

Priests Serving Together in a Family of Parishes: A Guide for Discussion

Offered by the Priestly Life Committee of the Presbyteral Council

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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Preamble

As we begin this movement to Families of Parishes, there will be a shift in the way priests live and minister. Over the last few decades, many priests have served as the only priest in a parish or parish region; there were not many parishes that were served by multiple priests. Now there are Families with two or three parochial vicars. This creates a new situation in which teams of priests serve Families of Parishes.

Clear expectations will help priests serving in a family of parishes. Having clear expectations flows from dialogue and discussion. Working collaboratively as priests ought to be life-giving, although it isn't without challenges. The Second Vatican Council envisions priests to collaborate in brotherhood and ministry (see *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 8 in Appendix I).

The purpose of this document is to propose topics of discussion. This document doesn't contain policies or procedures for priests serving a family of parishes. Rather this document invites discussion around how we live and minister together. This document can create conversation amongst priests. We enter this process confident of God's grace available to us. Let us be guided by fraternal charity. This resource is another element of our ministry, which will strengthen us for the mission Christ has given us as priests.

There are two Appendices at the end of this document. Appendix I contains the section of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* that discusses collaboration amongst priests. Appendix II contains an excerpt from the *Archdiocese of Cincinnati Priests Personnel Policies*, which relates to living in common. These policies are particular law for the archdiocese and serve as a normative guide for priests in Families of Parishes.



Fraternal

How good and how pleasant it is, when brothers dwell together as one! Like fine oil on the head, running down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, upon the collar of his robe. –Psalm 133

For all Priests serving a Family of Parishes

1. Shared Living
 - Common prayer (When, where, frequency, devotional, Liturgy of the Hours)
 - Meals (Frequency, hosting, restaurants)
 - Dietary restrictions?
 - If eating together on Friday, do we abstain from meat?
 - Other socializing (monthly outing)
2. How should we integrate, to the degree they wish, with senior/retired priests living in our area?
3. Parochial Vicars
 - Regular meetings with pastor – supervision, formation, ensure we are moving in the same direction, morale, resolve any disputes
 - What projects would a parochial vicar like to lead?
 - For parochial vicars who are preparing to be pastors – what sort of skills or experiences need to be cultivated.
4. Important conversations
 - What is each priest's vision of the priesthood?
 - What does mutual respect look like?
 - What values are important for our Family of Parishes priests (honesty, transparency, charity, etc)
 - Accessibility – how do we communicate? (text, email, phone call, in person?)
 - Problem solving and decision making – how do we disagree with one another, yet commit to a decision
5. Interpersonal
 - What is your daily routine?
 - Do we feel comfortable approaching each other with difficult topics?
 - Do you schedule things in advance or act spontaneously?
 - How do we know if you are having a good day? A bad day?
 - What are your love languages? (quality time, physical touch, receiving gifts, acts of service, words or affirmation)
6. How often do we revisit these discussions?
 - 6 months or annually
 - When a new priest is assigned to the family

For priests living in the same rectory

"Priests serving in a particular parish or in non-parochial ministry preferably will reside together under one roof, e.g. traditional rectory living at a parish/institution provided such housing is available and suitable as set forth in Sections V.B. and V.C. of this document. (Canons 533, 550)" –*AoC Priests Personnel Policies* (V.B.1)

(See Appendix II for policies from *Archdiocesan Priest Personnel Policies* related to common living)

1. Occupancy
 - How do we handle guests (brother priests, family, seminarians, etc) staying in the rectory? How much advanced notice is expected?
 - How do we handle long-term guests in the rectory or new residents?
 - How often will we evaluate living arrangements in the Family of Parishes?
 - When can a priest entertain friends in the rectory?
2. What will we share in common and how will we divide responsibilities
 - Food and drink (shared or personal)
 - Common household chores (garbage, dishes, tidying the house)
 - Is there a housekeeper?
 - Is there a cook?
 - What space is common and what space is personal?
3. How do we resolve conflicts?

