

LIFE AND MINISTRY OF PRIESTS

“Priests by sacred ordination and mission which they receive from the bishops are promoted to the service of Christ the Teacher, Priest and King. They share in his ministry, a ministry whereby the Church here on earth is unceasingly built up into the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit...” (Vatican II Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 1)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Spiritual Formation	1
Intellectual/Professional Formation	2
Human Formation	2-3
Priest as Collaborator	3
Priest as Pastoral Minister	3-4
Priest as Liturgical Minister	4-5
Standard Honorarium	5
Reimbursement for Specific Circumstances	5
Priest Salary and Benefits	6-7
Retired Priests	7-9
Last Will and Testament	9
Assignment	9
Living Conditions	9-10
Absences from the Parish or Pastoral Assignment	10
Death in the Family	10
Masses for Deceased Priests	10
Deans	10

Spiritual Formation

1. It is expected that every priest will:
 - a. set aside quality time for daily prayer
 - b. attend scheduled days of recollection for priests
 - c. take advantage of opportunities for spiritual growth
 - d. make an annual retreat
 - i) Particular law of the Diocese of Dodge City obliges every priest to make a retreat each year. No one is excused except on an individual case, for a just cause and with expressed permission of the diocesan bishop. A priest may choose from these options:
 - make the annual priest retreat
 - make a preached retreat at another time or in another place
 - make an individually directed retreat at a time and place of the priest's choosing and under the direction of the priest's choosing
 - if a priest wishes to make a **self-directed** retreat, he must obtain expressed permission of the diocesan bishop to determine if this will meet the requirements of taking part in an annual retreat
 - current policy allows for parish(es) of assignment to pay an annual allowance of \$350 toward the cost of retreat (if not made at the annual priest retreat)

Intellectual/Professional Formation

1. Priests are to be allowed adequate time for:
 - a. study and reading
 - b. homily preparation
 - c. parish and diocesan meetings
2. Continuing education through conferences, seminars or workshops:
 - a. Each year expenses (see below) for one **approved** continuing education conference [i.e., approved by the bishop] will be provided using the following formula:
 - b. 1/3 of the expenses will be reimbursed by the Continuing Education Fund
 - c. 1/3 of the expenses will be reimbursed by the parish(es) of assignment
 - d. 1/3 of the expenses will be the responsibility of the priest
 - e. Expenses include: tuition or registration fee, travel, room and board, and the cost of a substitute priest if needed.
 - f. For retired priests, 2/3 of the expenses will be reimbursed by the Continuing Education Fund and 1/3 of the expenses will be the responsibility of the priest.
3. Sabbatical for Renewal
 - a. A sabbatical is considered a maximum of four months leave of absence to be used at the discretion of the eligible priest and with the approval of the bishop for the improvement of priest's professional competence.
 - b. To be eligible the priest must be incardinated in the diocese and have actively ministered a minimum of ten years in the diocese.
 - c. Sabbatical leave may not be accumulated
 - d. Only one priest may be on sabbatical at any given time
 - e. The priest is responsible for arranging for his substitute during the sabbatical absence. The parish shall pay the substitute priest while the diocese shall pay the priest on sabbatical his regular salary.
 - f. The priest is responsible for travel expenses. Requests for sabbatical and payment of sabbatical expenses will be considered by the bishop on a case-by-case basis.
 - g. The bishop, in consultation with the presbyteral council, oversees the norms for sabbatical leave. Applications for sabbatical leave shall be forwarded to the bishop.

Human Formation

1. Every priest is entitled to:
 - a. one day off weekly
 - b. four weeks of vacation annually (taken in segments or continuously)
 - c. time for obligations arising from personal or family members
 - d. At the recommendation of the Presbyteral Council, and the approval of the Bishop, beginning July 1, 2018 the following special considerations have been afforded to incardinated priests whose home is another country:
 - The priest is allowed one additional week of vacation for purposes of travel to his home country;
 - Should the priest find it necessary to remain in his home country for some unexpected reason (such as for family needs, immigration, or other business), adaptations to the Personal Leave Policy will be considered with regard to base salary and expenses for priest coverage while he is away from the parish for this additional time. Contact the Vicar General when this need arises.

