

The Local Superior: Nomination, Formation, Term, Job Description

Practical Guide for the Local Superior
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Nomination

27. The local superior is named by the Visitor, with the consent of his council (C 125, 4°), after consultation with the members of the house (C 130 § 1). The Visitor or the Provincial Norms can determine the mode of consultation: through personal interview, letter, or some other means. The Visitor should communicate to the Superior General the names of the superiors he has named (C 125, 4°).

28. The Provincial Assembly can establish another mode of designating the local superior (C 130 § 2).

Requisites for nomination

29. In order to be named superior, a confrere must have passive voice and therefore have been incorporated into the Congregation for at least three years and be 25 years of age (C 61).

30. Since the local superiors have the power of jurisdiction both in the external and internal forum (cf., N° 36-38 below), they must be in Sacred Orders (C 100). This condition is, nevertheless, not absolute. With the permission of the Holy See brothers can and have been named superiors of local communities.

Formation

31. It is recommended that the Visitor assemble the local superiors for several days in the course of each year in order to assist them in their initial and ongoing formation as superiors and in order to consult them about major questions concerning the life and mission of the province. In this context, an additional day might be dedicated to the formation of new superiors, perhaps using this *Practical Guide*.¹

32. Each local superior, recognizing that he himself has the primary responsibility for his own formation, shall participate in appropriate workshops, courses, and other similar programs that will aid him in the exercise of his office.

Term

33. The local superior's mandate lasts for three years. He can be reappointed for a second three-year term. If after the second three-year term, there is a need for him to continue, the Visitor should have recourse to the Superior General (C 130 § 1).

34. The local superior can be removed if the Visitor, with the consent of his council and the approval of the Superior General, judges that there is a just and proportionate cause for taking this measure (C 133). It sometimes happens that the local superior does not complete

¹ Cf. *A Practical Guide for the Visitor*, 270, 4°.

his mandate because the Visitor, with this council, calls him to another mission, which he accepts. In this case, recourse to the Superior General is not necessary, since he is not being “removed” in the juridical sense.

Role

35. The local superior is at the service of the community as a whole and of each confrere. He exercises his role *with* the confreres of the house (S 79 § 1). As animator of a community for the mission, he “promotes the ministries of the house” (C 129 § 2). As animator of a community of persons bound together “like dear friends” (CR VIII, 2), he is “concerned for the personal development and activity of each confrere” (C 129 § 2). His principal role is to assist the community as a whole, and its individual members, in fulfilling the purpose of the Congregation and the objectives described in the Constitutions and Statutes, the Provincial Norms, and the Local Community Plan.

Rights and duties

36. The local superior has ordinary power in the internal and external forum for members and other persons living in his house day and night. He can delegate this power to others (C 131). Matters concerning the mission of the house and its community life belong to the external forum. Matters of conscience belong to the internal forum.

37. The superior’s power in the internal forum is limited. He cannot insist that a member of the house confess his sins to him or come to him as spiritual director (Canon 630 §§ 1 and 5). But on the other hand, if a member of the community requests him to do so, the local superior can hear his confession or serve as spiritual director (Canon 630 § 4). There is a delicate tension in the general law of the Church. While it forbids a superior in any way to induce the members to make a manifestation of conscience to himself, nonetheless it encourages members to approach superiors with trust and to open their minds freely and spontaneously to them (Canon 630 § 5). This presupposes an authentic climate of confidence and discretion within the local community. Otherwise the members will not feel free to be open in speaking with the superior and to share with him their personal problems and difficulties.

38. The local superior’s power in the external forum is very broad. It extends to decision-making in regard to all aspects of the life and ministry of the community. This power is to be exercised in communion with the members, as noted above in number 35.

39. Statute 78 provides a succinct list of the superior’s rights and duties:

- to keep the Visitor informed about the state of the house entrusted to him;
- to assign to members of the house those tasks and offices the assignment of which is not reserved to major superiors;
- to convoke and direct the domestic assembly;
- together with his community, to work out the common plan for his house and present it for the approval of the Visitor;
- to keep the archives and the seal of the house;
- to inform members about decrees and news of the Congregation;
- to see to it that Mass obligations are fulfilled.

The carrying out of these functions involves dedicating sufficient time to administrative matters, mindful of their pastoral scope.

Relationship with members not living in the house

40. The superior should maintain close ties with confreres attached to the house who, for motives of apostolate or other legitimate reasons, do not habitually live within it. He should visit them, invite them to the house for meetings, celebrations and other occasions, and make sure that they receive information about the house, the province and the worldwide Congregation.