Ministerial

General

1. How will the ministry of the priests of this Family of Parishes be divided among the parishes? Will all the priests serve all the parishes? How will we work together to bring the parishes closer to our five-year goal of unification of the Family?
2. Gifts, Talents, and Areas of Interests
 - What are each priest's gifts and areas of interest?
 - Is there a process to identify these talents?
 - How do we utilize these gifts to further the Church's mission?
3. Parish Situation
 - What are the parishes doing well?
 - What are the parishes not doing well?
 - Is there a need to focus on specific areas?
4. How will we communicate with each other and between the parishes? (is there a shared ministry calendar?)
5. What are the collective expectations for permanent deacons?

Sanctify

1. How do we divide the sacramental duties? How will they be scheduled and how will it be decided who will preside?
 - Weekend Mass rotation
 - Daily Mass rotation
 - Nursing Home Masses
 - Funerals (Can a family request a particular priest?)
 - Weddings (Can a family request a particular priest?)
 - Baptisms (Can a family request a particular priest?)
 - Sacrament of Penance
 - i. Do we rotate confession times between priests?

- ii. What if one priest wants to add extra confession times?
 - o What role do permanent deacons have (baptisms, weddings, funerals, preaching)?
- 2. How will we approach the use of vestments, both parish-owned and personal? Do we mind sharing personal vestments? Will we purchase new vestments over time, if so who selects them?
- 3. What are standard practices for celebrating Mass in this Family of Parishes vs. legitimate differences in celebration?
- 4. Who schedules extra priest help for vacation, retreat, and other times? (Worship staff? Secretary? The priest who will be away?)

Teach

- 1. What is our interaction with Adult Evangelization?
 - o RCIA – If there are multiple programs, how do we interact with them? What are the expectations of priests to catechize?
 - o Any particular areas of interest for priests (Men's group, Young Adults, etc)?
- 2. What is our interaction with Youth Evangelization (youth groups, CCD or other youth formation)?
- 3. If there is a parish school or schools, how do we serve the school?
 - o Administratively
 - o Sacramentally
 - o Pastoral visits

Govern

- 1. Poor
 - o How do we care for needy who approach us? Are there gift cards to offer beggars or neighborhood groups that serve the poor?
 - o How do we interact with various groups that care for the poor (SVdP, soup kitchens, etc).
- 2. Sick and Homebound
 - o What are the expectations for visiting the sick?
 - o Is there a rotation for hospital visits?
 - o Is there a rotation for emergency calls?
 - o How do emergency calls get to multiple rectories or cell phones?
- 3. Administration
 - o How can a parochial vicar alleviate administrative demands on the pastor? (Supervise staff, attend committee meetings, meet with difficult parishioners, etc)
 - o What particular skills, gifts, and experiences do each of the priests bring in the domain of pastoral administration?
 - o What learning needs do the priests have in pastoral administration, especially the more junior members of our team of priests?
 - o What are the personal interests in pastoral administration of the members of the clergy team?

Appendix I

From the Second Vatican Council document *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 8

Priests by virtue of their ordination to the priesthood are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood. In individual dioceses, priests form one priesthood under their own bishop. Even though priests are assigned to different duties, nevertheless they carry on one priestly ministry for men. All priests are sent as co-workers in the same apostolate, whether they engage in parochial or extra-parochial ministry. This is true whether they devote their efforts to scientific research or teaching, or whether by manual labor they share in the lot of the workers themselves-if there is need for this and competent authority approves-or finally whether they fulfill some other apostolic tasks or labor designed for the apostolate. All, indeed, are united in the building up of the Body of Christ which, especially in our times, requires manifold duties and new methods. It is very important that all priests, whether diocesan or religious, help one another always to be fellow workers in the truth. Each one, therefore, is united in special bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and brotherhood with the other members of this priesthood. This has been manifested from ancient times in the liturgy when the priests present at an ordination are invited to impose hands together with the ordaining bishop on the new candidate, and with united hearts concelebrate the Sacred Eucharist. Each and every priest, therefore, is united with his fellow priests in a bond of charity, prayer and total cooperation. In this manner, they manifest that unity which Christ willed, namely, that his own be perfected in one so that the world might know that the Son was sent by the Father.

