

Pope appoints Most Rev Vincent Nichols 11th Archbishop of Westminster

Biography of Archbishop Vincent Nichols

Vincent Nichols was born in Crosby, Liverpool, on 8 November 1945. He studied for the priesthood at the Venerable English College in Rome from 1963 to 1970, gaining licences in philosophy and theology at the Gregorian University. He was ordained priest in Rome on 21 December 1969 for the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

He then studied an MA degree in theology at Manchester University between 1970 and 1971. In 1971 he was appointed assistant priest in St Mary's Parish, Wigan and chaplain to the Sixth Form College and St Peter's High School. In 1974 he studied at Loyola University in Chicago and was awarded an M.Ed. In 1975 he was appointed to St Anne's parish in Toxteth, Liverpool with particular responsibility for education.

In January 1980 he was appointed director of the Upholland Northern Institute, where he was responsible for the in-service training of the clergy, pastoral and religious education courses. He was also a member of Archbishop's Council with responsibility for pastoral formation and development in the diocese.

In January 1984, he was appointed general secretary of the Bishops' Conference in England & Wales. From 1989 to 1996 he was moderator of the Steering Committee of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.

Mgr Vincent Nichols was appointed auxiliary bishop to Westminster, with responsibility for North London, on 24 January 1992.

In 1994 he became a member of the Finance Advisory Committee of the National Catholic Fund of the Bishops' Conference. In 1995 he became a member of the Bishops' Conference Committee for the Roman Colleges and in 1996 he was appointed Episcopal Liaison of the Bishops' Conference for the National Conference of Diocesan Financial Secretaries. He has also been a member of the Joint Commission of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences and the Conference of European Churches (Protestant); vice president of the Bible Society and a member of the board of the Christian Academy for European Development at Louvain.

In 1998 Bishop Nichols was appointed chair of the Bishops' Conference department for Catholic Education and Formation and also chair of the Catholic Education Service. He represented the European Bishops at the November 1998 Synod of Bishops from Oceania and appointed by the Holy See to the Synod of Bishops for Europe in September 1999 as a special secretary.

In 2000, Bishop Nichols was appointed Archbishop of Birmingham.

In 2001 Archbishop Nichols was appointed chair of the management board of the Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults.

In 2005, he provided the commentary for the worldwide BBC coverage of the death of Pope John Paul II and the Installation of Pope Benedict XVI.

In 2008 he was appointed President of the Commission for Schools, Universities and Catechesis of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE)

He has written two books to date: 'Promise of Future Glory', and 'Missioners' published in the United Kingdom.

Archbishops of Westminster since 1850

There have been 10 Archbishops of Westminster since the Restoration of Hierarchy in 1850, when the diocesan structure was re-established.

1. Nicholas Wiseman

Born 3 August 1802
Appointed 29 September 1850 (age 48)
Created Cardinal 30 September 1850
Died 15 February 1865 (14 years as Archbishop)

2. Henry Edward Manning

Born 15 July 1808
Appointed 8 June 1865 (age 56)
Created Cardinal 15 March 1875
Died 14 January 1892 (26 years as Archbishop)

3. Herbert Vaughan

Born 15 April 1832
Appointed 8 April 1892 (age 59)
Created Cardinal 16 January 1893
Died 19 June 1903 (11 years as Archbishop)

4. Francis Bourne

Born 23 March 1861
Appointed 11 September 1903 (age 42)
Created Cardinal 27 November 1911
Died 1 January 1935 (31 years as Archbishop)

5. Arthur Hinsley

Born 25 August 1865
Appointed 25 March 1935 (age 69)
Created Cardinal 13 December 1937
Died 17 March 1943 (7 years as Archbishop)

6. Bernard William Griffin

Born 21 February 1899
Appointed 18 December 1943 (age 44)
Created Cardinal 18 February 1946
Died 20 August 1956 (12 years as Archbishop)

7. William Godfrey

Born 25 September 1889
Appointed 3 December 1956 (age 67)
Created Cardinal 15 December 1958
Died 22 January 1963 (6 years as Archbishop)

8. John Carmel Heenan

Born 26 January 1905
Appointed 2 September 1963 (age 58)
Created Cardinal 22 February 1965
Died 7 November 1975 (12 years as Archbishop)

9. George Basil Hume OSB

Born 2 March 1923
Appointed 25 March 1976 (age 53)
Created Cardinal 24 May 1976
Died 17 June 1999 (23 years as Archbishop)

10. Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

Born 24 August 1932
Appointed 22 March 2000 (age 67)
Created Cardinal 21 February 2001
Retired 3 April 2009 (9 years as Archbishop)

Westminster Diocese

The Diocese of Westminster is one of the smallest dioceses in England and Wales in geographical area, but the largest in terms of Catholic population and priests. The diocesan boundaries include the London Boroughs north of the River Thames, between the River Lea to the East, the Borough of Hillingdon to the West, and including the County of Hertfordshire to the North.

Since the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy in 1850, its bishop has traditionally been a Cardinal. In an increasingly cosmopolitan city, the diocese includes a wide range of ethnic and cultural diversity amongst its Catholic population.

