

B. PRIESTS

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Policies for Diocesan Priests

The following excerpt is from the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests – *Presbyterorum Ordinis* – Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965. Citations within the excerpt are removed for readability. The entire decree is available online [here](#).

CHAPTER II – The Ministry of Priests SECTION 2 – Priests’ Relationships with Others

7. All priests, in union with bishops, so share in one and the same priesthood and ministry of Christ that the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical communion with the order of bishops. At times in an excellent manner they manifest this communion in liturgical concelebration as joined with the bishop when they celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Therefore, by reason of the gift of the Holy Spirit which is given to priests in Holy Orders, bishops regard them as necessary helpers and counselors in the ministry and in their role of teaching, sanctifying and nourishing the People of God. Already in the ancient ages of the Church we find liturgical texts proclaiming this with insistence, as when they solemnly call upon God to pour out upon the candidate for priestly ordination “the spirit of grace and counsel, so that with a pure heart he may help and govern the People of God,” just as in the desert the spirit of Moses was spread abroad in the minds of the seventy prudent men, “and using them as helpers among the people, he easily governed countless multitudes.”

Therefore, on account of this communion in the same priesthood and ministry, bishops should regard priests as their brothers and friends and be concerned as far as they are able for their material and especially for their spiritual well-being. For above all upon the bishops rests the heavy responsibility for the sanctity of their priests. Therefore, they should exercise the greatest care in the continual formation of their priests. They should gladly listen to their priests, indeed consult them and engage in dialogue with them in those matters which concern the necessities of pastoral work and welfare of the diocese. In order to put this into effect, there should be – in a manner suited to today's conditions and necessities, and with a structure and norms to be determined by law – a body or senate of priests representing all the priests. This representative body by its advice will be able to give the bishop effective assistance in the administration of the diocese.

Priests, never losing sight of the fullness of the priesthood which the bishops enjoy, must respect in them the authority of Christ, the Supreme Shepherd. They must therefore stand by their bishops in sincere charity and obedience. This priestly obedience, imbued with a spirit of cooperation, is based on the very sharing in the episcopal ministry which is conferred on priests both through the Sacrament of Orders and the canonical mission.

This union of priests with their bishops is all the more necessary today since in our present age, for various reasons, apostolic undertakings must necessarily not only take on many forms but frequently extend even beyond the boundaries of one parish or diocese. No priest, therefore, can on his own accomplish his mission in a satisfactory way. He can do so only by joining forces with other priests under the direction of the Church authorities.

“A person becomes a cleric through reception of diaconate and is incardinated into the particular church or personal prelature for whose service he has been advanced.” (c. 266, § 1.)

I. *Priests' Faculties*

The Bishop gives faculties to priests who share in his pastoral ministry to the People of God in the Diocese of Austin. These faculties are an assurance to the people that the Bishop has confidence that the priest will minister to them in the spirit of Christ and according to the faith Christ revealed to the apostles. The following faculties are granted according to the general law of the Church to priests in good standing for exercise within the territory of the Diocese of Austin.

A. Baptism and Confirmation

1. To pastors and parochial vicars to baptize those who have completed their fourteenth year (c. 863).
2. To all priests (*ipso iure*) to administer the sacrament of confirmation in danger of death (c. 883 3°).
3. To pastors (*ipso iure*) to administer the sacrament of confirmation to those persons who have attained the use of reason (c. 97) and whom they baptize (c. 883 1°; 530 2°; 886).
 - a. This same faculty is extended to parochial vicars. Pastors and parochial vicars are also given the faculty to confirm those persons who have attained the use the reason and are already baptized in another church or ecclesial communion, when they are received by them into full communion with the Church (c. 882, 884, § 1).

B. Eucharist

1. To all priests (*ipso iure*) to celebrate the holy sacrifice of the Mass according to approved liturgical norms (c. 900, § 2).
2. To all priests (*ipso iure*) to celebrate Mass in any decent place (c. 932, § 1).
 - a. Ordinarily funeral Masses should be celebrated in the parish church.
 - b. In case of pastoral necessity, the Mass can be celebrated in a funeral home.
3. To all priests to celebrate Mass once on weekdays under normal circumstances; three times on Sunday and Holy Days according to need. Mass may be celebrated twice on weekdays due to urgent need (e.g. funerals, weddings). Bination on weekdays should not be a regular practice (c. 905)
4. To all priests or pastors to dispense an individual in a specific instance for a just reason from the Eucharistic abstinence (c. 919, § 1).
5. To pastors (*ipso iure*) and to parochial vicars to dispense individuals, when there is a just and sufficient reason, from the obligation of observing a day of precept or a day of penance, or to commute obligation into other pious works.
 - a. This faculty may be exercised on behalf of a parishioner or a person visiting within the boundaries of the parish.
 - b. For this faculty to be validly exercised the reason for granting the dispensation must not be a matter of mere convenience but of sufficient concern to warrant the granting of the dispensation (c. 1245, 91).
6. To celebrants (*ipso iure*) to consume something before the second or third celebration of the Eucharist, even though there is not an hour's interval (c. 919, § 1).

C. Preaching

1. To all priests to preach the Word of God everywhere unless this faculty has been restricted or removed by the competent authority or unless particular law requires express permission (c. 764).

