



**MINISTRY OF
PARISH LIFE COORDINATOR**
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

“If the diocesan bishop should decide that due to a dearth of priests a participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon or to some other person who is not a priest or to a community of persons, he is to appoint some priest endowed with the powers and faculties of a pastor to supervise the pastoral care.”

Canon 517 § 2

I. Appointment

- A. The bishop freely appoints a Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) in accord with Canon 517 § 2 to provide overall pastoral and administrative care of parishes and missions.
- B. The bishop appoints a priest as sacramental minister¹ who will have the faculties of pastor regarding the celebration of sacraments.
- C. The bishop appoints a priest supervisor (canonical pastor) in accord with the provisions of Canon 517 § 2.

II. Purpose and Qualifications

A. Purpose

The Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) is one who is entrusted with the pastoral care of a parish without a resident pastor.

B. Professional Qualifications

- 1. Priority will be given applicants who have:
 - a. A master's degree in pastoral ministry or a related field of religious study;
 - b. Experience of three or more years in some phase of pastoral ministry such as sacramental preparation, RCIA, catechesis, liturgy, spiritual direction, counseling, homiletics, canon law, annulment processes, etc.
 - c. Three or more years of administrative experience, such as leadership in an organization, financial planning, human resources management.

¹ See Diocesan Policy--Role of Sacramental Minister (listed under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies)



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- d. A willingness to augment their basic education (especially theological/pastoral education) and to develop new skills.
2. Consideration may also be given applicants who have:
 - a. A bachelor's degree either in a field related to pastoral ministry or in another field with continuing education in pastoral ministry.
 - b. Experience of three or more years in some phase of pastoral ministry such as sacramental preparation, RCIA, catechesis, liturgy, spiritual direction, counseling, homiletics, canon law, annulment processes, etc.
 - c. Three or more years of administrative experience, such as leadership in an organization, financial planning, human resources management.
 - d. A willingness to augment their basic education (especially theological/pastoral education) and to develop new skills.
 3. By way of exception:
 - a. Educationally qualified applicants who lack practical experience may be asked to complete a supervised internship with appropriate remuneration as a prerequisite to official appointment by the Bishop;
 - b. Applicants with pastoral experience who lack necessary educational requirements may be asked to complete a supervised internship with appropriate remuneration and to undertake a college-level pastoral ministry program judged adequate by the diocese as a prerequisite to official appointment by the Bishop;
 - c. Formal appointment as Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) follows successful completion of the internship and/or studies program. The appointment is provided for through written agreement between the diocese and the applicant.
- C. Personal Qualifications to be considered:
1. Active membership in a faith community of the Roman Catholic Church for a significant period of time, usually at least three years;



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2. Ability to represent and lead a Roman Catholic faith community in eastern Montana in a manner that does not compromise one's personal integrity or that of the Church they represent.
3. General good health (physical, psychological, spiritual);
4. Liturgically based spirituality centered on the prayer life of the church;
5. Leadership skills: collaboration, delegation, initiation, facilitation, organization, flexible, dependable, responsible;
6. Ability to maintain confidentiality;
7. Commitment to personal and professional growth;

III. Placement Procedure

A. The person seeking a position as Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) will submit the following to the Bishop's office:

1. Three letters of recommendation:

- A letter of support from the spouse if the applicant is married,
- A letter of recommendation from the appropriate religious leadership of the congregation if the applicant is a religious,
- A letter of recommendation from at least two persons who know the applicant on a professional basis;

2. A resume;

3. Copies of official transcripts;

4. Current sacramental records, if requested.

B. Interviews will be conducted by a committee made up of some or all the following persons:

- the Bishop
- the Bishop's liaison for Parish Life Coordinators,
- the sacramental minister,
- the priest supervisor (canonical pastor),
- a representative of the Priests' Personnel Board,



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- the Chancellor
- a member of the pastoral council and/or the staff of the parish in which the opening is occurring.

C. The committee will make a recommendation to the Bishop concerning the appointment.

D. The ordinary method of appointment to the position of Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) is by free conferral of the Bishop following the application procedures, designated interviews and appropriate consultation.

