



Guidelines

Administration of Parishes without a Resident Pastor: Canon 517, §2

Diocese of Dodge City
January 2005

In the absence of a pastor due to a lack of priests, canon 517, §2 allows the possibility for deacons or women and men who are not ordained to be entrusted with the participation in the pastoral care of a parish by the diocesan bishop.

As chief shepherd of the diocese, the bishop is responsible to see that the pastoral needs of his flock are met.

The Code of Canon law leaves to the discretion of the diocesan bishop the determination of whether or not there is a shortage of priests which would not allow for all parishes to have pastors. In assessing the needs of the diocese and the projections for present and future priests to serve in parish ministry, the diocesan bishop alone has the responsibility to decide if and at what point the diocese will use the solution of canon 517, §2 to meet its pastoral needs. In making such a determination the diocesan bishop will seek the consultation of the Presbyteral Council, Personnel Board, and other advisors. He may with these advisors consider a number of factors: the numbers of priests, the numbers of parishes, the needs of a particular parish, such as language, and the competencies of the priests to meet these needs. Rather than a mere numeric equation of parishes divided by the number of priests available, the bishop and his advisors may look at the continuation of a parish community as an important consideration.

The Parish Life Coordinator is the person to whom a participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is entrusted by the diocesan

bishop. This care includes the areas of teaching, sanctifying, and administration (cc. 517, §2; 528-537).

Role of Parish Life Coordinator

The Parish Life Coordinator is appointed by the diocesan bishop to serve in a parish or a number of parishes. The Parish Life Coordinator is responsible to the bishop and serves at his pleasure.

The Parish Life Coordinator is responsible for the administration of the parish entrusted to the Coordinator's care, under the supervision of the priest supervisor, with the assistance of a priest who provides sacramental ministry, in accord with diocesan norms. The Parish Life Coordinator is an *ex-officio* member of the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Council and facilitates the work of these councils. The Parish Life Coordinator is to represent the parish in community, diocesan, ecumenical events and undertakings.

The Parish Life Coordinator should strive to know the faithful that have been entrusted to the Coordinator's care; therefore the Coordinator is to visit families, sharing the cares, worries, and especially the griefs of the faithful. The Coordinator is to help the sick particularly those close to death. The Coordinator is to seek out the poor, the afflicted, the lonely, those away from their own land, and those weighed down with special difficulties. The Coordinator is to support spouses and parents in fulfilling their proper duties.

The Parish Life Coordinator is to do whatever is possible to foster and promote among the faithful that have been entrusted to the Coordinator's care a sense of and concern for parochial communion so that they realize that they are members both of the Diocese and the universal Church.

Parish Life Coordinator will serve in these areas:

1. Teaching Office: The Parish Life Coordinator will relate aspects of parish life to the life and mission of the universal Church; call parishioners to service as Church and to facilitate lay ministry and leadership in a spirit of collaboration and subsidiarity. It will be necessary to provide formation to enable parishioners to fulfill their ministry in the Church and in the world ever more

effectively. In accord with Church law and diocesan policies, the Parish Life Coordinator will make provision for:

- A) The Religious Education/Formation of all parishioners.
- B) Initial and ongoing formation of catechists.
- C) Promotion of justice and greater understanding of the Church's social teaching.
- D) Bringing the Gospel message to those who have ceased practicing their faith or who do not profess true faith.
- E) Proper and full implementation of Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
- F) Understanding of and commitment to stewardship.
- G) Vocational discernment.

2. Administrative Functions: The Parish Life Coordinator is to represent the parish and is to see to it that the goods of the parish are administered in accord with the norms of canons 1281-1288. In accord with Church law and diocesan policies, the Parish Life Coordinator will make provision for:

- A) Assurance of a safe environment for children and young people in the parish by adherence to our diocesan *Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People* and *Code of Pastoral Conduct*.
- B) Utilization of diocesan resources and implementation of diocesan initiatives and programs in the parish.
- C) Maintenance of parish sacramental records, death records, parish archives.
- D) Preparation and filing of parish reports requested by the diocese.
- E) Stewardship of the material assets of the parish including financial records and processes, budgets, property and buildings in accordance with canon law and diocesan norms and in collaboration with the Property Commission and/or Finance Council.
- F) Discernment of parish gifts, needs, and plans for the future in collaboration with the Pastoral Council.
- G) Assurance that the parish Mission Statement guides the parish's life and activity.
- H) Selection, formation, support of the various volunteers engaged in the life and ministry of the parish.
- I) Selection, hiring, supervision, and dismissal of any employees hired by the parish.