D. Sacrament of Reconciliation

1. To pastors the habitual faculty to administer the sacrament of reconciliation is granted (*ipso iure*) (c. 986, § 1).
 - a. This same habitual faculty is extended to all parochial vicars and priests who have domicile in this diocese (c. 967, § 1).
 - b. This faculty may be exercised anywhere in the world, unless in a particular case the local Ordinary has restricted its exercise (c. 967, § 2).
2. To confessors to remit in the internal or external forum a *latae sententiae* penalty for abortion and apostasy.
 - a. This faculty may be exercised only within the confines of the diocese and on behalf of any person regardless of the person's residence or the place where the penalty was incurred.
 - b. Since apostasy constitutes leaving the Church by a formal act, reconciliation should be in the external forum with a notation in the baptismal register since the person would again be bound to the canonical form of marriage (cf. c. 1117).

E. Marriage

1. To pastors (*ipso iure*) to subdelegate a priest or deacon in an individual case or to give general delegation to a specific priest or deacon in writing to assist in marriages within the boundaries of the parish to which the pastor is assigned (c. 1111, § 1).
 - a. The faculty to assist at marriages within the boundaries of the parish to which they are assigned is extended to parochial vicars as well. However, they may subdelegate this faculty to a specific priest or deacon only in individual cases and not as a general delegation (c. 137, § 3).
 - b. Marriages are not to be celebrated in any place except a church.
 - i. Only the Bishop can grant a dispensation from this requirement.
2. The faculty is granted to those able to assist at marriages to dispense from all the impediments to marriage which may be dispensed by the local Ordinary, when everything has been prepared for the marriage (*omnia parata*), when the marriage cannot be delayed without the probable danger of grave harm until the dispensation can be obtained from the competent authority, and the competent authority cannot be contacted by telephone prior to the ceremony.

NOTE: If this faculty is exercised, the Bishop must be notified immediately in writing.

 - a. Therefore, in an *omnia parata* situation, only the following impediments may be dispensed:
 - i. Age (c. 1083, § 1)
 - ii. Disparity of worship (c. 1086, § 1)
 - iii. Abduction (c. 1089)
 - iv. Consanguinity except in the direct line or in the second degree of the collateral line (c. 1091)
 - v. Affinity in the direct line (c. 1092)
 - vi. Public propriety (c. 1093)
 - vii. Legal relationship based on adoption in the direct line or the second degree of the collateral line (c. 1094)
 - b. If a dispensation is granted, make a notation on the marriage application and contact the chancery as soon as possible.
 - c. The following are reserved impediments and may not be dispensed by priests or deacons:

- i. Those of divine law, e.g. impotence, prior bond (*ligamen*), consanguinity in the direct line or in the second degree of the collateral line (c. 1078, § 3; 1084; 1085, § 1; 1091)
 - ii. Sacred Orders and public perpetual vow of chastity in an institute of pontifical right (c. 1078, § 2, 1°)
 - iii. Conjugicide (c. 1078, § 2, 2°).
 - d. Dispensation from canonical form is reserved to the local Ordinary.
- 3. Pastors and parochial vicars may permit a marriage between a baptized Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic in an *omnia parata* situation, if the conditions in Canon 1125 are met and the Bishop is immediately notified in writing (c. 1124).

F. Funerals

- 1. To pastors and parochial vicars assigned to a parish to allow funeral rites for an unbaptized child, if the parents had intended to have the child baptized (c. 1183, § 2).
- 2. To pastors and parochial vicars assigned to a parish to allow funeral rites for a baptized person belonging to a non-Catholic church or ecclesial community, provided this is not clearly contrary to the wishes of the deceased and provided a minister of the faith of the deceased, for whatever reason, is not available (c. 1183, § 3).

G. Vows

- 1. To pastors (*ipso iure*) and to parochial vicars assigned to a parish to dispense from private vows made by a person belonging to the parish to which they are assigned and also by a visitor within the territory of the parish.
 - a. This dispensation may be granted only if no injury is done to the acquired rights of others (c. 1196, 1°, 3°).
- 2. To pastors (*ipso iure*) and to parochial vicars assigned to a parish to commute to a lesser good what has been promised by a private vow made by a person belonging to the parish to which they are assigned and also by a visitor within the territory of the parish (c. 1197).

H. Liturgy of the Hours

- 1. To all priests to omit the Liturgy of the Hours except Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer if one participates in:
 - a. A Mass celebrated or presided over by the Bishop
 - b. A jubilee Mass
 - c. A Mass offered on the occasion of an ordination, religious investiture or profession
 - d. Confirmation or Forty Hours
 - e. A cursillo, retreat or day of recollection
 - f. The hearing of confession for more than two hours
 - g. Trination
- 2. To all priests to omit all of the Liturgy of the Hours on Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day, if he participates in a vigil service or a Midnight Mass.

II. Care of Priests

A. Retreats, Days of Prayer, Convocations

- 1. Every priest is to make a retreat annually (c. 276.4, § 2, 4°).
 - a. The cost of the retreat is covered by the parish or institution served by the priest.
 - i. If a priest makes a retreat other than the ones provided by the Diocese of Austin, he can be compensated only the amount charged for the diocesan retreat. (See [Compensation Schedule for Priests.](#))

- b. Priests who do not attend the retreats scheduled/organized by the diocese should inform the Vicar for Priests of their alternate retreat plan.
2. Every priest is to have a spiritual director. A minister to priests is available in the diocese for spiritual direction. He can also assist to identify others who can serve as a spiritual director for priests.
 - a. The regular celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation is highly encouraged.
3. All priests are invited and encouraged to join with the presbyterate for the days of prayer during Advent and Lent.
4. Priests are encouraged to build fraternal relationships with other priests within the presbyterate through occasions of prayer and fraternal support groups or other ecclesial spiritualities that are in keeping with their ministry as priests (c. 278, § 1).