2. Preventative health care is expected through:
 - a. adequate physical exercise and proper diet
 - b. regular health checkups
 - c. medical recovery time
 - d. time for nurturing friendships
3. Personal Leave policy
 - a. for a just cause a priest may request a maximum six month personal leave
 - b. the priest who is granted personal leave will need to resign from his current office(s)
 - c. during the time of the leave, the diocese will pay the priest 2/3 of the base salary and his health insurance premiums
 - d. the priest is responsible for housing or living arrangements
 - e. the priest is to provide as much supply help as possible. One half of any honorariums are to be paid to the diocese to contribute toward the salary. The priest may keep Mass stipends, mileage reimbursements and monies received on the occasion of celebrating a marriage, baptism, funeral, etc.
 - f. each request for personal leave will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Priest as Collaborator

1. The entire presbyterate of a diocese functions as collaborator with the diocesan bishop. The bishop, in turn, is to listen to his priests, consult and discuss with them matters which concern the pastoral welfare of the diocese.
2. In order to give effective assistance to the bishop in his leadership of the diocese, the presbyteral council serves as an advisor to the diocesan bishop on a wide-range of pastoral matters.
3. The presbyteral council consists of seven priests: four elected, two appointed by the bishop, and the vicar general who serves as an *ex-officio* member.

Priest as Pastoral Minister

1. The priest as LEADER:

“Priests must sincerely acknowledge and promote the dignity of the laity and the part proper to them in the mission of the Church... They must willingly listen to the laity, consider their wants in a fraternal spirit, recognize their experience and competence in the different areas of human activity, so that together with them they will be able to recognize the signs of the times.”

(Vatican II Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 9)

- a. Develops lines of communication and opportunities for collaboration among the laity through finance councils, pastoral councils, commissions and service organizations within the parish or cluster. Regarding finance and pastoral councils:
 - meetings should have a definite agenda with advance distribution to the participants
 - minutes are to be recorded and published to the parish/cluster community
 - other than the pastoral and finance council, the pastor cannot be expected to attend every meeting of other commissions and organizations
- b. Has in place adequate staff (paid or volunteer) to meet the administrative and pastoral needs of the parish or cluster
- c. Encourages and supports the laity to share in the pastoral ministry needs of the parish or cluster. Encouragement of participation in the diocesan Pastoral

Ministry Formation program would be one significant way to support and prepare the laity for ministry.

- d. In parishes whose pastoral care is being provided according to canon 517, §2, the diocesan guideline *Administration of Parishes without a Resident Pastor: Canon 517, §2* is to be followed.

2. The priest as TEACHER:

“Priests share the teaching role of their bishops and are the immediate collaborators with them in the proclamation of the Gospel. The special role in the diocesan catechetical mission that they exercise arises directly from the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which constitutes priests as educators in the faith. Since a priest ‘must be the catechist of catechists, forming... a veritable community of disciples of the Lord,’ in his preaching and teaching and in the sacramental ministry of the Church, the priest transmits the Gospel of Christ, encourages conversion to him, fosters the life of faith and ongoing formation of faith, and inspires the prayer of the community of faith.” (National Directory for Catechesis, 54.2)

- a. Oversees the overall catechetical formation of adults, children and youth
- b. Oversees the formation and preparation for each sacrament
- c. Maintains open communication with the diocese, parish leadership and parishioners
- d. Facilitates the role of the laity by inviting them to share in the catechetical ministry of the parish or cluster
- e. Prepares and supports the laity for catechetical ministry by encouraging them to attend Catechist Formation sessions, adult formation sessions, Pastoral Ministry Formation courses and other workshops.