The Diocese of Westminster is also a Metropolitan See, having as members of its Province the Dioceses of Brentwood, Northampton, Nottingham and East Anglia. The governance of the Diocese is under the care of the Archbishop's Council, the members of which are the Cardinal, the Auxiliary Bishops, the Vicars General, the Cardinal's Private Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Principal Advisor for Public Affairs; while the day to day administration is directed through the four principal departments of Clergy and Consecrated Life, Pastoral Affairs, Education and Ecumenism, Interfaith and Justice and Peace.

Key Diocesan Statistics

Parishes 216

Estimated Catholic population in the Diocese – 500,000, with an estimated weekly mass attendance of 156,000.

Priests of the Diocese – 380.

They are made up of those working in the Diocese - 241; Chaplains to the Forces, Further Studies, working outside the Diocese, Sick or on leave – 51; Retired 88

Priests of other Dioceses - 111

They are made up of those from England & Wales 84; those from other countries, Eastern Rites and Prelature of Opus Dei 27

Priests of Religious Congregations - 319

Schools

Primary (Aided) 163

Secondary (Aided & Special Agreement) 39

Aided VI Form College 2

Independent 18

Non-maintained Special 2

What is a Bishop?

A Bishop is a member of the clergy who has received the third of three stages of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, having previously received the first (as a deacon) and second (as a priest). He is a successor to the original Apostles who accompanied Jesus and is appointed by the Pope.

The Bishop's role is:

To teach Church doctrine and belief;

To lead worship;

To govern a local Church area (the diocese).

Bishops have the same powers of any priest to celebrate the sacraments of the Eucharist ("Holy Mass"), Baptism, Reconciliation ("confession"), Matrimony and Anointing of the Sick. Additionally, they can celebrate the other sacraments: Confirmation and Holy Orders ("ordination"). They also bless the holy oils that are used for some of the sacraments by priests in the diocese.

An Archbishop is the principal Bishop of an area covering more than one diocese, called a province.

What is a Cardinal?

Cardinals are appointed by the Pope to form a special college whose main task is to elect a new Pope when that office becomes vacant, in a meeting called a conclave.

Cardinals of 80 years of age or older cannot vote in a conclave and maximum electors at any one time is 120. Cardinals do not have to be Bishops: some may be priests.

The Pope periodically calls a meeting of Cardinals, called a consistory, to create new Cardinals.

Since 1850 and the Restoration of the Hierarchy, each Archbishop of Westminster has been created a Cardinal within 10 years of becoming Archbishop. At times there have

been other Cardinals in England & Wales, most notably Cardinal Newman in the 19th century.

What is an Apostolic Administrator?

Apostolic administrators are equivalent in canon law with diocesan bishops, with essentially the same authority as a diocesan bishop. Administrators *sede vacante* or *sede plena* (as is the case with Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor) serve in their role until a newly chosen diocesan bishop takes possession of the diocese. Canon law describes their administrative powers in terms of those of a diocesan bishop, with a few exceptions.

Glossary of terms

Archbishop – principal bishop in a Province; addressed as “The Most Reverend...”, “Archbishop ...” “His Grace”.

Archdiocese – diocese presided over by an archbishop.

Auxiliary bishop – assistant to a diocesan bishop.

Bishop – successor of the Apostles; recipient of third and final stage of the sacrament of holy orders; normally overseer and pastor of a church territory (diocese); has same powers of any priest to say mass and administer the sacraments. Additionally he may confirm, ordain priests and consecrate the holy oils used for the sacraments in his diocese; addressed as “The Right Reverend...”, “Bishop...”, “His Lordship”.

Bishops’ Conference – assembly of bishops of a country or a territory; a permanent institution including various offices and departments representing the Church’s concerns at a national level. The Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales has its offices in London.

Canon Law – the Church’s law; the current Code of canon law was published in 1983 and replaced the edition of 1917.

Cardinal – bishop, appointed by the Pope, whose main task is to join the conclave in voting for a new Pope when there is a vacancy; addressed as “Cardinal...”, “His Eminence”.

Cathedral – church of the bishop

Consecration – ordination to become a bishop.

Diocese – territory presided over by a bishop.

Ecumenism – the movement and process towards Christian unity.

Episcopal – of or pertaining to the office of a bishop.

Hierarchy – often refers to the bishops collectively.

Holy Orders – sacrament of the ministers of the Church; bishops, priests and deacons.

Installation – ceremony in which someone already a bishop is installed in a diocese.

Metropolitan – the archbishop; a Metropolitan See is an archdiocese.

Mitre – double-pointed hat worn by bishops and abbots.

Nuncio – papal ambassador; always an archbishop – addressed as “Archbishop...”, “His Excellency”.

Ordinary – a diocesan bishop is the Ordinary of the Diocese, but an auxiliary or a coadjutor is not.

Ordination – conferring of the sacrament of holy orders.

Pallium – band of white wool marked with six crosses, given by the Pope to Archbishops and worn around the neck over robes during services.

Pectoral Cross – cross worn by Bishops and Abbots around their neck.

Province – territory comprising a number of dioceses under an Archbishop. England & Wales have five provinces (Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool, Southwark, Westminster)

See - diocese

Terna – list of three names of candidates for a vacant diocese submitted to the Holy See by the Nuncio.

Zucchetto – small skull cap worn by Bishops.