1. The Bishop decides to whom to offer the position,
2. The position is offered to the applicant,
3. When accepted, the following are simultaneously notified: the sacramental minister, the priest supervisor (canonical pastor), the pastoral council of the parish, and the Priests' Personnel Board,
4. The appointment is communicated in writing and includes the rights and obligations as established by diocesan policy.
5. An annual contract signed by the Bishop and the Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) (and in the case of religious by the appropriate representative of the congregation) includes the details concerning remuneration and conditions of employment.

IV. Accountability

A. The Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) is accountable to the bishop for the pastoral care of the parish and its missions, if any. He/she meets with the Bishop or his representative annually for purposes of self-evaluation and for sharing of information regarding the parish and its missions, if any.

B. For the harmonious exercise of their respective ministries

1. The Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) and the sacramental minister will meet periodically to evaluate their working relationship² and to promote mutual understanding, cooperation, and support; openness with regard to areas of

² See Policy—Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies) Section II. D.



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pastoral concern; resolution of difficulties should they exist; and communication that enhances the spiritual life of the parish.

2. The Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) and the priest supervisor (canonical pastor) will meet occasionally to facilitate ongoing communication and to address any concerns regarding the pastoral care of the parish.

V. Within the Diocese

- A. The Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) is expected to familiarize himself/herself with diocesan policies, handbooks and procedures; to demonstrate support for the mission statement of the diocese; and to promote the implementation of its pastoral plan.
- B. He/she receives all diocesan communications that pertain to the position of Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) and is consulted regarding decisions affecting his/her ministry or the life of the parish.
- C. In addition, the Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) attends and participates in:
 1. The presbyteral assemblies and if elected/appointed, serves on committees of the Presbyterate;
 2. Vicariate and regional meetings for pastors of parishes;
 3. Institutes or gatherings for Parish Life Coordinator (PLC)s (local, regional, national) insofar as this participation is possible/helpful.

VI. Within the Parish

- A. Assures provision of **pastoral presence** to members of the faith community by:
 1. Nurturing a sense of community within the parish and fostering an atmosphere in which the free and generous sharing of gifts given for the good of the community is a priority;
 2. Encouraging a strong sense of discipleship that expresses itself in outreach to the poor, the elderly, the needy, the sick, as well as in other social action and evangelization;
 3. Facilitating clear, honest and open communication within the parish and between the parish and the diocese, its offices and staffs;



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4. Relating aspects of parish life to the life and mission of the universal church to strengthen bonds of unity with the broader community of faith, its joys, pains and needs;
5. Initiating and providing for ecumenical involvement wherever possible;
6. Laboring diligently so that spouses and parents are supported in fulfilling their proper duties, and fostering growth in the Christian life within the family;
7. Providing pastoral support to individuals and families;
8. Assuring that pastoral leaders are available and present to parishioners at important moments in their lives (birth, personal crisis, death, celebration, etc.) as appropriate.
9. Assisting in ministry to divorced and remarried persons and assuring that access to a marriage tribunal is facilitated;

B. Assures the **liturgical/worship life** for the faith community by:

1. Overseeing the sacramental life of the parish, collaborating with the sacramental minister³ and the priest supervisor (canonical pastor) in directing parish liturgy; participating in liturgical celebrations according to the regulations of the Code of Canon Law, liturgical law and diocesan norms;
2. Recruiting, training, coordinating and supervising liturgical ministers (e.g., acolytes, servers, ushers, lectors, eucharistic ministers, presiders, etc.);
3. Providing spiritual and liturgical direction for the worship commission;
4. Serving as extraordinary minister of the Eucharist and Viaticum (cc. 910, § 2; 911, § 2);
5. Preaching⁴ when pastorally and canonically appropriate;
6. Administering approved sacramentals (c. 1168);

³ See Policy-Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies), Section III.

⁴ See Policy-Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies), Section IV. H.