Priest as Liturgical Minister

“God, who alone is holy and who alone bestows holiness, willed to take as his companions and helpers men who would humbly dedicate themselves to the work of sanctification. Hence, through the ministry of the bishop, God consecrates priests, that being made sharers by special title in the priesthood of Christ, they might act as his ministers in performing sacred functions. By Baptism [persons] are truly brought into the People of God: by the sacrament of Penance sinners are reconciled to God and his Church; by the Anointing of the Sick, the ill are given solace; and especially by the celebration of Mass they offer sacramentally the Sacrifice of Christ.” (Vatican II Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 5)

1. To keep themselves informed, priests are expected to read and study current liturgical documents.
2. Priests are expected to comply with all universal, national and diocesan liturgical laws and norms.
3. Celebrations of the Eucharist (to view the entire *pagella* of faculties for priests, see *Faculties Granted to Priests*):
 - a. A priest is granted the faculty by law to celebrate the Eucharist twice on weekdays and, if pastoral necessity requires it, three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation. If pastoral necessity requires that a priest regularly celebrate more than two Masses on weekdays and more than three Masses on Sundays, the diocesan bishop may dispense in individual cases.
 - b. Weddings may be celebrated during Sunday Mass if the priest wishes and if the church can accommodate the additional people.

- c. When possible, celebrations of first communion and confirmation should be celebrated during a regularly scheduled Mass.
- d. Considerations should be given to celebrating wedding anniversaries (and other such occasions) during a regular Sunday Mass.
- e. With regard to funeral rites, deacons (ordinary ministers) and lay persons (extraordinary ministers) are permitted to preside at the vigil and rite of committal (i.e., burial).
- f. In the absence of a priest, the document *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* is to be followed.

Standard Honorarium (as revised by administrative decree effective 1 July 2014)

1. Communal Penance Service \$30 per each penitential service or confession help out (apart from a regular weekday- and weekend-Mass schedule that includes confessions) plus roundtrip mileage at current IRS rate
2. Weekday Mass \$20 plus roundtrip mileage at current IRS rate
3. Weekend/Holy Day Mass \$50 plus roundtrip mileage at current IRS rate
4. Mass offering always goes to the priest

[Bishops in the Province of Kansas increased the standard offering amount to \$10 effective 1 May 2014.]

Additions to Standard Honorarium (as revised by Administrative Decree eff. 1 Sept. 2018) for when the parish priest is not available:

1. Vigil and Funeral \$50 plus roundtrip mileage at current IRS rate
2. Wedding practice & wedding \$50 plus roundtrip mileage at current IRS rate
3. Anointing of the Sick \$20 plus roundtrip mileage at current IRS rate
4. Mass offering always goes to the priest

Reimbursement for Specific Circumstances

1. Regular help out as part of an assignment by the bishop and/or ongoing agreement with the approval of the bishop:
 - a. Active Priests – Standard honorarium rates would apply for each Mass celebrated outside the parish(es) of assignment and beyond the three that a priest in the diocese would ordinarily celebrate.
 - b. Retired Priests – Standard honorarium rates apply (see above)
2. Sacramental Ministers (Canon 517, §2)
 - a. Active Priests – Standard honorarium rates apply (see above)
 - i) 50% of the honorarium goes to the priest
 - ii) 50% of the honorarium goes to the place of assignment from which the priest receives his salary
 - iii) Round trip mileage goes to the priest
 - iv) Mass stipend goes to the priest
 - b. Retired Priests – Standard honorarium rates apply (see above)
 - i) All of the honorarium goes to the priest
 - ii) Mileage goes to the priest
 - iii) Mass stipend goes to the priest
3. Priest Supervisor (Canon 517, §2)

- a. Compensation for a priest supervisor will be \$100 per month, payable by the parish(es). The amount is split equally between the priest and the place of assignment from which he receives his salary.
- b. If the priest drives in excess of 25,000 miles annually as a result of his Priest Supervisor responsibilities, he is entitled to an additional compensation from the parish cluster based on the number of miles in excess of 25,000 at the current IRS rate, subject to written approval by the diocesan finance officer.