B. Continuing Education

1. The Committee of Priestly Life and Formation in consultation with the Presbyteral Council organizes an annual Priests' Convocation in the fall of each year.
 - a. The cost of the convocations is covered by the parish/institution served by the priest and/or the diocese.
2. An additional allowance per annum is to be made available to the priest by the parish/institution for "continuing education." (See [Compensation Schedule for Priests.](#))
3. Priests are invited and encouraged to gather each year in June for a summer gathering of fraternity and renewal with the Bishop and brother priests.
 - a. The meals and other expenses are covered by the budget of the Priestly Life and Formation Committee; the hotel cost is covered by the parish or institution served by the priest (See [Compensation Schedule for Priests.](#))

C. Sabbatical Policy

A sabbatical policy for the priests of the Diocese of Austin was approved by the Presbyteral Council on January 28, 2004. (See [Sabbatical Policy.](#))

D. Vacation

Priests are allowed no more than one (1) month annually for vacation (c. 283; 533, § 2; 550, § 3). They should take this time for rest and rejuvenation for their own health and well-being.

1. The annual retreat is not considered as vacation time.
2. A request for vacation that exceeds one month requires approval by the Bishop.

E. Day off

For the good of his own health, every priest should take a day off each week.

F. Medical Care

Every priest is encouraged to have an annual physical examination.

G. Mental Health

Every priest will have access to mental health care such as treatment for addiction, psychiatric conditions, or other behavioral issues.

III. Remuneration

A. Classification, Remuneration, and Sustenance Policies for Incardinated Priests

1. The *Classification, Remuneration, and Sustenance Policies for Incardinated Priests in the Diocese of Austin* (effective July 1, 2020) are detailed in the [Priest Classification and Remuneration Chart.](#)

2. The chart only applies to incardinated priests of the Diocese of Austin; changes in classification or ministry for extern or religious order priests are made in collaboration with the priest's ordinary or superior.

B. Salary and Benefits

1. Diocesan priests and religious priests who serve in full-time ministry in the Diocese of Austin receive a monthly salary from the parish or institution to which they are assigned.
 - a. The Bishop of the Diocese of Austin sets the amount in consultation with the Presbyteral Council.
 - i. The amount is reviewed periodically and is published in the [*Compensation Schedule for Priests*](#).
 - ii. A parish or institution may not give a different (larger or smaller) salary than the amount published in the [*Compensation Schedule for Priests*](#).
 - iii. If a parish is unable to pay the required salary, the pastor or administrator should notify and consult with the Vicar General.
 - iv. Payments to priests under a different character, nature, or name are prohibited, unless such payments are specifically authorized in this policy or specifically permitted by the Bishop.

C. Room (Rectory)

1. Every parish is to own a rectory suitable for use of the priest(s) who serve the parish.
2. The parish is responsible for the cost of maintaining the rectory.
3. Priests may not receive a housing allowance from the parish to be applied to the purchase of a priest's own dwelling property.

D. Health Insurance

1. The diocese sends regular invoices to each parish or institution where a priest is serving to pay the priest's health insurance premium.
2. It is the responsibility of the parish or institution to pay for the premiums for each priest who serves at the parish or institution.
3. All priests are on the diocesan health insurance plan except for certain religious priests whose Order maintains a separate health insurance policy for the priests in the Order.
 - a. In those cases, the parish or institution will pay the same premium amount to the Order for the priest's health insurance.

E. Pension

1. The diocese gives an annual contribution to the Priest Pension Plan based on the assessment calculated on the size of the parish.
2. Each parish pays the assessment without regard to whether the parish or institution is served by incardinated priests, other diocesan priests, or religious priests.
3. The diocese has contractual arrangements with the Orders providing religious priests to serve in the diocese. The terms of the contracts determine the amount of any retirement or pension benefits for the care of religious priests.
4. The parish is assessed for the priests assigned at the parish.

F. Mass Stipends and Stole Fees

1. Mass Stipends in the Provinces of Texas are \$5 per Mass.
 - a. When the donation for numerous Masses does not specify the number of Masses to be celebrated the standard of \$5 per Mass applies.
 - b. Smaller stipends or even no stipend should not prevent the acceptance of a Mass intention (c. 950-952).

