

Domus Ecclesiae*

Norms for the Granting of the Title of Minor Basilica

"The house of the Church" or the house of God and of the Christian community has always stood out as one of the special signs of holy Church herself, the Bride of Christ, present and on pilgrimage in the world.

The beauty and glory of a church and its fitting arrangement for liturgical celebrations have at various times been ordered by appropriate norms.

Among the churches of any diocese the cathedral church holds the first place and the greatest dignity. In it is placed the cathedra, the sign of the Bishop's teaching authority and power, as pastor of the same diocese and the sign of communion with the Roman cathedra of Peter. Next there are the parish churches, which are the homes of the various communities of the diocese. In addition, there are shrines to which the Christian faithful of the diocese or of other local Churches go on pilgrimage.

Among these churches and others of different categories are found some that have particular importance for liturgical and pastoral life. These may be honoured by the Supreme Pontiff with the title of minor basilica, thereby signifying their particular link with the Roman Church and the Supreme Pontiff.

Norms concerning minor basilicas were established after the Second Vatican Council in the Decree *Domus Dei* promulgated on July 6, 1968 by the Sacred Congregation for Rites (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 60 [1968], 536-539).

Attentive to more recent liturgical documents and after the experience of the passing years, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments considers it opportune to adjust the aforementioned norms to present circumstances as follows.

I. CONDITIONS FOR OBTAINING THE TITLE MINOR BASILICA

1. A church for which the title of basilica is proposed must have been dedicated to God by a liturgical rite and must stand out as a centre of active and pastoral liturgy, especially through celebrations of the Most Holy Eucharist, of penance, and of the other sacraments, which celebrations set an example for others on account of their preparation and realization according to liturgical norms and with the active participation of the people of God.

* Translation courtesy of the United States Conference of catholic Bishops

2. To further the possibility of truly carrying out worthy and exemplary celebrations, the aforesaid church should be of an appropriate size and with a sufficiently large sanctuary. The various elements required for the liturgical celebration (altar, ambo [lectern], celebrant's chair) must be placed according to the requirements of the restored liturgy (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 288-318).

3. The church may enjoy a certain renown throughout the diocese, for example, because it has been constructed and dedicated to God on the occasion of some particular historical and religious event, or because the body or significant relics of a saint are reserved in it, or because some sacred image is there venerated in a special way.

The historical value or importance of the church and the worthiness of its art are also be considered.

4. So that, as the liturgical year progresses, the celebrations of the various seasons may be carried out in a praiseworthy manner, a fitting number of priests is necessary; they are to be assigned to the liturgical and pastoral care of the church, especially for the celebration of the Eucharist and penance (there should also be an appropriate number of confessors who at stated hours are available to the faithful).

In addition, a sufficient number of ministers is required as well as an adequate *schola cantorum*, which is to encourage the participation of the faithful with sacred music and singing.

II. DOCUMENTS TO BE PRODUCED FOR GRANTING THE TITLE OF BASILICA

Documents to be sent to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments:

1. the petition of the local Ordinary, even if the care of the church is entrusted to some religious community;
2. the *nihil obstat* or favorable judgment of the national Episcopal Conference;
3. brochures or a report concerning the origin, history, and the religious activity of the church (its worship life and its pastoral associations and charitable works);
4. an album of photos illustrating the exterior and interior form of the church but particularly the arrangement of the sanctuary (altar, ambo [lectern], celebrant's chair) and the other places intended for carrying out celebrations (seats for ministers and servers; baptistery or baptismal font; the place for reserving the Eucharist and places designed for the celebration of the sacrament of penance);
5. Information about the church as indicated in the questionnaire supplied at the time and which must be completed and returned to this dicastery.

III. OFFICES AND DUTIES PROPER TO A BASILICA IN THE LITURGICAL AND PASTORAL AREAS

1. In a minor basilica the liturgical instruction of the faithful is to be promoted by establishing groups concerned with liturgical activity, by special courses of instruction given in a series of conferences, and by other programs of this kind.

Among the special activities of a basilica may be especially mentioned the study and popularization of documents coming from the Supreme Pontiff and the Holy See, especially those pertaining to the sacred liturgy.

2. The celebrations of the liturgical year are to be prepared and carried out with great care, especially the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter.

During Lent, in places that preserve the traditional form of gathering the local Church in the manner of the Roman "stations," it is highly recommended that a basilica be chosen for celebrating this kind of station (cf. *Roman Missal*, the beginning of Lent; *Ceremonial of Bishops*, nos. 260-262).

The word of God is to be diligently proclaimed either in homilies or in special sermons.

The active participation of the faithful is to be promoted both in the Eucharistic celebration and in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially at Morning and Evening Prayer.

In addition, approved forms of devotion are to be suitably fostered.

3. Since the celebration of the liturgy takes on a more noble form when it is carried out in song, care must be taken that gatherings of the Christian faithful be associated with the singing of the various parts of the Mass, especially those found in the Ordinary (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 54; Sacred Congregation for Rites, Instruction *Musicam Sacram*, March 5, 1967).

In a basilica where the faithful from different nations or languages frequently come together, it is useful that they should know how to sing together in Latin the profession of faith and the Lord's Prayer, using more simple melodies like those composed in Gregorian chant which is "proper to the Roman Liturgy" (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 116; General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 41).

4. To make clear the particular bond of communion by which the minor basilica is united with the Roman cathedra of Peter, every year there must be celebrated with particular care:

1. the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter the Apostle (February 22);
2. the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles (June 29);
3. the anniversary of the Supreme Pontiff's election or inauguration into the supreme ministry.

IV. CONCESSIONS CONNECTED WITH THE TITLE OF MINOR BASILICA

1. The day on which the concession of the title of basilica to a certain church is publicly announced should be prepared for and observed in a festive way with appropriate sermons, prayer vigils, and other celebrations, all taking place not only on the days immediately preceding the proclamation of the title but also on those immediately afterwards.

On all these days, provided there does not occur a liturgical day listed in no. I, 1-4 or II, 5-6 of the table of precedence in the Universal Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, there may be celebrated the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours of the title of the church or of the Saint or of the holy image which is especially venerated there; or "For the Particular Church" or "For the Pope" (cf. Universal Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, no. 59).

On the day of the proclamation itself, the Mass of that day is celebrated or one of the Masses indicated above, according to the norm of the rubrics. At the beginning of the celebration, before the Gloria, the apostolic brief or decree of concession by which the church is raised to the status of basilica is read in the vernacular.

2. The faithful who devoutly visit the basilica and within it participate in any sacred rite or at least recite the Lord's Prayer and the profession of faith may obtain a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intention of the Supreme Pontiff):

1. on the anniversary of the dedication of the same basilica;
2. on the day of the liturgical celebration of the title;
3. on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles;
4. on the anniversary of the granting of the title of basilica;
5. once a year on a day to be determined by the local Ordinary;
6. once a year on a day freely chosen by the each of the faithful.

3. The papal symbol, that is, "crossed keys," may be exhibited on banners, on furnishings, and on the seal of the basilica.

4. The rector of the basilica or the person in charge of it may wear in the exercise of his office — over the cassock or the religious habit and the surplice — a black mozetta with red piping, buttons, and button holes.

From the offices of the Congregation, this ninth day of November 1989, the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica.

Eduardo Card. Martinez
Prefect

✠ Lajos Kada
Titular Archbishop of Thibica
Secretary