

DECREE NO. 1

PROMULGATION OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE LAWS

- 1.1. In accordance with the prescription of Can. 8 §2, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that laws emanating from the Episcopal Conference, once approved by the Holy See, be published in “Intercom” (Catholic Communications Institute of Ireland) and that the date of promulgation be the last day of the month appearing on the particular issue of that journal or, in the case of a double-month issue, the last day of the second month.
- 1.2. In order that these laws be made known as widely as possible, the Conference further decrees that, without prejudice to their formal promulgation as in No. 1.1. above, they also be offered for publication to “The Furrow” (the Furrow Trust) and to “Doctrine and Life” (Dominican Publications).

DECREE NO. 2

MAINTENANCE OF INFIRM, ILL, OLD AND RETIRED PRIESTS

- 2.1. In accordance with the prescription of Cann. 282 §2 and 538 §3, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that, while leaving the details to be worked out in each diocese in accordance with its own circumstances and traditions,
 - (a) Each diocesan Bishop have a specific and funded scheme, adequately designed to provide worthy maintenance and accommodation for all the infirm, ill, old and retired priests of his diocese;
 - (b) A number of priest-representatives of the priests of the diocese be actively involved in the administration of the scheme;
 - (c) The adequacy of the scheme be reviewed regularly.

DECREE NO. 3

ECCLESIASTICAL DRESS FOR CLERICS

- 3.1. In accordance with the prescription of Can. 284, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that, since a distinctive form of clerical dress has a particular significance and since such a distinctive attire is expected by the faithful in our country, all clerics will continue to wear such clerical dress as will give public witness to their priesthood or clerical state.

DECREE NO. 4

COLLEGE OF CONSULTORS/CATHEDRAL CHAPTER

- 4.1. In accordance with the prescription of Can. 502 §3, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that it empowers the diocesan Bishops who wish to entrust the functions of the College of Consultors to the Cathedral Chapter, to do so.

DECREE NO. 5

APPOINTMENT OF PARISH PRIESTS FOR A FIXED TERM OFFICE

- 5.1. In accordance with the prescription of Can. 522, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that, in view of the need to maintain the principle of stability in a parish priest’s appointment, while at the same time to cater for special situations which may on occasion call for an appointment other than “for an indeterminate period of time”, a diocesan Bishop may appoint a parish priest for a period of not less than six years, renewable at the Bishop’s discretion for further periods of six years each.

DECREE NO. 6

REGISTER OF THE CONFIRMATION IN EACH PARISH

- 6.1. In accordance with the prescription of Cann. 535 §1 and 895, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that, in view of the long-established practice in this country, a register of confirmation be kept in each parish rather than a central register at the diocesan curia.

DECREE NO. 7

PERMISSION FOR LAY PERSONS TO PREACH

- 7.1. In accordance with the prescription of Can. 766, the Irish Episcopal Conference, while stressing that the homily at any Mass may be given only by a priest or deacon (cf. Can. 767 §1), hereby decrees that in the circumstances of this country it may in some particular cases be advantageous (though rarely, if ever, necessary) to allow a lay person to preach in a church or oratory, provided permission is given by the diocesan Bishop, even by way of general regulation.

DECREE NO. 8

WELCOME FOR MISSIONARIES

- 8.1. In keeping with the age-old missionary tradition of the Irish Church, and recognising all that is already being done in this regard by various approved ecclesiastical agencies in this country, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby in accordance with the prescription of Can. 792 decrees that every encouragement be given to such agencies in their endeavour to give a fraternal welcome and an appropriate pastoral care to those who come to Ireland from missionary territories for the purpose of work or study.

DECREE NO. 9

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

- 9.1 Taking account of the competence and the activities of the Episcopal Commissions for Education and for Catechetics, with their many associated bodies, all of which constantly monitor the matter of Catholic religious education and advise the Episcopal Conference accordingly, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby in accordance with the prescription of Can. 804 §1 decrees that the general norms at present in force remain operative and that new norms be issued as occasion may demand.