2. A pastor is obliged to celebrate one Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation for the people entrusted to him. This is known as the *Pro Populo* intention.
 - a. If he has care for more than one parish, only one (1) Mass intention needs to be celebrated for the entire people entrusted to him (c. 534).
3. Priests are to receive no more than \$5 per Mass even when the amount of stipends collected is greater than \$5 unless the person making the offering has freely indicated at the time of the request the priest is to receive a greater amount.
 - a. Only one stipend can be accepted for each Mass. The priest is able to retain for his own use only one (1) stipend per day. The other stipends attached to other Masses celebrated on the same day must be given to the parish or the missions.
4. Only one (1) stipend can be accepted for each Mass even in cases of collective offerings. In the case where there are multiple Mass intentions, like All Souls Day, the priest is to only receive one (1) stipend and either give the remaining stipends to the parish for charitable purposes or forward the extra stipends to the diocese for distribution to parishes without sufficient Mass intentions and/or to support retired clergy and seminarians.
5. Stole fees are gifts from persons for sacramental service or other functions, and are distributed according to the intention of the donor (i.e., to the cleric or to the parish, c. 531).
 - a. Parishes may not charge a fee for the services of a priest.
 - b. Parishes may charge a fee to cover reasonable expenses (for facilities or other costs) in accordance with the *Supplementary Norms*, but the fee may not include a fee for clergy to celebrate a sacrament or to be present at the parochial function.
 - c. Neither a priest nor a parish may support, encourage, or require persons to pay or offer a stole fee.
 - d. The diocese maintains recommended stipend amount(s) to compensate a priest who ministers in a parish other than his own (see [Compensation Schedule for Priests](#)).
 - i. Priests who “supply” in parishes other than their own parishes are compensated in accordance with the [Compensation Schedule for Priests](#).
 - ii. A parish must provide visiting clergy who receive payment from the parish over the specified Internal Revenue Service threshold, Form 1099 reflecting amounts paid to the visiting clergy during the year.

G. Reimbursable Expenses (Accountable Plan)

1. Reimbursed expenses paid under an “accountable plan” are not taxable to the priest and not included in the priest’s W-2.
2. The IRS requires that certain rules apply and are satisfied in order for a plan to maintain its status as an accountable plan (See *IRS Pub. 463*).
3. Therefore, to be eligible for reimbursement, expenses must:
 - a. have a business-related purpose (directly used by the priest in his ministry as a priest)
 - b. be supported by the submission of an invoice, bill, or receipt showing date, total amount, and purpose of expenditure
 - c. be reimbursed based on the actual cost of the item or service
 - d. be requested and reimbursed before the end of the applicable tax year
4. The parish or institution and the priest are to maintain the invoice or receipt as a record for five (5) years.
5. All goods paid for by the parish directly or by reimbursement to the priest belong to the parish and should remain at the parish.
6. When incurring costs and expenses outlined below, the amounts should be reasonable and the parish and priest should exercise good stewardship and prudence related to the purchase of such items and should be authorized first by the parish or institution’s budget.
7. Except for these items and those listed in Section III-G-8, the parish or institution shall, upon receiving proper substantiation, pay or reimburse a priest’s expenses for:

- a. Automobile: Reasonable expenses related to the professional use of one (1) personal automobile, including gas, maintenance, minor repairs, insurance, inspection, taxes, license fee, parking fees and tolls.
 - b. Equipment: Reasonable expenses for equipment necessary for the exercise of the priest's ministry (e.g. pyx, oil stocks), as well as business-related expenses, such as computers or office supplies (excludes items for priest's personal use).
 - c. Cell phone plan: Reasonable cost of a plan for one (1) cell phone that provides sufficient minutes and data for related calls necessary for the priest's ministry.
 - d. Clerical clothing: Reasonable expenses for clothing used in priestly ministry (e.g., alb (one every two years) black suit (one every two years), and clerical shirts (not to exceed 6 per year), but excluding personal clothing such as shorts, shoes, socks, casual pants, non-clerical shirts, etc.).
 - e. Dues, Subscriptions, Books: Reasonable expenses for dues, subscriptions or books, which strengthen or support priestly life and ministry (excludes expenses for personal use).
 - f. Continuing Education: Reasonable expenses for continuing education in an amount not greater than allowed for in the [*Compensation Schedule for Priests*](#).
 - g. Moving expenses: Upon reassignment of a priest, the parish or institution he is leaving shall pay or reimburse the priest's reasonable expenses for moving, not to exceed the amount set forth in the [*Compensation Schedule for Priests*](#).
8. Expenses not reimbursed:
- a. Parishes may reimburse only those expense described above as reimbursable and may not purchase, reimburse or defray the cost of items not listed above as reimbursable.
 - b. Examples of non-reimbursable expenses or payments include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. All or part of the purchase price of an automobile
 - ii. Costs of maintaining or insuring a second automobile, other than described above
 - iii. The purchase price of a vehicle to be retained in the parish's or institution's name for use by the priest in his ministry
 - iv. All or part of the purchase price of a cell phone. This refers to the purchase of a phone expensed monthly on the bill.
 - v. Accessories such as shoes, socks, belts of any color or type, or other personal clothing
 - vi. Expenses for a priest's vacation, such as airfare, mileage, gas, lodging, food, etc.
 - vii. A priest's education other than as expressly authorized by this policy
 - viii. Personal items such as cigarettes, personal care items, and toiletries
 - ix. International personal long distance calls or mobile phone expenses used primarily for personal use
 - x. Health insurance deductibles, co-pays, co-insurance, and any amounts in excess of what the diocesan health plan covers
 - xi. Personal items and equipment, such as computers, books, religious articles, subscriptions, dues, etc.
 - xii. Personal fines or fees, such as speeding tickets
 - xiii. Auto insurance deductibles
 - xiv. Gym memberships or personal trainers
 - xv. Cost of cable over basic subscription
 - xvi. Subscription costs for applications, such as Netflix, and/or other streaming subscriptions
 - xvii. Entertainment expenses, movies, video rentals, personal applications, etc.
 - xviii. Amounts in excess of those recommended in the [*Compensation Schedule for Priests*](#).

