

Catholic Church

In Catholic canon law, *a vicar is the representative of any ecclesiastic*. The Romans had used the term to describe officials subordinate to the praetorian prefects. In the early Christian churches, bishops likewise had their vicars, such as the archdeacons and archpriests, and also the rural priest, the curate who had the *cure* of all the souls outside the episcopal cities. The position of the Roman Catholic vicar as it evolved is sketched in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1908.^[1]

The Pope uses the title *Vicarius Christi*, meaning, the *vicar of Jesus Christ*. The papacy first used this title in the eighth century; earlier they used the title *vicar of Saint Peter* or *vicarius principis apostolorum*, the *vicar of the chief of the apostles*.

Vicars have various different titles based on what role they are performing. An apostolic vicar is a bishop or priest who heads a missionary particular church that is not yet ready to be a full diocese - he stands as the local representative of the Pope, in the Pope's role as bishop of all unorganized territories. A vicar capitular, who exercises authority in the place of the diocesan chapter, is a temporary ordinary of a diocese during a *sede vacante* period.

Vicars exercise authority as the agents of the bishop of the diocese. Most vicars, however, have ordinary power, which means that their agency is not by virtue of a delegation but is established by law. Vicars general, episcopal vicars, and judicial vicars exercise vicarious ordinary power; they each exercise a portion of the power of the diocesan bishop (judicial for the judicial vicar, executive for the others) by virtue of their office and not by virtue of a mandate.

A vicar forane, also known as an archpriest or dean, is a priest entrusted by the bishop with a certain degree of leadership in a territorial division of a diocese or a pastoral region known as a vicarate forane or a deanery.

A parochial vicar is a priest assigned to a parish in addition to, and in collaboration with, the pastor of the parish. He exercises his ministry as an agent of the parish's pastor, who is termed *parochus* in Latin.

Some papal legates are honoured by the title *Vicar of the Apostolic See*.

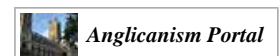
Eastern Orthodox

In the Russian Orthodox Church and some other non-Hellenic Eastern Orthodox Churches that historically follow Russian tradition vicar (Russian: *vikarij* / *викарий*) is a term for what is known as suffragan bishop in the Anglican Communion or as auxiliary bishop in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church. A vicar bishop usually bears in his title the names of both his titular see (usually, a smaller town within the diocese he ministers in) and the see he is subordinate to. For example, Bishop Ignaty Punin, the vicar bishop under the Diocese of Smolensk, is titled "The Rt. Rev. Ignaty, the bishop of Vyazma, the vicar of the Diocese of Smolensk," Vyasma being a smaller town inside the territory of the Diocese of Smolensk. Normally, only large dioceses have vicar bishops, sometimes more than one. Usually, Russian Orthodox vicar bishops have no independent jurisdiction (even in their titular towns) and are subordinate to their diocesan bishops; though some of them *de facto* may have jurisdiction over some territories, especially when there is a need to avoid an overlapping jurisdiction. In the Russian Orthodox Church, some vicar bishops are styled "archbishops" or "metropolitans", but these titles are merely honorary.

In some other Eastern Orthodox Churches the term "chorbishop" is used instead of "vicar bishop".

Anglican

In the Church of England, *vicar* is the ordinary title given to certain parish priests. Historically, Anglican parish clergy were divided into rectors, vicars and *perpetual curates*. These were distinguished according to the way in which they were remunerated. The church was supported by tithes — taxes (traditionally, as the etymology of *tithe* suggests, of ten percent) levied on the agricultural output of the parish. These were divided into *greater tithes* levied on wheat, hay and wood, and lesser tithes levied on the remainder. A rector received both greater and lesser tithes, a vicar the lesser tithes only. This was due to the fact that a monastery was the rector — and they supplied a priest to act on their behalf. A perpetual curate received no tithe income and was supported by the diocese. A perpetual curate was usually in charge of a newly created Parish carved out of a larger rectoral or vicarial parish. In some cases a portion of the tithe income was given to support the priest. The adjective *perpetual* emphasises that such a clergyman enjoyed the same security of tenure as his more affluent peers. As all rectors, vicars and perpetual curates were personal representatives of the authority of the church in their parishes they were generally styled parsons. However, this title was used most often by perpetual curates more easily to distinguish them from assistant curates, who were not legally parsons. An Act of Parliament of 1868 permitted perpetual curates to style themselves vicars and the term *parson* rapidly lost popularity. The conjunction of this change with near-contemporaneous church reforms aimed at reducing the disparities of income among clergy meant that the distinction between the grades of clergy became progressively less relevant and remarked upon. Popularly, any members of the clergy are often referred to as a *vicar*, even when they do not legally hold such a post. In the past a similar situation led to all clergy being popularly referred to as parsons.