Priest Salary and Benefits

1. ACTIVE PRIESTS - All priests active in the diocese, regardless of canonical office (i.e., pastor or parochial vicar or chaplain) or additional responsibilities, receive the same base salary.

a. Base Salary (effective 7/1/2018) \$2,625.00/month \$31,500.00/year

b. Additional benefit based on years of service:

0-3 years ordained	\$ 0.00/month	\$ 0/year
4-8 years ordained	\$ 12.50/month	\$ 150/year
9-14 years ordained	\$ 25.00/month	\$ 300/year
15-24 years ordained	\$ 50.00/month	\$ 600/year
25-34 years ordained	\$ 75.00/month	\$ 900/year
35+ years ordained	\$ 100.00/month	\$ 1,200/year

c. Base salary includes:

- Reimbursement for priests' portion of Social Security
- Annual mileage up to 25,000 miles. If a priest drives in excess of 25,000 miles annually, he is entitled to additional compensation from the parish or cluster based on the number of miles in excess of 25,000 at the current IRS rate, subject to written approval from the diocesan finance officer.
- Health insurance deductible
- Monthly food expense
- Monthly cell phone expense
- Vestment expense
- Funds for vehicle expense (payments, insurance, tags, taxes, maintenance, repair)

d. Health Insurance – The parish cluster pays premiums for Blue Cross Blue Shield major medical health insurance plan, which includes prescription drug coverage and dental coverage. Premium as of 1 May 2019 is \$825 per month per priest. As of 1 May 2007 the deductible is \$1,500 which is the responsibility of the priest.

e. Post-65 Health Insurance Plan/Policy (effective January 1, 2016)

When a priest turns 65 and continues to be in active ministry, the following policy has been approved by Bishop Brungardt and becomes effective January 1, 2016.

By January of the year following his 65th birthday, the priest is to:

- Enroll in Medicare Part A (if this hasn't been done already)
- Enroll in Medicare Part B
- Enroll in a Medigap Plan (Plan 65) [Blue Cross Blue Shield F is probably the best choice]
- Enroll in a Medicare Part D – Prescription Drug Plan [this will be determined by a number of factors as to which plan is best suited for the individual priest]

(When one becomes eligible, there is a seven-month window to enroll: three months before your eligibility month until three months after your eligibility month. If one misses that window, you must wait to enroll between October 15 and December 7.)

f. Residence – The parish cluster will provide residence for the priest(s) assigned to the parish cluster. This provision includes a residence, utilities (gas, water, trash, electric, cable, telephone, internet service), maintenance, insurance, as well as laundry, housekeeping and meal preparation when done by a person or persons other than the priest. Personal telephone lines are the responsibility of the priest.

On 27 November 2018 the Presbyteral Council recommended and the Bishop approved the value of priest housing to remain \$500 per month (or \$6,000 annually). This amount is not taxable to the priest for income tax purposes; however, the amount is taxable for Social Security purposes. The value of priest housing will be reviewed annually.

- g. Moving expenses – the cost of moving from one parish assignment to another are the responsibility of the parish(es) from which the priest is moving, not the new parish(es) to which the priest is being assigned. A priest transitioning from active parish ministry to retirement may bill the parish from which he is moving for the moving expenses, up to \$1,200.
- h. Illness – the parish will pay the first month’s salary; the Diocesan Priests’ Retirement Fund will pay the salary thereafter.
- i. Long Term Care for Priests – Incardinated priests are covered under a long term care policy, either through the self-insured Diocesan plan or through an individual policy with Blue Cross Blue Shield or Knights of Columbus. Eligibility to participate in the BCBS or K of C plan is determined based on a health questionnaire. Priests not eligible for the BCBS or K of C plan are covered under the self-insured Diocesan plan. The specifics of the plan are contained in a separate document, but generally speaking after a 90-day waiting period will provide a \$100-\$150 per day nursing home benefit for a period of 50 months. Priest participation includes a monthly premium with the majority of the cost being a parish paid benefit.

