]

For the Diocese

O God, who in each pilgrim Church throughout the world
make visible the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,
graciously grant
that your faithful may be so united to their shepherd
and gathered together in the Holy Spirit
through the Gospel and the Eucharist,
as to worthily embody the universality of your people
and become a sign and instrument in the world
of the presence of Christ.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

[From the Mass For the Church – For the Particular Church]

Prayers for the new Bishop on appointment

O God, eternal shepherd of the faithful,
who tend your Church in countless ways
and rule over her in love,
grant, we pray, that N., your servant,
whom you have set over your people,
may preside in the place of Christ
over the flock whose shepherd he is,
and be faithful as a teacher of doctrine,
a Priest of sacred worship
and as one who serves them by governing.
Through Christ our Lord.

Or:

O God, shepherd and ruler of all the faithful,
look favourably on your servant,
whom you have set at the head
of your Church of N. as her shepherd,
grant, we pray, that by word and example
he may be of service to those over whom he presides,
so that, together with the flock entrusted to his care,
he may come to eternal life.
Through Christ our Lord.

Or:

O Lord, who for the feeding of your flock
have set your servant N. over it as a successor to the Apostles,
grant him, we pray,
a spirit of counsel and fortitude, a spirit of knowledge and piety,
so that, by faithfully governing the people entrusted to him,
he may build up in the world the sacrament of the Church.
Through Christ our Lord.

[From the Mass For the Bishop]

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<http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RitePontifical.shtml#Ordination>

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