3. Sanctifying Office: The Parish Life Coordinator is to see to it that the Most Holy Eucharist is the center of the parish assembly of the faithful. The Coordinator will endeavor to assist the faithful in a knowing and active participation in the sacred liturgy. In accord with the norms of liturgical law the Parish Life Coordinator will provide for and coordinate the celebrations of the Eucharist and other sacraments by the sacramental minister, other priests, and the diocesan bishop. In accord with Church law and diocesan policies, the Parish Life Coordinator will make provision for:
- A) Stewardship of the charisms given by God through Baptism and Confirmation to the faithful of the parish.
 - B) Preparation of persons for the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, and marriage.
 - C) Scheduling, planning, and preparing for the liturgical rites and sacramental celebrations called for throughout the liturgical year.
 - D) Celebration of the rites called for in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
 - E) Calling forth, forming, scheduling, and supporting liturgical ministers.
 - F) Weekday celebrations of the Word and/or Liturgy of the Hours.
 - G) Visitation and care of parishioners who are ill.
 - H) Home Communion.
 - I) Viaticum.
 - J) Blessings of persons, places, and things.
 - K) Opportunities for spiritual renewal, prayer, and reflection on the part of the parish as a whole, various segments of the parish, and individual parishioners.
 - L) Assisting families with funeral arrangements and the celebration for the funeral rites.
 - M) Assisting anyone who wishes recourse to the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal.

Parish Life Coordinator will be specifically authorized to:

Preside at weekday liturgy (liturgy of the hours; Liturgy of the Word, with or without Holy Communion); wake services; funeral liturgies outside of Mass, committals, Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest.

Administer Baptism when no ordinary minister of baptism (i.e., priest or deacon) is available (cc. 230, §3; 861, §2).

Serve as extraordinary minister of Holy Communion and Viaticum (cc. 910, §2; 911, §2).

Serve as a minister of Eucharistic exposition and reposition (c. 943).

Administer approved sacramentals (c. 1168).

Impart Blessings designated in the *Book of Blessings*.

Preach when pastorally and canonically appropriate (c. 766). This is always apart from the homily in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Parish Life Coordinator

...is appointed by the diocesan bishop, is responsible to him, and serves at his pleasure. The Coordinator is appointed for a one-year term initially which can be renewed after the initial year for three-year terms. This appointment and subsequent renewal is done in consultation with the Parish Pastoral Council.

...is installed by the diocesan bishop in a liturgical rite in the parish.

...is supervised by a priest appointed by the bishop (see below).

...is assisted by a sacramental minister, a priest appointed by the bishop, who will provide regular weekend celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments by mutual arrangement with the Parish Life Coordinator (see below).

...is compensated by arrangement worked out by the parish that meets the approval of the diocesan bishop (and if the Coordinator is a religious, the approval of the Coordinator's religious community). The local USD salary scale for teachers and/or other paraprofessionals of comparable education and experience is offered as a rule of thumb for a just compensation. Provisions need to be made (within the salary structure) for housing, retirement, health insurance, and mileage.

Priest Supervisor:

- A) This “priest supervisor” provides supervision of the pastoral care given by the Parish Life Coordinator.
- B) He is accountable to the bishop and collaborates with the Parish Life Coordinator.
- C) He is to provide a mentoring role for the Parish Life Coordinator.
- D) The priest supervisor, while having all the powers and faculties of pastor in accordance with the norms of canon 517, §2, is not the canonical equivalent of a pastor and does not assume the canonical rights and obligations of a pastor.
- E) The term of the supervising priest is for an indefinite period of time and not limited to a six year tenure as is the term of a pastor.
- F) The priest supervisor and the Parish Life Coordinator will regularly discuss the life of the parish with its gifts, needs, growth, and development.
- G) The priest supervisor and the Parish Life Coordinator will discuss and devise ways of assessing the effectiveness of the Parish Life Coordinator’s ministry.
- H) The priest supervisor will be available for information, advice, clarification, and support when needed by the Parish Life Coordinator.
- I) The priest supervisor may visit the parish occasionally.
- J) The priest supervisor is to offer a Mass for the intention of the people of the parish (c. 534) on each Sunday and holy day.
- K) If there are conflicts that arise between members of the parish and the Parish Life Coordinator, the priest supervisor is the one to intervene and serve as mediator. If this proves unsuccessful, the Vicar General or Chancellor of the diocese will serve as mediator. The diocesan bishop is the final recourse.
- L) Compensation will be determined by diocesan policy. This compensation is split half to the priest and half to the place of assignment from which he receives his salary.
- M) The priest supervisor and the sacramental minister may or may not be the same priest.

Sacramental Minister:

- A) The sacramental minister is a priest appointed by the Bishop who will provide regular weekend celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments by mutual arrangement with the Parish Life Coordinator.