3. RETIRED PRIESTS

- a. Retirement is age 70. Approximately a year prior to his 70th birthday, the priest begins a conversation with the bishop about his retirement plans (i.e., whether the priest intends to continue in ministry or retire). If the priest wishes to continue in ministry, he discusses ministerial options with the bishop. If the priest wishes to retire, he may do so. At age 75 a pastor is requested to submit a resignation from office to the bishop, who may accept or defer it after a consideration of circumstances (c.f., canon 537, §3). Requests to retire prior to age 70 will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis.
- b. At age 65, health insurance premiums are provided for by Plan 65, a supplement to Medicare, and are paid for by the diocese. This coverage pays costs not covered by Medicare, including the deductible. Additionally, since Plan 65 does not provide prescription drug coverage, the diocese reimburses retired priests for prescription drugs using the same formula as provided for under the active priests’ plan (\$15 deductible for generic, and \$30 deductible for name brand drugs). Requests for reimbursement, along with the prescription documentation, can be sent to the diocesan finance office. Finally, since most Plan 65 plans do not provide for dental coverage, the diocese reimburses retired priests for dental costs incurred using the benefit schedule for the active priests’ plan. Requests for reimbursement, along with documentation, can be sent to the finance office.
- c. Retirement benefits for all incardinated priests are provided through the Diocesan Priests’ Retirement Fund, a separate corporation. (See below)

- d. Upon full retirement a priest may reside in an apartment, house or retirement facility of his own choosing and expense. One half of the retirement benefit is considered a housing allowance. Continuing to reside in the rectory or other facility of the parish from which he is retiring is not permitted. Residing in another rectory in the diocese is not permitted. Nursing home care is determined on an individual basis of need.
 - e. Senior Priest – A retired priest requesting to be assigned as a “senior priest” will be considered by the bishop on a case-by-case basis and will be reviewed annually.
 - f. Diocesan Priests’ Retirement Fund – An eligible priest begins receiving a partial retirement benefit at age 65 or after being ordained 40 years in the amount of \$250 per month, as long as the priest remains in an assignment.
 - g. At age 70 and if still in an assignment, the priest will then receive \$500 per month.
 - h. At full retirement, an eligible priest receives full retirement benefits, which are adjusted occasionally to reflect changing cost of living. As of 1 July 2019, the current retirement benefit is \$2,350 per month, of which one half of the amount (\$1,175) is considered a housing allowance and is therefore not taxable to the priest as a retirement benefit.
 - i. Priests of religious institutes and other non-incardinated priests do not participate in the Diocesan Priests’ Retirement Fund.
 - j. A completed actuarial study in April 2017 determined contributions to the retirement fund needed to resume in order to eventually get back to a fully funded position. Beginning July 2017, parishes will begin quarterly contributions to the fund. [In addition, a parish contribution is made toward retirement for the non-incardinated priest serving in the diocese.]
4. Social Security Coverage for Priests – Since 1955, diocesan priests have had the option of being covered or opting out of coverage under the provisions of the Social Security Acts. In 1968, the Social Security Act changed and priests were automatically covered unless they applied for an exemption within two years of ordination which, when granted, is irrevocable.

The 1986 Tax Reform contained two provisions related to Social Security for clergy. First, priests who had previously elected to be exempted from Social Security were permitted a window of time to revoke the exemption. Also, the law was clarified to state that priests wishing to apply for exemption in the future could do so only for religious reasons (i.e., because coverage violates their understanding of the vow of poverty). A priest, diocesan or international/extern, may not exempt himself from the provisions of the Social Security Act for convenience (the priest is not expected to serve in the United States long enough to accrue a benefit).

The diocese strongly recommends incardinated priests not choose to be exempted from the Social Security Act, even as this recommendation requires them to pay social security self-employment taxes. This recommendation is made because the diocesan health insurance plan for priests is enhanced when an individual is covered both by Medicare (a social security program) and a supplemental health plan. Additionally, the priests’ retirement plan is predicated on the idea that each priest is also receiving the

social security old age benefit in addition to a priest pension and individual retirement savings.

5. Income Taxes – It is a requirement that the priest receive a W-2 Form to report their annual compensation from the parish or institution, as opposed to Form 1099. Income tax questions from the priest or parish bookkeeper may be directed to the diocesan finance office.