Most parishes in England and Wales retain the historical title for their parish priest — rector or vicar — with vicar being more

common in the urban areas, due to the fact of an expansion of new Parishes being created in the Victorian years, and the incumbents being styled 'vicar' after 1868. The distinctions between the titles is now only historical. In the late twentieth century, a shortage of clergy and the disparity of workload between parish clergy led to the development of a number of new forms of parish ministry. One of these, which has proved relatively effective, is the *Team* ministry or benefice. It might be that a number of parishes join together to form the *Team*, and each parish retains its legal definition and independence. Rather than having clergy licensed to the individual parishes, a team of clergy are licensed to the entire *benefice*. Alternatively, a large parish with daughter churches in addition to a parish church, may be created as a Team Ministry.

In these examples, the more senior priest takes the title *Team Rector* and serves as parish priest in the main parish, and one or more stipendiary, experienced priests serve as *Team Vicars* (often installed into the other parishes, or Churches). Non-stipendiary clergy and assistant curates take other titles, often *Team Curate*.

Team Rectors and Team Vicars are not perpetual parish priests, and as such do not possess the 'freehold' but are licensed for a fixed term, known as 'leasehold', usually seven years for a Team Rector, and five years for a Team Vicar.

In many other Anglican provinces, the distinction between a vicar and a rector is different. In the Church of Ireland and the Scottish Episcopal Church, most parish priests are rectors. In the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, a vicar is a priest in charge of a mission, meaning a congregation supported by its diocese instead of being a self-sustaining parish which is headed by a rector.

See also

- How the Church of England is organised

Ulster

In early 17th century Ulster every church had a vicar and a parson instead of a co-arb and an arenagh. The vicar, like the co-arb, was always in orders. He said the mass ('serveth the cure') and received a share of the tithes. The parson, like the arenagh, had a major portion of the tithes, maintained the church and provided hospitality. As he was not usually in clerical orders, his responsibilities were mainly temporal. However, there were differences in the divisions of the tithes between various dioceses in Tyrone. In the Diocese of Clogher, the vicar and the parson shared the tithes equally between them; in the Diocese of Derry, church income came from both tithes and the rental of church lands ('temporalities'). The vicar and the parson each received one third of the tithes and paid an annual tribute to the bishop. In places where there was no parson, the arenagh continued to receive two thirds of the income in kind from the church lands, and delivered the balance, after defraying maintenance, to the bishop in cash as a yearly rental. In other places, the parson, the vicar and the arenagh shared the costs of church repairs equally between them. In the Diocese of Armagh the parson received two-thirds of the tithes and the vicar one third. The archbishop and the arenagh impropriated no part thereof, presumably because they received the entire income from the termon lands. The division of responsibilities between vicar and parson seems to derive from a much earlier precedent established in the old Celtic Church of St Columcille.

Notable vicars

In either tradition, a vicar can be the priest of a "chapel of ease", a church which is not a parish church. Non-resident canons led also to the institution of *vicars choral*, each canon having his own vicar, who sat in his stall in his absence (see Cathedral).

Peter the disciple of Christ is noted by the Roman Catholic church to be the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Oliver Goldsmith's novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) and the Barsetshire novels of Anthony Trollope, and in France Honoré de Balzac's *The Curate of Tours* (*Le Curé de Tours*) all evoke the impoverished world of the 18th and 19th century vicar, while the satiric ballad "The Vicar of Bray" reveals the changes of conscience a vicar in Co. Wicklow might be forced through, in order to retain his meagre post, between the 1680s and 1720s. "The Curate of Ars" (usually in French: *Le Curé d'Ars*) is a style often used to refer to Saint Jean Vianney, a French parish priest canonized on account of his piety and simplicity of life.

Many English culture figures started life as the educated but impoverished son of a vicar: Sir Francis Drake, Thomas Hobbes, John Henley, John Lightfoot, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Adam Sedgwick, Cecil Rhodes, Nassau William Senior, or Charles Kingsley, for some examples drawn from various intellectual fields. Robert Herrick was himself a vicar. On a lighter note: A popular British television series on BBC depicts a fictional vicar in *The Vicar of Dibley*. One of the more notable current vicars is Robert Widdowson currently of the parishes of Oakhill, Ashwick and Bineger. The English rock band The Smiths recorded a song about an eccentric vicar entitled "Vicar in a Tutu" on their album *The Queen is Dead*.

Lutheran usage