



The Church building

Overview

A Parish Community consists of a membership of Catholics within a set of geographical boundaries gathering within a church building, the place of worship. Some parishes are formed on these territorial boundaries while others are formed on the basis of ethnicity or language.

Parish boundaries

While the church building is the physical place of worship within a community, parishioners come from the surrounding area. To identify the closest parish to an individual's residence, boundaries have been identified. This zoning is the most obvious but not the only means of a person's belonging to an individual parish as a person can belong to a parish in three ways: by one's street address, by regularly attending a parish outside of the pre-determined boundaries and registering there, and finally, where they attend Mass if a person is without a permanent residence.

In the Archdiocese of Toronto two distinct types of parishes have been established to address the needs of its Catholic population.

Territorial Parishes make up the bulk of parishes within the Archdiocese of Toronto. Currently, there are 181 territorial parishes that form a geographical grid work across the Archdiocese of Toronto. The primary language spoken at territorial parishes is English however, to address the needs of the faithful, Mass in other languages are offered.

Personal Parishes, whose zoning territory is bigger, sometimes encompass the entire archdiocese, to meet the needs of a specific ethnic community, nationality or need, such as sign language. Currently there are 44 personal parishes spread throughout the Archdiocese.

Church Types

Cathedral. The main church of the diocesan church and houses the bishop's chair (the cathedra). It is traditionally located in the 'see city' from which the diocese takes its name. St. Michael's Cathedral in Toronto was established in 1848. The pastor of the cathedral is the ordinary (Archbishop of Toronto), subsequently, the priest who administers to the cathedral parish and its affairs has the title of rector.

Basilica. There are seven main churches in Rome called Basilicas and are ancient pilgrimage churches. Minor basilicas, like St. Paul's in Toronto, are churches which have special privileges attached to them. St. Paul's Basilica is Toronto's oldest parish, established in 1822, and was raised to the status of a Basilica in 1999. By virtue of its rank, a Basilica also has the distinction of its own Coat of Arms.

Church. A church is the gathering place for the local community's worship. The general difference between a church and a parish is that a church is the physical structure and a parish refers to the organization and its people. In the Archdiocese of Toronto there are 225 parishes.

Chapel. Is a place of liturgical worship for a community other than a parish such as a school, hospital, convent, or seminary. A chapel can be a room within a building, or possibly, a separate building.

Mission. In the Archdiocese of Toronto a mission parish can mean two things. A mission is a place of liturgical worship that may be used seasonally and is attached to a local territorial parish. A mission can also be the term used for a personal parish for the care of souls of a specific group who do not have their own place of worship but use those of a territorial parish.