Last Will and Testament

1. Every incardinated priests should have a valid will on file at the chancery. Other priests serving in the diocese should at least provide the chancery with complete information for whom we are to contact in case of serious illness or death.
 - a. The will (or a copy of it) is to be in a sealed envelope with the name, address, and phone number of the executor. Wills should be revised occasionally, especially if a beneficiary or the executor dies or if circumstances change.
 - b. A second envelope, which the chancery may open at the time of death, should be on file that contains the priest's desires regarding funeral arrangements. Things to include would be the name of the homilist, specific music, particular vestments to be buried in, the cemetery to be buried in, etc.
 - c. If a priest wishes to leave a legacy to the diocese or a parish, the proper form is: "I give and bequeath to [the Catholic Diocese of Dodge City, a Kansas not-for-profit corporation] or [*name of parish* of city, a Kansas not-for-profit corporation] for the purpose of [state the intention]." In case the bequests do not total the amount of assets, a line such as the following may be added: "Any residue of my estate I give and bequeath to..."

Assignment

1. The Priest Personnel Council is an advisory body to the bishop in matters relevant to the assignment or placement of priests serving in the diocese. The Council consists of four *ex-officio* members (i.e., the three deans and the vicar general) and one elected member. The elected member serves a five-year term. The chair of the Council will be selected from among its members. The Director of the Office of Priestly Vocations serves in an advisory role.

The purpose of the Priest Personnel Council is to serve as an advisory body to the Bishop of the Diocese of Dodge City in matters relevant to the assignment or placement of priests serving in the Diocese of Dodge City. To the extent that circumstances permit, the Personnel Council functions to promote the stability of priests within their pastoral assignments. The Council realizes that effective pastoral care is strengthened by priests and people being allowed to form healthy, trusting relationships.

2. Ordinarily, a pastor will serve at least six years, and may continue serving after the initial six years has passed. Ordinarily, a parochial vicar will serve in two parishes before becoming a pastor.

Living Conditions

1. A priest having more than one parish is entitled to live in one place of residence.

2. Living quarters for priests should be in a separate residence. Offices, meeting rooms and staff work rooms should not be in the rectory unless the rectory is so designed as to provide the priest with the privacy needed for normal living.
3. Priests with adjoining assignments may choose to reside together, in consultation with the bishop.

Absences from the Parish or Pastoral Assignment

1. Priests are to notify the bishop's office (by phone, email or letter) when they will be away from their parish/pastoral assignment over a weekend or longer. This applies even when there is more than one priest in residence. The purpose of this notification is to provide proper and timely pastoral care to the people of God who could well suffer a family emergency or loss of a loved one in the priest's absence. The notification should include:
 - a. The name of the priest who will be substituting and providing pastoral coverage. This is to include weekend coverage as well as the priest on call in the event of funerals or other critical pastoral needs.
 - b. Names and phone numbers of where you can be contacted, or where messages can be left, in the event of an emergency.

Death in the Family

In a spirit of support and consolation, we desire to be able to inform our priests of the death of a family member of a fellow priest. Frequently, some may be able to attend the funeral or, at least, express his fraternal sympathy and offer prayers. Please inform the bishop's office of the death of an immediate family member so that we can inform the presbyterate.

Masses for Deceased Priests (from 9/30/03 Minutes of Presbyteral Council meeting)

At the time of the death of a priest:

1. Four Masses should be offered for each deceased priest (i.e., the funeral Mass plus three other Masses)
2. At a Mass on retreat and at a Mass at the annual Convocation, an intention for all deceased priests will be offered.

Deans

1. Also known as *vicar forane*, in each of the three deaneries of the diocese (Great Bend, Garden City and Dodge City), one priest is appointed by the diocesan bishop as dean. The overarching concern of the dean for the priests in his deanery is to support their spiritual life and ministry, and come to their aid especially in times of illness, sorrow or conflict. Responsibilities of a dean include:
 - a. serve as an *ex-officio* member of the Priest Personnel Council
 - b. coordinate for his deanery liturgical celebrations or pastoral meetings at the direction of the bishop
 - c. on the occasion of the illness or death of a pastor, the dean is to make provision that the registers, documents, sacred furnishings and other things which belong to the Church are not lost or removed.