

Fabrique Assembly

Parishioner,

The parish needs you as churchwarden

As the year ends, it is also time for the election of churchwardens. Let me tell you a little about churchwardens and their role.

What is a churchwarden?

A churchwarden is a parishioner, lay or clerical member of the Fabrique Council of a parish. The term of office is three years, renewable once.

According to articles 36 and 39 of the Act respecting Fabrique, to fulfil the role of churchwarden, one must reside in the parish and be 18 years of age or older. Sections 1.i and 1.j of the Fabrique Act indicate that a parishioner is a person belonging to the parish or ward where he or she may exercise the rights granted to him or her by the said Act. In a diocese, parishes are identified by their territorial boundaries. The election of a churchwarden who does not reside within these boundaries therefore renders the resolutions of the parish council void, null.

However, a person having a residence outside the territory of the parish may be admitted to the Fabrique meetings. He or she may not vote, but may participate in the deliberations and share in the responsibilities of the Fabrique provided the Fabrique authorizes him or her to do so. If for some reason the parish cannot find a person to fill one of the churchwarden positions, it remains vacant. After 60 days, the bishop may appoint a churchwarden on the recommendation of the parish priest or the parish assembly.

Churchwardens are elected primarily to administer the material goods of the parish, goods that will be used to provide religious services to the parishioners. However, beyond the search for a good and healthy administration, they do everything in their power to ensure that the parish has the necessary means to respond to its mission of evangelization.

Board of Directors or Fabrique Assembly

The Fabrique Assembly usually meets once a month. An extraordinary meeting may be called for an emergency or for a specific need.

The Fabrique Assembly is made up of six (6) churchwardens (the one for a ward is made up of three (3)), plus the parish priest or priest moderator and the president of the assembly appointed by the diocesan bishop. Thus, eight (8) members for the parish and five (5) members for the district. The pastor becomes the president of the Fabrique Assembly if the bishop does not appoint one.

Canon 1284 enumerates in detail the fundamental duties of all persons entrusted with the administration of the temporal goods of the Church. The first paragraph of this canon specifies that the members of the board of directors (made up of the churchwardens, the president of the Fabrique Assembly and the parish priest) must carry out their duties with the diligence of "a good family father".

The second paragraph identifies their functions. They must:

- Ensure that the goods entrusted to them are kept in a safe manner;
- Ensure that appropriate insurance policies are in place;
- Ensure ownership of church property;
- Respect the intentions of donors;
- Respecting the norms of civil law, especially with regard to guidelines on social life and work (see canon 1286, 1);
- To collect in due time the income and profits of the goods and apply them to the purposes for which they are intended;
- To pay interest on loans or mortgages in a timely manner and to ensure that the principal is repaid on time;
- To forward to the office of the diocesan bursar any surplus funds;
- To keep the books of receipts and disbursements in good order;
- Prepare an annual financial report;
- Keeping contracts and other legal documents and arranging for copies to be deposited with the Diocesan Bursar;
- Preparing annual budgets for income and disbursements;
- render an account to the faithful of goods that have been donated to the Church (see canon 1287, §2). In addition, parish administrators are to ensure that a just and equitable salary is paid to employees (cf. canon 1286, 2).

It should be noted that the office of churchwarden is carried out on a voluntary basis according to the respective abilities of the members of the Fabrique Council, mostly at monthly meetings and as needed. It is important to note that they can only act in a factory assembly, section VII, art. 43 to 48. It is also important to remember, in accordance with canon 1283, 1o that all members of the board of directors must take an oath before taking office. We will send you a note on this. As of January 2022, all administrators of the diocese will take the oath at the beginning of their mandate. (To be continued).