H. Tax Issues for Priests

1. Income Tax: All diocesan priests (incardinated and extern) employed by parishes and diocesan institutions and religious priests (including externs) employed by parishes and diocesan institutions who receive direct compensation (paycheck made in priest's name) are considered "employees" for income tax purposes.
 - a. They are to receive a W-2 Form from the parish or institution, which includes salary, allowances, and Mass stipends (if paid to the priest by a parish check).
 - b. The W-2 should be filled out by the employing institution by January 31 for the previous year's income.
 - c. The information does not apply to religious priests who do not receive direct compensation from the parish (e.g., religious orders receive a contractual fee from the parish or diocese in lieu of compensation to priests).
2. Social Security Tax: The Internal Revenue Service treats priests as "self-employed" for social security purposes.
 - a. The priest is responsible for the entire social security tax payment.
 - b. Diocesan and extern priests must participate in the social security system and may not opt out.
 - c. Religious priests are exempt from taxes due to their vows of poverty and the fact that any compensation for services in ministry is paid to and belongs to the Order.
 - d. Withholding Tax: Priests have the option to have taxes withheld from their regular paychecks; or to file quarterly tax payments (*Form 1040 ES*).
 - i. If a priest wants the parish to withhold taxes, he must complete Form W-4 at the beginning of the year, declaring the amount to withhold, based on his estimated total taxable compensation (salary, stipends, earned income, etc.) and not solely on his salary.
 - e. Mileage Log: It is prudent for a priest to maintain a mileage log, if he needs to illustrate to the Internal Revenue Service that the vehicle is used entirely or mostly for ministerial purposes, and avoid questions from the Internal Revenue Service about the reimbursements and use of the vehicle.
 - f. Stipends, Mass Intentions, Stole Fees: Stipends, Mass intentions, and stole fees are federal taxable income.
 - i. The parish must include stole fees, Mass intentions, and stipends paid by the parish in the priest's gross wages and report it in his annual W-2.
 - a. "Stipends" include Mass stipends and payments for other services.
 - b. "Stole fees" are gifts in connection with a priestly service (gifts at weddings, funerals, etc.).
 - ii. If a person gives a priest a gift in exchange for or in thanksgiving for a priestly service, it is taxable income to the priest (regardless of whether the gift was solicited).
 - iii. The only gifts that are not taxable are those gifts that are not related to priestly service from the faithful (e.g., Christmas gift, birthday gift, etc.)
 - iv. If the parish gives a priest a check for Mass stipends or stole fees, the total annual amount is to be included on the priest's W-2 form as additional income.
 - v. If the priest maintains his own record for Mass stipends and stole fees received directly from the faithful, he includes the annual amount of stipends and stole fees on his *Schedule C* as miscellaneous income.
 - g. Fair Rental Value for Housing: The fair rental value of a rectory is excludable only for federal income tax purposes.
 - i. The priest must include the amount of the fair rental value of a rectory for Social Security of Medicare coverage purposes.
 - ii. The fair market value (FMV) of the rental value of the priest rectory should be estimated and reported as additional income.

- iii. Each parish should evaluate the specific living situation of its priests to determine the fair market rental amount to report.
- iv. It is prudent to keep the calculations for arriving at the FMV on file.
- v. The parish is required by the Internal Revenue Service to provide the pastor with a FMV Letter at the time he is provided a W-2.

IV. Lending Parish Funds

A pastor does not have the authority to lend church funds to himself or any individual.

V. Personal Business

Priests are not to conduct business or trade either for their own benefit or that of others without the permission of the Bishop. (c. 286)

VI. Proper Dress

When exercising their ministry, priests should wear suitable ecclesiastical garb (c. 284).

VII. Personnel Assignments and Procedures

- A. The Priests' Personnel Committee assists the Bishop in the assignments of priests.
 - 1. The Committee meets (in person or by conference call) at least quarterly and more often as required.
 - 2. All matters discussed by the Personnel Committee are confidential.

VIII. Retirement

- A. Priests may retire at age 70.
 - 1. When a priest reaches the age of 75, he is to submit in writing a letter of resignation to the Bishop.
 - a. The Bishop will either accept the letter of resignation, or, if the Bishop and the priest agree, the priest may continue to serve as his health permits.
 - b. The Bishop and priest will review his health and ministry on a year-to-year basis.
- B. If a priest wishes to retire before age 70 for health or other personal reasons, he should consult with the Bishop, and, if a mutual agreement is reached, the priest should submit a letter of resignation to the Bishop.
- C. The Diocese of Austin provides a home for priests at the John Paul II Residence for Priests in Georgetown.
 - 1. Priests will be given preference to live at the residence in the following order:
 - a. Diocesan Priests of the Diocese of Austin
 - b. Extern priests who have served in the Diocese of Austin
 - c. Religious Order priests who have served in the Diocese of Austin with the permission of their superiors
 - d. Other priests

- D. The cost of rent at the John Paul II Residence for Priests will be determined by the Bishop/Presbyteral Council in consultation with the trustees and Committee of the Priests' Retirement Fund (Austin Pension Plan and Trust)
 - 1. Rent is not to exceed half of the monthly pension payment.
- E. A copy of the by-laws of the *Austin Pension Plan and Trust* is available through the Office of the Vicar for Priests.