DECREE NO.10

REGISTRATION OF BAPTISM OF ADOPTED CHILDREN

- 10.1 In accordance with the prescription of Can. 877 §3, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that the resolution adopted by the Episcopal Conference at its meeting in November 1980 be confirmed viz.:
“It was decided that a central baptismal register for all adopted children be kept in each diocese. This is to be kept either at the diocesan Curia or in a parish or centre specially designated by the diocesan Bishop for this purpose. It has been agreed that the (civil) Adoption Board would, on the adoption of a child, send to this office all relevant information necessary for the issuing of baptismal certificates,”
and that the following amendment be added to this resolution:
It is recognised however that because of circumstances at present obtaining in Northern Ireland, greater flexibility is necessary there in the application of this resolution. Hence we empower the Bishops of the Armagh Province to deal with this matter, when it arises within their jurisdiction.

DECREE NO. 11

AGE FOR THE RECEPTION OF CONFIRMATION

- 11.1 In accordance with the prescription of Can. 891, and in view of the long-established and pastorally successful practice in this country, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that (apart from “a danger of death” or where “in the judgement of the minister a grave reason suggests otherwise”) the sacrament of confirmation be conferred on the faithful not “at about the age of discretion,” but rather towards the end of the primary-school education curriculum, i.e. at about the age of 11 or 12 years.

DECREE NO. 12

GENERAL ABSOLUTION

- 12.1 In accordance with the prescription of Can. 961 §2, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that at the present time the conditions for this extraordinary rite (i.e. Rite III, general absolution) are not realised in our country, where people would not, without any fault on their part, have to wait a long time for an opportunity to go to Confession – without prejudice however to the right of the diocesan Bishop as determined in §2 of Can. 961

DECREE NO. 13
MARRIAGE BANS NO LONGER REQUIRED

13.1 In accordance with the prescription of Can. 1067, and by reason of the issue (dated 22 April 1984) by the Episcopal Conference of the new "Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form" with its accompanying explanatory document, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that the publication of marriage bans be required no longer.

DECREE NO. 14
DAYS OF PENANCE

14.1 In accordance with prescriptions of Cann. 1251 and 1253, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that the manner of observing the law of fast and abstinence be as determined by the Episcopal Conference in November 1983 (Minutes, 2.2.x) and as set out in the Statement issued on that occasion (November 1983, Appendix I).

14.2 In order that the notion and the practice of penance as an essential part of Christian life be adequately renewed and inculcated (cf. c. 1249; "*Paenitemini*"), the Episcopal Conference further decrees that the National Conference of Priests of Ireland be asked to prepare, in consultation with such other bodies as it may think appropriate, a thorough catechesis of the faithful, including suggestions as to the most effective pastoral means of conducting this catechesis.

APPENDIX TO DECREE NO. 14
FRIDAY PENANCE: IRISH EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE NOV. 1983

1. The new *Code of Canon Law* which comes into force on the first Sunday of Advent reminds us that all of Christ's faithful are obliged to do penance. The obligation arises in imitation of Christ himself and in response to his call. During his life on earth, not least at the beginning of his public ministry, Our Lord undertook voluntary penance. He invited his followers to do the same. The penance he invited would be a participation in his own suffering, an expression of inner conversion and a form of reparation for sin. It would be personal sacrifice made out of love for God and our neighbour. It follows that, if we are to be true, as Christians, to the spirit of Christ, we must practise some form of penance.
2. So that all may be united with Christ and with one another in a common practice of penance, the Church sets aside certain penitential days. On those days the faithful are to devote themselves in a special way to prayer, self denial and works of charity. Such days are not designed to confine or isolate penance but to intensify it in the life of the Christian right through the year.
3. Lent is the traditional season of renewal and penance in the Church. The new Code reaffirms this. It also prescribes that Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are to be observed as days of fast and abstinence. Fasting means that the amount of food we eat is considerably reduced. Abstinence means that we give up a particular kind of food or drink or form of amusement. Those over 18 are bound by the law of fasting until the beginning of their 60th year, while all over 14 are bound by the law of abstinence. Priests and parents are urged to foster the spirit and practice of penance among those too young to be the subjects of either law.
4. Because Friday recalls the crucifixion of Our Lord, it too is set aside as a special penitential day. The Church does not prescribe however that fish must be eaten on Fridays. It never did. Abstinence always meant the giving up of meat rather than the eating of fish as a substitute. What the Church does require, according to the new code, is that its members abstain on Fridays from meat or some other food or that they perform some alternative work of penance laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
5. In accordance with the mind of the universal Church, the Irish Bishops remind their people of the obligation of Friday penance, and instruct them that it may be fulfilled in one or more of the following ways:
 - i) by abstaining from meat or some other food;

