

Appendix 8: Priestly Life and Working Environment in the Rectory

Purpose:

Presented here are guidelines for parish offices, rectory life & relationships with staff.

A. The Parish Office

- a. The priest(s) should have access to an office for pastoral/spiritual counseling and instruction purposes. The office should be distinct from living quarters.
- b. The priest(s) should have access to the parish files, record books and equipment.
- c. Confidentiality especially in regard to counseling and church records should be safeguarded at all times.
- d. The priest(s) should have access to secretarial service in the exercise of parish ministry.
- e. The areas of responsibility of the office staff (e.g., secretaries, bookkeepers) should be clearly defined and understood by all.

B. The Rectory as the Priest's Home

Although residences differ from one to the other, these guidelines provide a number of basic considerations that will help assure a mutual understanding between the priest(s) and parish pastoral council regarding the proper upkeep and maintenance of the rectory, including painting and timely repair or replacement of furnishings and fixtures.

- a. It is essential that the rectory living space and parish office area be distinctly separate, even in separate buildings if possible.
- b. All parish staff members and others are expected to honor the private space requirements of the priest(s). A priest has the right to limit the access of others to his private quarters. Parish employees and others are not to enter, spend time in, take meals in or have indiscriminate access to the priest's common house without the consent of the priest(s).
- c. Honest dialogue, fraternal charity, and priestly affirmation are to be hallmarks of the relationship between the priest(s) and parish pastoral council. Decisions affecting life in the house (e.g. remodeling, smoking in common areas, pets in common areas, cleanliness, etc.) are to be mutually discussed and agreed upon by all the priests.
- d. The rectory is the designated residence of priests officially assigned there by the diocesan bishop. Use of the rectory by the priest must be in conformance with the guidelines of the diocesan Safe Environment Program found in diocesan manual, *Establishing Bonds of Trust*. Only priests officially assigned to the rectory by the diocesan bishop may reside in the rectory. Occasional overnight guests are allowed only in conformance with the Safe Environment Program. Guests staying more than three nights within a 30 day period are allowed only with the written consent of the diocesan bishop.
- e. The pastoral needs of the Church require that priestly assignments not be contingent on pet ownership. Therefore, a great deal of caution and concern needs to be exercised should a priest decide to own a pet.

animal. In every case the rights of others and the value of parish property needs to be foremost and respected. When a pet(s) causes damage to the rectory (e.g. furniture, flooring, wall coverings, etc.) or other parish property, the damage must be repaired and the owner of the pet(s) shall be directly financially responsible for the cost of such repairs. It shall not be the responsibility of parish staff to care for or feed the pet(s). This is beyond their job description.

- f. Every parish will provide the priest(s) living in the rectory with the ordinary amenities of room and board (e.g. meals, basic furniture, linen such as bed linen, towels, wash cloths, soap, laundry, telephone, etc.) or reimbursement for those amenities not provided. Private telephone lines which are not used for parish purposes are the financial responsibility of the priest. Additional lines for the telephone and or cable TV must be mutually agreed to by the priest(s) and parish finance council. Personal toiletry items of the priest(s) such as those items used for dental hygiene, hair brushes, shampoo, etc. are the financial responsibility of the priest.
- g. Each parish and priest assigned to a residence in that parish will maintain an inventory of personal versus parish property. A copy of this inventory, which is to be updated annually, is to be kept on file in the parish business office.

C. Periodic Inspections Required

- a. In conformance with the requirements of the Catholic Mutual Group (CMG), every parish will undergo an inspection of its property every five years by a representative from CMG and the diocesan risk manager to help assure the safety of the property and protect against property loss due to negligence or disrepair.
- b. Annual self-inspections of parish property by the parish finance council and priest(s) in accordance with CMG policies are required.