



## THE CARE & WELL-BEING OF PRIESTS

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

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The Church of Eastern Montana is grateful for her ministers; grateful for who they are and their willingness to serve. She is concerned that priests will care for their own well being as well as that of the people.

Contemporary spirituality emphasizes growth of the WHOLE person. It recognizes the interaction between the spiritual and material; the correlation between the personal and communal dimensions of spirituality. We are made of body, mind and spirit. Care for ourselves first is a healthy premise on which to base our lives as ministers of Gospel wholeness.

The following is a summary of the life care package for priests in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

Clergy Finances and Insurance: Finances which pertain to the life and ministry of priests, their ongoing formation, their supply while away, as well as their insurance and retirement benefits are determined by the diocesan finance board and the bishop in consultation with the priests' council

Health Care: Priests are encouraged to avail themselves of proper nutrition, regular physical checkups and a daily regimen of physical exercise. Each priest is entitled to proper meals. For those who cannot cook, finding a housekeeper may be important. Finding suitable exercise programs during the winter, especially in our smaller localities, can be quite a challenge, yet nonetheless necessary.

Days Off Each Week: Priests are entitled to a day off each week and strongly encouraged to be faithful to this practice. Parishioners should support this practice and be made aware of the priests' day off. Parishioners should be requested not to infringe on his time off except in case of a true necessity. As a result, the parish may not have Mass on the priest's day off though all priests are encouraged to celebrate Mass daily.

Priests, especially in rural settings, may find that combining days off (e.g., two days off every other week) better meets their needs. Often, the need to drive long distances in order to be with a fellow priest or with friends, makes this a desirable alternative. Priests are not permitted to extend this to four or five days during any week unless it is vacation time.

In addition to a weekly day off priests need to set aside adequate time for reading, prayer and reflection. Unless pastoral ministry is nourished with study and prayer, it soon becomes mechanical and desiccated.

Rectory Living: It is important that priests learn to separate their personal lives from what they do as church ministers. A priest living in the parish rectory may want to



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move his office and work space elsewhere. If a priest is the owner of a pet or pets, his out-of-pocket expenses (i.e. not paid by the institution) include, but are not limited to food, veterinary care, medicines and supplements, ongoing grooming costs and carpet repair/replacement as needed, as well as any other collateral damages to church property. Note: for Alternative Housing, refer to Diocesan Policy, "Policy Regarding a Priest Living Outside the Rectory."

Vacation: Each priest is entitled to an annual vacation for 30 days (with a maximum of 4 weekends) in accordance with canons 533§.2 and 550§.3.

**Canon 533§.2:** Unless there is a serious reason to the contrary, the pastor may be absent each year from the parish on vacation for at most one continuous or interrupted month...

**Canon 550§.3:** The Parochial Vicar possesses the same rights as the pastor in the matter of vacation time.

Anytime a priest is absent from his parish on vacation, adequate contact information (e.g., a cell phone number or an email address) is to be left with a contact person at the parish and with the diocesan chancellor in case of an emergency or if a serious matter surfaces while he is absent. If a priest is to be away from his parish for a week or more, he **must** contact the bishop's office at least a month in advance. He is to provide the dates he proposes to be absent, his plan for sacramental coverage for the parish with the name(s) of supply priests and provide the required contact information **in writing**. Sacramental coverage is to be established prior to arranging travel and purchasing plane tickets. Once plans have been made and presented to the bishop, the bishop will grant permission for the absence. It may be the case that a priest will be required to remain in his parish until adequate coverage can be arranged. Making plans well in advance is encouraged.

Annual Retreat: Each priest is expected to avail himself of an annual retreat in accord with the prescriptions of canons 276§ and 533§.

**Canon 276§.1** In leading their lives, clerics are especially bound to pursue holiness. . . §.2 In order for them to pursue this perfection . . . they are also bound to make a retreat according to the prescriptions of particular law.

**Canon 533§.2** The days which the pastor spends



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once a year in spiritual retreat are not counted in his vacation days.

Travel outside the diocese for a retreat is customarily borne by the priest himself.

Professional Journals: Priests are encouraged to subscribe to at least two or three journals for their ongoing professional development.

Support Group: Priests are encouraged to join a Support Group. Prayer and sharing one's life with fellow priests has been beneficial for many.

Attendance at Presbyteral Assemblies: Priests are expected to participate in the two annual meetings of the Presbyteral Assembly.

"The encouragement and support that we find in one another is a great gift of God's love – a characteristic of Christ's priesthood. The increase of mutual support among brother priests through prayer and sharing is a most encouraging sign. The same can be said, on a different level, for the development of presbyteral councils committed to the solidarity of priests with one another and with the bishop in the mission of the Universal Church." *(Pope John Paul II)*

Continuing Education: see Policies on Continuing Education. For remuneration of those on sabbatical, see Temporalities.

Transfer or Reassignment: see Policies of the Clergy Personnel Board.

Retirement: Priests are free to request the bishop's permission to retire at 65. Those who choose to continue active status must submit a letter of resignation at 75. see Canon 538§.3.

Priests are invited to prepare themselves spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and financially for their retirement years. They are encouraged to work with the continuing education director in availing themselves of the opportunities to understand the process of aging as well as the third age potential.

Priests could model for others how to grow old gracefully and enjoy one's golden years.

Active Pensioners: Pastors who continue in their assignment, with the written permission of the bishop, may be named "Active Pensioners." Under these



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circumstances, the pastoral ministry remains the same, salary and benefits from the parish may still be drawn, and the CBA retirement funding may begin.

Lifestyle:     **Canon 282§.1** Clerics are to cultivate a simple style of life

and are to avoid whatever has a semblance of vanity.

**Canon 282§.2** After they are provided for their own decent support and for the fulfillment of all the duties of their state of life from the goods which they receive on the occasion of exercising an ecclesiastical office, clerics should want to use any superfluous goods for the good of the Church and for works of charity.

Special Gifts: It is recommended that the custom of special gifts be discouraged. (i.e. Mother's Day, Father's Day, All Souls, etc).

Wills: All diocesan priests must file a copy of their Last Will and their burial instructions, in a sealed envelope with the vicar general.

- a. These documents are to be in a separate sealed envelope which will be placed in each priest's file at the pastoral center.
- b. It is recommended that a priest's Last Will be drawn up by an attorney. The Vicar General is available to help identify an attorney.

Funeral and Burial: Instructions should,

- a. include the location of the original copy of your will, and
- b. either – simple statement that all funeral and burial arrangements may be left to the discretion of the bishop or a detailed listing of your instructions regarding your funeral and burial. These should include the funeral director, place of burial, ministers of funeral mass, pall bearers, homilist, etc., and
- c. A list of all relatives and alumni associations who are to be notified with their addresses.

Approved by  
Bishop Anthony Milone  
March 31, 1995  
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