IX. Assisted Living and Nursing Home Care

- A. When a priest can no longer live independently, and specialized care is needed, the priest is asked to contribute his pension plan and social security payment to partially defray the cost of assisted living or nursing home care.
 - 1. The Diocese of Austin pays the remainder of the cost of this care.

X. Personnel Files and Diocesan Archives

- A. Every diocesan priest must have the following documents on file at the Pastoral Center:
 - 1. An updated will (at least updated every ten (10) years)
 - 2. An inventory of personal material belongings and the location of financial documents (such as insurance policies, bank accounts, deeds, stocks, etc.) which are not otherwise listed or defined in the priest's will
 - 3. A list (names and addresses) of the priest's next of kin (parents, brothers, sisters, etc.)
 - 4. A living will or a directive to the doctors should the priest become unable to make medical decisions
 - 5. A power of attorney
 - 6. Burial instructions
- B. Each document is to be placed in a separate sealed envelope with the title of the document on the envelope.
- C. The documents will be held in the priest's personal file by the chancellor of the diocese and will be opened only upon the death of the priest or as needed in a medical or other emergency.

XI. Funeral Arrangements

- A. Diocesan priests are to have instructions for their funeral liturgy and funeral instructions on file with the chancellor at the Pastoral Center.
- B. Funeral expenses can be covered by the benefits of the diocesan life insurance policy.
 - 1. Any amount above the policy coverage will be covered by the priest's estate.

XII. Extern Priests Who Are Accepted to do Ministry in the Diocese

- A. Based on the pastoral need of the Diocese of Austin external priests may be invited to exercise priestly ministry for a specified period of time.
 - 1. Priests who come to the Diocese of Austin to exercise priestly ministry are to be welcomed as brothers among the presbyterate.

- B. Extern priests must supply the following for their personnel file prior to beginning ministry with the Diocese of Austin:
 - 1. Copies of their visa information (if international clergy)
 - 2. Letter of permission from their Bishop or provincial superior giving the priest permission to serve in another diocese
 - 3. A curriculum vitae
 - 4. A completed data information form provided by the vicar for priests of the Diocese of Austin
 - 5. A medical report signed by a physician designated by the Diocese of Austin stating that the priest is in good health.

- C. The Diocese of Austin will:
 - 1. Give faculties for the period of time the priest will serve in the diocese
 - 2. Offer health insurance (paid by the parish or institution served by the priest)
 - 3. Offer a loan for a car (not to exceed \$15,000) to be paid back monthly from the priest's paycheck

Sabbatical Policy: “Rekindling the Gift of God”

I. Description

- A. A sabbatical is an educational leave (encouraged by the Diocese of Austin) for a period of three (3) to four (4) months, in which a priest takes time off from the responsibilities of his assignment to pursue a specific program of formation or a combination of different elements which fit the particular personal and ministerial needs of the priest. This is conducive to the mission of the diocese and the universal Church.

The ongoing formation of priests, whether diocesan or religious, is the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality which began and developed in the seminary or the religious house with the training program which aimed at ordination (Pastores Dabo Vobis³ 71).

- B. A sabbatical is distinguished from:
1. A vacation that is used solely for rest, relaxation, and recreation
 2. A retreat that is oriented solely toward spiritual renewal
 3. Sick leave which is intended for the recovery of physical health
 4. Pursuit of a graduate degree program for the purpose of specific professional development or meeting of approved criteria for assignment
 5. A weeklong program of either spiritual or intellectual pursuit

II. Eligibility

- A. Priests ordained ten (10) years or more are eligible for a sabbatical.
1. As priests approach their tenth anniversary of ordination, they are highly encouraged to begin planning for a sabbatical.
 2. Subsequent sabbaticals can be made at seven (7) year intervals.
 3. Priests recently incardinated into the Diocese of Austin are eligible for a sabbatical based on the same criteria provided they have served in the Diocese of Austin for at least five (5) years.

III. Types of Sabbaticals

- A. There are a wide range of sabbatical options. There are both self-contained and structured programs. Some sabbaticals reflect a desire for theological update and educational focus. Some may center on spirituality and others may center on development of additional pastoral skills. Some sabbaticals provide a different cultural/world context. These and other variations reflect the varied needs and interests of priests. There are several resource books that list and describe briefly a variety of sabbatical programs. For someone who is considering a sabbatical, it would be helpful to become acquainted with these resources. Resource books are available from the vicar for priests.
- B. Special individualized programs can be proposed to the vicar for priests.
1. A sabbatical of this kind may be one that focuses on a particular area of ministry or a specific area that the priest may want to explore for his personal or professional growth.
 2. Those pursuing individualized programs must present a detailed plan with goals and criteria prior to the sabbatical.

IV. Procedures for Application

- A. When a priest decides he wants to take a sabbatical, he must complete a Sabbatical Form and turn it in to the vicar for priests.
- B. The preferred date of his requested sabbatical should also be given.
 - 1. This does not presume approval at this time but it places the request on a priority listing.
- C. Because many sabbatical programs have limited registration and allotted positions per diocese, there is a need that this request is made at least one (1) year in advance of the sabbatical program.
- D. For each calendar year, applications for first sabbaticals to be taken in that year will be accepted up until eighteen (18) months prior to that year; after that time, applications will be accepted from those who have had a previous sabbatical.
- E. Applications will be evaluated and approved by the vicar for priests and confirmed by the diocesan Bishop.