- ii) by abstaining from alcoholic drink, smoking or some form of amusement;
 - iii) by making the special effort involved in family prayer, taking part in the Mass, visiting the Blessed Sacrament or praying the Stations of the Cross;
 - iv) by fasting from all food for a longer period than usual and perhaps by giving what is saved in this way to the needy at home and abroad;
 - v) by going out of our way to help somebody who is poor, sick, old or lonely.
6. While the form of penance is an option and doesn't have to take the same form every Friday, the obligation to do penance is not. There is a serious obligation to observe Friday as a penitential day. We are confident that the Irish people as a whole will take this obligation to heart. We recommend that each person should choose some form of penance for Fridays in memory, as was Friday abstinence, of the Passion and Death of Our Lord.

DECREE NO. 15

OBLIGATION OF CHRIST'S FAITHFUL TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH

15.1 Since, in accordance with the tradition and custom of this country, the material support of the Church comes exclusively from the voluntary offerings of the faithful, and since the practice varies from one diocese to another, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby in accordance with the prescription of Can. 1262 decrees that this matter be left to the determination of each individual diocesan Bishop.

DECREE NO. 16

RULES REGARDING COLLECTIONS

16.1 In accordance with the prescription of Can. 1265 §2, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that, pending their more detailed review at future Plenary Council (cf. Can. 439 §1), nn. 307-314 of the Plenary Council of Maynooth 1956 be observed integrally in their spirit and, in so far as they are not incompatible with the *Code of Canon Law*, in their letter.

DECREE NO. 17

MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM AMOUNTS FOR ALIENATION

17.1 In accordance with the prescription of Can. 1292 §1 and in accordance with the decision taken at the meeting of the Conference, March 1984 (Minutes, 2.2.iii), the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that the approved minimum sum be Stg£100,000 (one hundred thousand pounds sterling) and the maximum sum Stg£1,000,000 (one million pounds sterling).

17.2 The Conference further decrees that, in order to cater for the inevitable variation in monetary values, each of these sums be understood to be linked to the percentage increase (or decrease) in the cost-of-living Index of the country, to be interpreted and determined each year from the date of this Decree by the Episcopal Conference.

DECREE NO. 18

LAY JUDGES IN ECCLESIASTICAL TRIBUNALS

18.1 In accordance with the prescription of Can. 1421 §2, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that lay persons, duly qualified and experienced, may be appointed judges in ecclesiastical tribunals in this country.

DECREE NO. 19

SOLE CLERICAL JUDGE IN MARRIAGE-NULITY CASES

19.1 In accordance with the prescription of Can. 1425 §4, and in respect of judicial cases of nullity of marriage at first instance, if it is not possible, because of the scarcity of judges, to constitute a College of Judges for each case without causing undue delay in determining the cases before the court, the Irish Episcopal Conference hereby decrees that the Bishop-Moderator of each Regional Marriage Tribunal may entrust cases to a sole clerical judge of proven knowledge and experience who, where possible, shall associate with himself an assessor and an auditor. This Decree is to be reviewed after five years.

These decrees were promulgated through publication in 'Intercom' December 1987/January 1988.