



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

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## **ORGANIZATION AND OFFICE**



## DMOCESE OF AUSTIN

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### **Diocesan Mission Statement**

*We, the Diocese of Austin,  
through the Word and Eucharist,  
prayer, formation, education,  
social ministries and advocacy,  
embrace diverse cultures  
throughout the diocese;  
so together,  
as the Catholic Church,  
we may continue  
the mission of Christ  
in the world today.*



## DIocese OF AUStIN

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### Diocesan Coat of Arms

The diocesan coat of arms represents the 25 counties that made up the Diocese of Austin at its creation. The diocese extends north to south from West to San Marcos and east to west from Bryan/College Station to Mason. The coat of arms was designed by Bishop Louis J. Reicher at the time the diocese was established in 1947.

The custom of having a coat of arms goes back to medieval times when rulers, officials, large land owners, etc., would have the shields of their soldiers emblazoned with a design symbolizing the family. Since the diocese and its see city take the name of Stephen F. Austin, Bishop Reicher chose to utilize part of the Austin family coat of arms. This consisted of a horizontal bar charged with three crosses between one chevronel line above and another at the base.

He altered the coloring, however, utilizing the colors symbolic of the Blessed Virgin Mary, white and blue, in view of the fact that the cathedral of the diocese is dedicated to her. These are also the principal colors of the state seal of Texas.

The star above has a double significance. It symbolizes both the Lone Star of Texas and our Blessed Lady under the title *Stella Maris*, “Star of the Sea.”

The rose on the lower chevronel reminds us of the shield of the Galveston Diocese, from which most of the Austin Diocese was taken in 1947. This rose, copied from the field of the mother diocese of the state, symbolizes the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of *Rosa Mystica*, “Mystical Rose” and is a symbol of new birth as it was in the beginning of the church.

The wavy lines symbolize the Colorado River, which passes through the center of the diocese, and the golden heart symbolizes St. Augustine (Austin) of Hippo. The transfixing arrows, one descending and one ascending, represent St. Austin’s love for God and God’s love for St. Austin as a great doctor of the Church.



## DIocese OF AUSTIN

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### **Diocesan Offices and Structure**

#### I. Diocesan Offices

##### A. Bishop

1. The diocesan Bishop, as successor to the apostles, is the teacher of doctrine, the priest of sacred worship, and the minister of governance in the diocese entrusted to his care. The Bishop exercises his role as pastor in the diocese in hierarchical communion with the Supreme Pontiff, the Bishop of Rome.
2. As teacher of doctrine, the Bishop teaches and illustrates the truths of faith that are to be believed and applied to life.
3. The Bishop is attentive to all Christ's faithful entrusted to his care. He has a special concern for the priests who are his helpers and counselors in ministry. The diocesan Bishop seeks to promote the holiness of Christ's faithful according to the vocation of each. Since he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, he assists those in his care to grow in grace through the celebration of the sacraments and through living the paschal mystery.
4. The Bishop governs the particular Church entrusted to him with legislative, executive, and judicial power in accordance with the law. He ensures that abuses do not creep into ecclesiastical discipline, especially concerning the ministry of the word, the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals, the worship of God and the cult of the saints, and the administration of goods.
5. In all juridical transactions of the diocese the diocesan Bishop acts in the person of the diocese.

B. Vicar General

1. The vicar general is appointed by the diocesan Bishop.
2. He assists the Bishop in the governance of the whole diocese.
  - a. In virtue of his office, the vicar general has the same executive power throughout the whole diocese as that which belongs by law to the diocesan Bishop. That is, he can perform all administrative acts, with the exception of those which the Bishop has reserved to himself or which by law require a special mandate of the Bishop.

C. Chancellor

1. The chancellor is appointed by the Bishop.
2. He works as the executive office of the diocesan Bishop.
3. His principal responsibility is to be the notary of the Bishop and to ensure that the acts of the diocese are kept safe in the archive of the diocese.

D. Moderator of the Curia

The Moderator of the Curia coordinates the exercise of administrative responsibilities and sees that the other members of the Curia duly fulfill the office entrusted to them.

1. The Moderator of the Curia works closely with the director of Human Resources.

E. Vicar for Religious

1. The vicar for religious is appointed by the Bishop to serve as his liaison to members of religious orders and congregations serving within the diocese.
  - a. The vicar for religious promotes communication between the Bishop and men and women religious.
2. The vicar for religious is assisted by associate vicars.

F. Dean (Vicar Forane)

The dean is the priest who is placed in charge of a deanery (vicariate forane).