V. Number of Sabbaticals

The number of the sabbaticals granted each year is determined by the funds and priest personnel available.

VI. Personnel Replacement

- A. Approval of a sabbatical request does not require prior confirmation of a replacement.
- B. Lining up of a replacement must be done with the approval of the director of the Priests' Personnel Board and the bishop.
- C. A priest preparing to go on sabbatical should make every effort to find his replacement.
 - 1. If he needs assistance, he should ask the director of the Priests' Personnel Board to help him identify potential replacements. The Priests' Personnel Board may assist the priest in obtaining coverage.
- D. If needed, a temporary administrator may be appointed by the Bishop for the duration of the sabbatical.

VII. Coverage of Sabbatical Expenses

- A. Sabbatical program expenses are covered by a grant from the diocesan Sabbatical Account of the Priestly Life and Formation Committee's Budget.
 - 1. The maximum Sabbatical Fund grant is found in the [*Compensation Schedule for Priests*](#).
- NOTE: The average cost for Menlo Park, St. Meinrad, NAC is about \$16,000.
- a. The priest himself is responsible for one-third (1/3) of the total cost, the parish will cover one-third (1/3), and the Diocese will cover one-third (1/3).
- B. The employing institution will cover the salary and benefits for both the priest on sabbatical and the priest who is replacing him during the time of sabbatical.

- C. Parishes that cannot afford these expenses should inform the vicar for priests in a timely manner.
- D. In the situation where the sabbatical occurs during the transition time between two assignments, the last place of assignment will ordinarily continue to pay his salary and benefits.
- E. [Application Forms for Priests' Sabbaticals](#) are found in the Forms section of the Pastoral Manual.

Immigration Guidelines for International Priests and Religious

These procedures will pertain to all international priests and religious who are sponsored to come to the Diocese of Austin for ministry on the R-1 Temporary Religious Worker Visa and those being sponsored for Legal Permanent Residence (LPR).

- I. *A letter of approval and a testimonial of suitability from the individual's bishop or provincial (or designee) must be submitted.*
 - A. The bishop or provincial must certify the person is in good standing, in good health, has no barriers to ministry, and is given permission to live and work in the III of Austin under the R-1 Visa or as a legal resident.
 - B. These documents should be submitted prior to any finalized immigration documents being submitted to the US government, unless circumstances require otherwise.
 1. Both the letter of approval and testimonial of suitability must be on official diocesan or provincial letterhead and have a current date, an original signature, and an official seal of the diocese or province.
 2. Receipt of these documents may be submitted by mail, courier, or electronically.
 - a. Faxes may be accepted only if they are to be followed by the original hard copy that meets these requirements.
 3. The Diocese of Austin reserves the right to ask for copies of the individual's personnel file as a condition of sponsorship.

II. Guidelines for the-R-1 Visa

- A. The intent of sponsorship for the R-1 Visa is for an international priest or religious to work in the Diocese of Austin for a period of time not to exceed five (5) years.
- B. Only the Diocese of Austin will sponsor international priests or religious for R-1 Visas to work in parishes, schools, or other diocesan entities as identified in the most current *Official Catholic Directory (Kenedy Directory)*.
 1. If an international priest or religious will be serving an entity separate from the Diocese of Austin, the employing entity must act as the sponsor.
- C. Only the Bishop of Austin or the vicar general may sign immigration paperwork or make final decisions regarding visa sponsorship.
- D. No international priest or religious may purchase land or houses while working in the Diocese of Austin while on an R-1 Visa.
- E. The Diocese of Austin will pay all legal fees, government application fees, and transportation expenses to arrive from their home country for priests sponsored to work in the diocese under the R-1 Visa, with the exception of certain religious orders where it is customary and appropriate for them to pay their own legal fees and transportation costs.
- F. An R-1 Visa holder may only work in the assignment made by the visa sponsor.

III. Guidelines for Legal Permanent Residence

- A. Diocesan sponsorship for LPR is usually restricted to the following circumstances:
 - 1. The individual is an expert in a specialization or is in a ministry which would otherwise be difficult to fill
 - 2. The individual has been approved for incardination in the Diocese of Austin
 - 3. Other reasons exist for sponsorship, including the unforeseen needs of the diocese
- B. Payment of fees for LPR applications
 - 1. If a priest is or will be incardinated in the Diocese of Austin, all legal costs and governmental application fees will be paid by the Diocese of Austin.
 - 2. If a priest is not incardinated in the Diocese of Austin, but is asked to stay in the US by our diocese, the Diocese of Austin will pay all legal costs and governmental application fees.
 - 3. If a priest is not incardinated in the Diocese of Austin and he requests permission to stay (and there is no objection by the Diocese of Austin), the individual priest is responsible for paying all legal costs and government application fees.
 - 4. If a religious brother or sister is approved for sponsorship for legal residence, the individual or their religious order is responsible for all legal costs and government application fees.
- C. Use of Attorney Services
 - 1. If the Diocese of Austin pays any part of the costs related to the LPR petition, the priest must use the attorney recommended by the Diocese of Austin.
 - 2. If the Diocese of Austin does not pay any of the costs related to the LPR petition, the priest may use any attorney he chooses.
 - 3. Religious brothers and sisters approved for LPR sponsorship may use any attorney they choose.
- D. The individual priest or religious is responsible for fulfilling all obligations and requirements in the LPR application process as required by the government or the attorney.
 - 1. Failure to meet this requirement may result in denial or withdrawal of sponsorship by the Diocese of Austin.

