

# Highlighting The Lowcountry Deanery

On November 3, 2008, our pastor Father Michael Oenbrink was appointed Dean Pro Tem of the Lowcountry Deanery by Monsignor Laughlin, Administrator of the Charleston Diocese. This appointment was announced in *The Catholic Miscellany*. Perhaps you were not aware that St. Francis By the Sea is a member of The Lowcountry Deanery, and also, wondered what the purpose of a Catholic Deanery is.

A deanery is a section of the diocese made up of parishes and other ecclesiastical institutions under the limited authority of a dean, who in this diocese bears the title of Dean (and the pleasantry of being addressed as Very Reverend).

It appears that the Diocese of Charleston has used the deanery system since ca. 1948. It originally began with larger sections of the diocese, based on the metropolitan areas of Greenville, Columbia, and Charleston. The area of individual deaneries shrunk, while the number of parishes served in each deanery grew. Today they're still divided among large population centers, but go by regional (e.g., Lowcountry) rather than metropolitan designations.

The Lowcountry Deanery consists of the counties of Beaufort, Jasper, Hampton, and Colleton. Parishes and missions in those counties include St. Peter (Beaufort), St. Gregory the Great (Bluffton), St. Mary Mission (Hampton), Holy Family (Hilton Head), St. Francis by the Sea (Hilton Head), St. Anthony (Ridgeland), Holy Cross Mission

(Saint Helena Island), St. Anthony (Walterboro), and St. James the Greater Mission (Walterboro/Ritter). The Lowcountry Deanery was formed in 2004 from portions of the Coastal Deanery.



Each deanery is headed by a vicar forane, also called a dean or archpriest, who is a priest appointed by the bishop after consultation with the priests exercising ministry in the deanery. Since the Diocese of Charleston does not at present have a Bishop, Father Mike was appointed by Monsignor Laughlin, thus his title is Dean Pro

Tem. He will serve in this capacity until the Diocese does have a Bishop. At that time the Bishop has the option of appointing a dean or confirming the appointment of Father Mike.

General duties of the dean include promotion and coordination of the common pastoral activity within the deanery and seeing that religious functions follow Church norms. Father Mike also convenes and presides over meetings of the deanery which are normally held at St. Gregory the Great. He also is the liason between the diocese and the deanery.

At present, The Lowcountry Deanery is the only deanery that does not have a Catholic high school. Therefore, the deanery is currently addressing this concern and is actively working to make a Catholic high school in our deanery a reality.

We congratulate Father Mike and wish him well in his appointment.