1. The dean is appointed by the Bishop after consultation with the priests who are exercising the ministry in the deanery.
2. He represents the Bishop to the priests and others of his deanery.
3. The dean makes a formal visit to each parish in his deanery every three years and submits a written report to the Bishop.
4. When tensions or difficulties arise in parishes within the deanery, the dean, based on the principal of subsidiarity, is to assist the pastor and parish in handling the matter at that level before it is referred to the diocesan offices.
5. The dean encourages the clergy in his deanery to attend the events sponsored by the diocese, especially the programs promoted by the Priestly Life and Formation Committee.
6. He seeks to offer spiritual assistance to the priests of his deanery, particularly to those who are in difficult circumstances or are troubled by problems.
7. In the case of illness of a priest, the dean is to advise the Bishop and seek to do his part in offering assistance.

G. Financial Officer

The financial officer, under the authority of the Bishop, administers the goods of the diocese in accordance with the plan of the Finance Council.

1. The financial officer gives the Bishop and the Finance Council quarterly financial reports.
2. The financial officer is in charge of salaries and benefits for the diocesan employees and coordinates and administers the diocesan building and health insurance plans.
3. The financial officer works closely with the Office of Facilities Planning, the Office of Stewardship and Development, and the director of Human Resources.

## H. Judicial Vicar

The Bishop appoints a judicial vicar, or “officialis,” for the promotion of justice regarding matters within the diocese.

1. The judicial vicar serves as an extension of the Bishop’s judicial ministry in the diocese.
2. He constitutes one tribunal with the Bishop but cannot judge cases which the Bishop reserves to himself.
3. In particular, the judicial vicar acts as a resource to the Bishop on canonical matters, studies requests for annulments, and serves as a consultant for priests, deacons, religious, and laity in canonical policies relating to marriage.

## II. Diocesan Councils and Committees

### A. Presbyteral Council

1. The Presbyteral Council assists and advises the Bishop in the governance of the diocese, on behalf of the local presbyterate, on the pastoral welfare of the people of God.
  - a. The council has a consultative vote.
  - b. The diocesan Bishop consults the council in matters of more serious moment.
  - c. The council of priests can never act without the diocesan Bishop.
2. When the See is vacant, the Presbyteral Council ceases and its functions are fulfilled by the College of Consultors.
  - a. The new Bishop must reconstitute the Presbyteral Council within a year of taking possession of the diocese.

### B. College of Consultors

The Bishop presides over a smaller number of priests from the Presbyteral Council known as the consultors. The consultors advise in the more practical and ordinary administration of the diocese according to the norms set by Canon Law or when deemed necessary by the Bishop.

C. Finance Council

1. Each diocese is required by Canon Law to have a Finance Council. It is an advisory council presided over by the Bishop.
2. The Finance Council is appointed by the Bishop and is composed of experts in financial affairs and civil law.
3. It is the responsibility of the Finance Council to approve an annual budget for the governance of the diocese, in accordance with the direction of the Bishop.
4. It is also the responsibility of the Finance Council to account for income and expenditures at the end of the year.

D. Priest Personnel Committee

The Priest Personnel Committee advises the Bishop on matters pertaining to the assignment of priests within the diocesan structure or when a priest is being considered for extra-diocesan assignments.

E. Building Commission

The Building Commission serves in an advisory capacity to the Bishop in matters relating to the building projects of the diocese.

1. The Building Commission oversees all building, planning, and maintenance issues of the diocese and its parishes.
2. The Building Commission reviews, evaluates and makes recommendations on the construction or remodeling of buildings within the diocese according to established diocesan criteria.
3. The Building Commission assists the parishes and institutions of the diocese in their building plans to meet liturgical, educational, and social needs.



## DIocese OF AUSTIN

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### **Policy on Compliance with Ethics and Integrity in Ministry**

Effective January 1, 2002

In order to safeguard the children and vulnerable adults whom we serve, and to honor our privilege and responsibility of sharing in the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

On January 1, 2002, the Diocese of Austin established a policy on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry (EIM) for all clergy, religious, seminarians, and employees (in parishes, schools, and all diocesan offices) and those volunteers who minister to youth (those under the age of 18) or vulnerable adults (those who are uniquely vulnerable to abuse because of physical or mental disability that substantially impair the person's ability to provide adequately for their own care or protection). To be compliant one must complete the EIM Application for Ministry and attend an EIM workshop within sixty (60) days of submitting the application.

In August 2008, these policies were revised: All those required to be compliant with the diocesan Ethics and Integrity in Ministry policies must attend an EIM workshop every three (3) years. Additionally, the definition of who is required to be compliant with these policies has been expanded. Please refer to the current Policies on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry for a comprehensive review of all EIM policies and procedures at [www.austindiocese.org/eim](http://www.austindiocese.org/eim).

**The Diocese of Austin has a separate Handbook of Policies for Ethics and Integrity in Ministry. It can be viewed at [www.austindioocese.org](http://www.austindioocese.org)**