- B) Due to his key role in the sacramental and liturgical life of the parish, the sacramental minister is to be involved in the work of the liturgical commission and with liturgical planning.
- C) The sacramental minister is the first priest on call for emergencies (e.g., anointing of the sick), funerals, and weddings. If he is unavailable, the Parish Life Coordinator makes arrangements with neighboring priests (retired and active).
- D) Compensation will be determined by diocesan policy.
- E) The sacramental minister and the priest supervisor may or may not be the same priest.
- F) When the sacramental minister is not the same priest as the priest supervisor, the sacramental minister is given faculties of a parochial vicar in the parish.

Qualifications of Parish Life Coordinator:

To be qualified for the position of a Parish Life Coordinator, a person needs to be

- in full sacramental union with the Church;
- in agreement with the magisterium of the Church;
- actively living out the Church's life in all dimensions of his or her own life;
- of general good health (physically, psychologically, spiritually);
- able to collaborate with priests and lay people;
- experienced in pastoral ministry;
- able to maintain appropriate confidentiality;
- committed to parish life;
- have completed the diocesan Pastoral Ministry Formation Program or its equivalent (an academic degree is highly desirable);
- open to ongoing education and formation;
- able to read, write, and speak English with average competency (ability to do the same in Spanish is highly desirable);
- able and willing to drive and to work weekends and evenings;
- able to use a computer with average skill.

Selection of Parish Life Coordinator

When the bishop decides to use the provisions of canon 517, §2 to meet the pastoral needs of a parish, or parishes, he will seek to appoint a Parish Life Coordinator who is qualified and available to the parish in question. Ideally a first preference is for a person who is living in or near to the parish, is familiar with the parish, and has experience with the life and pastoral care of the parish. This preference does not preclude advertising for the position and seeking applicants from outside the parish and the diocese. This will be an individualized process. The process will inevitably involve the Pastoral Council of the parish concerned as well as the diocesan Personnel Board.

It is increasingly evident that the provisions of canon 517, §2 will be utilized more frequently to meet pastoral needs of parishes of our diocese. Diocesan and parish leadership needs to discern individuals in our parishes who possess the necessary gifts, talents, and dispositions to serve as a Parish Life Coordinator sometime in the future. Parish and diocesan leadership needs to encourage these potential candidates to prepare themselves and provide opportunities for such preparation and formation. The diocesan Pastoral Ministry Formation Program is a premier resource.

Notes for Consideration:

- A) Within the parameters of Church law, the diocesan bishop may alter any of the specifics of this guideline to accommodate the persons and/or parish(es) involved in a Parish Life Coordinator assignment. This may be done prior to assignment or during the course of an assignment.
- B) If a deacon is appointed as a Parish Life Coordinator, the specifications offered in this guideline would be adjusted to accommodate his being an ordained minister.
- C) While the priest supervisor is granted the faculties of a pastor, he is not the pastor of the parish. Because he possesses the powers and faculties of a pastor, he would be well advised to mandate the Parish Life Coordinator certain areas of responsibility. The mandates, not faculties, come from the priest supervisor and not the bishop because they are proper to the one who possesses the faculties of a pastor.

As suggested by John Huels in his book *Empowerment for Ministry*, unless the priest supervisor is to assume the duties of administering the parish, it would be advantageous to grant three mandates to the Parish Life Coordinator:

- a) "You may act in my name as the legal representative of the parish in accord with the pertinent laws of the Church and State and within the limits of your job description (c. 532)."
- b) "In my absence, you may preside at meetings of the parish pastoral council and finance council (cc. 536, 537)."
- c) "You may make decisions necessary for the fulfillment of the duties enumerated in your job description and for implementing an approved pastoral plan or project. The more important decisions, as determined by the priest supervisor, and all decisions adversely affecting the rights of persons, require the prior consent of the priest supervisor; but if he cannot be reached, you may decide the matter, which decision must be confirmed by him or the local ordinary."
[John M. Huels, *Empowerment for Ministry: A Complete Manual on Diocesan Faculties for Priests, Deacons, and Lay Ministers*, (Mahwah, NJ:Paulist Press, 2003) 172-173].

- D) The Parish Life Coordinator will carry out the ordinary acts of administration and obtain permission from an Ordinary of the diocese for acts of extraordinary parish administration. If the parish is to initiate or contest a civil law suit, the bishop will designate who will represent the interests of the parish.
- E) The Vicar General or Chancellor of the Diocese will serve as mediator should conflicts arise between and/or among the Parish Life Coordinator, the priest supervisor, or the sacramental minister. The diocesan bishop is the final recourse.

- F) A decree of appointment will be issued for the Pastoral Life Coordinator, the priest supervisor, and the sacramental minister. These appointments will be announced in the Southwest Kansas Register.
- G) In addition to these decrees, a "memorandum of agreement" will state the understanding of these assignments. The diocesan bishop, representatives from the parish pastoral council, the Parish Life Coordinator, the priest supervisor, and the sacramental minister are to sign the "memorandum". The diocesan Chancellor is to notarize the "memorandum".