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## WHEN A DIOCESE IS VACANT – HOW BISHOPS ARE APPOINTED

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### Once The Diocese Becomes Vacant

#### Identifying Potential Appointees

Bishops regularly provide names of priests who might be suitable to be bishops. Those names might be discussed by bishops in that province. The names are sent to the Apostolic Nuncio.



#### Preparing a Diocesan Report

The Apostolic Nuncio asks for a report on the Diocese to be prepared. The report profiles the diocese and identifies its needs and includes the names of people who might be consulted – clergy, religious and laity – on the appointment of a new bishop.



#### Investigating Potential Appointees

The Apostolic Nuncio conducts an investigation into the priests suggested for appointment as bishops. That will include consultation with bishops, local clergy, laity and religious. This is conducted with strict confidentiality.



#### Preparation of a *Terna*

The Apostolic Nuncio prepares a report to be sent to the Dicastery for Bishops in Rome. It lists three candidates, called a *terna*, and makes a recommendation. It could include priests' and bishops' names.



#### Review of the *Terna*

The Dicastery for Bishops reviews a summary of the report, with a vote taken on the three candidates. The Dicastery can accept the recommendation of the Nuncio, prefer another candidate, or ask that a new *terna* be prepared.



#### The Appointment is Made

The head of the Dicastery meets with Pope Francis to present the recommendation. The Pope may accept the Dicastery's preference, choose another candidate, ask that another *terna* be prepared or even name his own candidate.



#### The Announcement is Made

The Dicastery for Bishops advises the Apostolic Nuncio of the outcome, who then contacts the nominated priest. A priest may decline the appointment; he must have a compelling reason. The announcement is made, usually weeks later, by the Holy See at noon Rome time. Local announcements by the Bishops Conference (and the receiving Diocese) are made simultaneously.

*NOTE: This process applies to the appointment of Latin-Rite Dioceses. The process can differ for Eastern-Rite Churches.*