IV. Application for US Citizenship

- A. The Diocese of Austin is not involved in the citizenship petition process and does not pay legal or government fees for priests or religious applying for citizenship.
- B. The priest or religious is not permitted to solicit funds to cover any of the costs or fees related to the citizenship application process from the laity or from the parish or institution they serve.

V. Transportation expenses for international priests and religious to travel to and return from their home countries for vacation or other personal business is the responsibility of the individual or their religious order.

- A. The priest or religious is not permitted to solicit funds to cover any of the transportation or other costs related to the travel from the laity, or from the parish or institution they serve.
- B. Diocesan assistance with transportation costs for emergency family situations may be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

VI. The Diocese of Austin, the international priest or religious and the receiving parish, school or diocesan entity will abide by all civil and criminal laws, including U.S. Immigration and U.S. State Department rules, policies, and regulations (e.g.: reporting change of residence to immigration officials).

- A. Failure to comply with laws or regulations may result in the priest or religious losing their sponsorship and employment with the Diocese of Austin.

VII. To continue ministry in the Diocese of Austin, an international priest or religious is expected to:

- A. Provide copies of current passport, visas, and I-94s to the appropriate diocesan official within one week of arrival.
 - 1. Copies of changes in these documents must be submitted within one week of the change.
- B. Meet enculturation standards, as directed by the vicar for priests or the vicar for religious, prior to being given a pastoral assignment in a parish, school, or other diocesan entity.
 - 1. The individual may reside in a parish, but will not receive a pastoral assignment until the enculturation standards are met as prescribed.
 - 2. During the enculturation period and prior to pastoral ministry, the priest will be provided compensation through an agreement between the vicar general and the institution served.
- C. Attend English as a Second Language (ESL), accent modification, or other language classes if required by the Bishop.
- D. Notify the vicar general and vice chancellor of the Diocese of Austin when any change of residence has occurred.
- E. Notify the vicar general prior to any travel outside the U.S.
- F. Acquire a Texas Driver's License and U.S. Social Security Card (optional) within 30 days.

VIII. An international priest or religious may be returned to their country of origin if, after careful assessment and evaluation, it is determined that repatriation is in the best interest of the Diocese of Austin or in the best interest of the individual.

Compensation Schedule for Priests

I. Remuneration for Supply Work

A. Weekend Ministry

1. \$50 for each weekend Mass
2. \$25 for Sacrament of Penance
3. Retired clergy receive the IRS rate per-mile travel allowance. Priests in active ministry do not receive mileage allowance since their parish pays for gas, repairs, and maintenance of their vehicle.
4. Applicable Mass stipends of \$5 per Mass per day

B. Weekday Ministry

1. \$25 for each weekday Mass
2. Retired clergy receive the IRS rate per-mile travel allowance. Priests in active ministry do not receive mileage allowance since their parish pays for gas, repairs, and maintenance of their vehicle.
3. Applicable Mass stipends of \$5 per Mass per day

II. Retreats, Days of Prayer, Convocations

- A. If a priest makes a retreat other than the ones provided by the Diocese of Austin, he can be compensated no more than the amount charged for the diocesan retreat. The priest would be personally responsible for all additional expenses.
- B. The parish/institution will cover the convocation fee assessed by the diocese per priest assigned to the parish regardless of attendance. The parish will also cover reasonable hotel costs for its priest to attend the convocation.

III. Continuing Education

- A. The additional allowance per annum to be made available to the priest by the parish/institution for “continuing education” is \$1,200 (includes travel and lodging). The parish will cover the summer gathering fee assessed by the diocese per priest assigned to the parish regardless of attendance. The parish/institution will also cover reasonable hotel costs for the summer gathering for priests or retreats organized by the Priestly Life and Formation Committee.

IV. Priest Salary

- A. Effective July 1, 2020, the monthly salary for priests in active ministry is \$2,500.

V. Priest Health Insurance

- A. The priest’s monthly health insurance premium is to be paid by the parish/institution according to its collections (see letter from Finance office for insurance rates).
- B. The priest is personally responsible for paying co-pays, co-insurance, and any amounts in excess of what the health plan covers.

VI. Priest's Automobile Insurance

As a minimum, the insurance policy should cover both liability and collision for, at least, the value of the vehicle.

VII. Priests' Pension Plan

- A. Each diocesan priest's parish/institution is billed according to its collections for the Priests' Pension Plan (see annual budget assumption letter for premium amounts).

VIII. Sabbatical

The maximum sabbatical fund grant is \$6,000. (NOTE: The average cost of the sabbatical programs at Menlo Park, the North American College, and St. Meinrad is about \$16,000).

IX. Moving Expenses

- A. Priests who move from one assignment to another are entitled to be reimbursed up to and not more than \$500 for their moving expenses.
- B. The priest who is being transferred should present receipts to the office staff of the parish that he is leaving.
 - 1. The parish that he is leaving is responsible for making this reimbursement to the priest.
- C. Moving costs beyond \$500 are the responsibility of the priest who is being transferred.