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7. Providing for the preparation and evaluation of Sunday liturgies, children's and other special group or home liturgies, seasonal liturgies and communal penance services;
 8. Participating in the preparation and coordination of the Rite of Anointing⁵;
 9. Providing for marriage⁶ preparation according to diocesan guidelines;
 10. Assisting families with funeral arrangements; presiding at vigil services, celebrating funeral liturgies outside of Mass, and Rites of Committal according to the Order of Christian funerals⁷;
 11. Preparing and coordinating the rites of initiation⁸;
 12. Providing for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, weekday liturgy of the hours or celebrations in the absence of a priest⁹ subject to the regulations of the Code of Canon Law, liturgical law and diocesan norms;
 13. Assuring that the sacrament of penance¹⁰ is available for parishioners.
- C. Assures the provision of **Christian formation** to all members of the faith community by:
1. Coordinating the sacramental catechesis programs;
 2. Promoting a spiritual vision for educational programs in the parish and school;
 3. Promoting the role of laity
 4. Providing for an adult education ministry;
 5. Assuring that a ministry of evangelization and outreach occurs within the parish;

⁵ See Policy-Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies) , Section IV. E.

⁶ See Policy-Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies), Section IV. G. & Marriage Policy

⁷ See Policy-Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies), Section IV. F.

⁸ See Policy-Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies), Section IV. A., B., C.

⁹ See Policy-Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies), Section IV. C.

¹⁰ See Policy-Role of Sacramental Minister (under Personnel Policies/Priest Policies), Section IV. D.



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6. Overseeing the formation, training and support of faith community leaders who provide leadership in or manage key areas of faith community life; these areas include pastoral and finance councils, commissions, volunteers and staff who coordinate parish pastoral ministry programs.

D. Assures the provision of **administrative and management services** in the parish by:

1. Abiding by diocesan policies and guidelines in all that pertains to parish pastoral administration;
2. Representing the parish community in ecumenical, vicariate and diocesan networks of pastoral leaders;
3. Involving parishioners in the life of the parish through the consultative bodies¹¹ mandated by diocesan and church policy, familiarizing the pastoral and finance councils with their respective roles and evaluating their performance;
4. Maintaining parish sacramental records, death records, parish archives and preparing and submitting annual reports requested by the diocese (cc. 535; 537);
5. Presiding at meetings within the parish as required;
6. Overseeing the bookkeeping and budgeting processes in collaboration with parish councils and volunteers in ways consistent with their respective roles¹²;
7. Exercising stewardship over parish properties (overseeing all parish maintenance, repairs and construction), and helping to foster a sense of stewardship (development and divestment) within the parish;
8. Overseeing the recruitment, hiring, support, evaluation and overall supervision of all members of pastoral staff and volunteers.

VII. Loss of Office

The office of Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) may be lost through resignation, transfer, or termination by the Bishop.

¹¹ See Policy-Norms for Parish Finance Councils and Policy- Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines

¹² See Policy-Policy Relating to Temporal Matters



A. Resignation

The Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) sends a letter of resignation to the Bishop at least six months prior to the conclusion of the current employment contract. The letter indicates the reasons for resignation.

B. Transfer

The Bishop or his representative requests an intent form from the Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) using the same timetable as that used by the Priests' Personnel Board when it seeks intent forms from the priests of the diocese. The Parish Life Coordinator (PLC)s are informed by the personnel board of the open parishes and they may apply for them.

C. Termination

1. Removal from office is a serious step and a last resort. Evaluations and suggestions for remedial action should precede the process of termination whenever possible.
2. For a serious cause a Parish Life Coordinator (PLC) may be removed from office by the Bishop.

Serious cause may include but is not limited to:

- publicly leaving the Catholic faith or breaking communion with the Church;
 - carrying out parish ministry in a manner that is seriously detrimental to the parish community;
 - grave neglect of pastoral duties;
 - poor administration;
 - malfeasance in office;
 - lifestyle or marital state contrary to church doctrine or church discipline;
3. Should such cause arise or be alleged, the Bishop's representative will carry out a preliminary investigation.
 4. The Bishop will receive a report of the investigation and will interview the Parish Life Coordinator (PLC), the priest supervisor (canonical pastor) and any other parties he deems appropriate.



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5. The Bishop will decide about whether to terminate the Parish Life Coordinator (PLC). When that decision is made, he will notify the parties in question.

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