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Vicars of Christ: Loving Union with Bishops

In the beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is "typos tou Patros": he is "like the living image of God the Father." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1549)

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Who are the bishops in the Church?

“The Sacred Council teaches that bishops by divine institution have

succeeded to the place of the apostles, as shepherds of the Church, and he who hears them, hears Christ, and he who rejects them, rejects Christ and him who sent Christ. In the bishops, therefore, for whom priests are assistants, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Supreme High Priest, is present in the midst of those who believe.” (*Lumen Gentium*, 20-21)

“Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers. In the beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is *typos tou Patros*: he is like the living image of God the Father.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1549)

How do the bishops exercise their pastoral ministry?

"As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular

Church entrusted to him, but at the same time he bears collegially with all his brothers in the episcopacy the solicitude for all the Churches."

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1560)

How do the Christian faithful relate to the bishops?

“The faithful should be closely attached to the bishop as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father. Let all follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ follows his Father, and the college of presbyters as the apostles; respect the deacons as you do God's law. Let no one do anything concerning the Church in separation from the bishop.”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 896)

St. Josemaria would tell his spiritual children to give joys to the bishops and not to add to their crosses, because - he would say with a smile -

with the pectoral cross they already have enough. He would spread veneration for the Bishop of the place and would plead as a brother to other priests, that they always be united to their bishop, following the sure norm of conduct: *nihil sine Episcopo* (nothing without the Bishop). When preaching to priests he would stress ardently that if they wanted to be holy priests, they ought to love, venerate, and be very united to the Bishop. (cf. *Articulos del Postulador*, nos. 653-654, Roma, 1979)

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