Older priests, therefore, should receive younger priests as true brothers and help them in their first undertakings and priestly duties. The older ones should likewise endeavor to understand the mentality of younger priests, even though it be different from their own, and follow their projects with good will. By the same token, young priests should respect the age and experience of their seniors; they should seek their advice and willingly cooperate with them in everything that pertains to the care of souls. In a fraternal spirit, priests should extend hospitality, cultivate kindness and share their goods in common. They should be particularly solicitous for the sick, the afflicted, those overburdened with work, the lonely, those exiled from their homeland, and those who suffer persecution. They should gladly and joyfully gather together for recreation, remembering Christ's invitation to the weary apostles: "Come aside to a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mk 6:31). And further, in order that priests may find mutual assistance in the development of their spiritual and intellectual life, that they may be able to cooperate more effectively in their ministry and be saved from the dangers of loneliness which may arise, it is necessary that some kind of common life or some sharing of common life be encouraged among priests. This, however, may take many forms, according to different personal or pastoral needs, such as living together where this is possible, or having a common table, or at least by frequent and periodic meetings. One should hold also in high regard and eagerly promote those associations which, having been recognized by competent ecclesiastical authority, encourage priestly holiness in the ministry by the use of an appropriate and duly approved rule of life and by fraternal aid, intending thus to do service to the whole order of priests.

Finally, by reason of the same communion in the priesthood, priests should realize that they are obliged in a special manner toward those priests who labor under certain difficulties. They should give them timely help, and also, if necessary, admonish them discreetly. Moreover, they should always treat with fraternal charity and magnanimity those who have failed in some matters, offer urgent prayers to God for them, and continually show themselves as true brothers and friends.

Appendix II

From *Archdiocese of Cincinnati Priests Personnel Policies*, Approved August 1, 2017 (V.C)

Living Conditions in the Common Residence Provided at Parish/Institution

1. Honesty and fraternal charity are to be hallmarks of those who reside together. For priests residing together in a common house, the residence is to be equally the house of all. The residence does not belong to any priest individually. All priests residing in the common house are to have equal access to the use of any guest room/s, always respecting the privacy of other priests in the residence. Decisions affecting life in the common house (e.g. remodeling, long-term guests, pets in common areas, smoking in common areas, noise, times of rest) are to be mutually discussed and agreed upon by all the priests and should not infringe upon the privacy or well-being of the other priests in the residence.
2. No new priest or seminarian is to come to live in the common house without prior consultation of all the priests. It is recommended that people other than priests and seminarians not live in the common house. (Also, please see Section V.B.5.) The *Decree on Child Protection* must be observed in all instances at all times.
3. All parish staff members are expected to honor the private space requirements of the priests. An individual priest has the right to limit the access of others (e.g. staff and parishioners) 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 all the priests living in the house. No one is to have a key to the common house without the consent of all the priests.
4. Every parish or Archdiocesan institution will provide the priests living in the common house with the ordinary amenities of room and board (e.g. meals, basic furniture, laundry, telephone) or reimbursement for those amenities not provided.
5. The right of each priest to show hospitality and the right of each priest to privacy are to be considered when entertaining guests in private quarters. The *Decree on Child Protection* must be observed in all instances at all times.
6. No one is to be hired to work in the common house (e.g. housekeeper, cook, laundry person) without the prior consultation of all the priests. The *Decree on Child Protection* must be observed in all instances at all times.
7. If a priest has a pet, the priest is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the pet. The priest is personally responsible (financially) for any damage done by the pet. Before he moves, the priest must see that the parish office and residence is cleaned and repaired, and ready for use for the next priest. A pet should be confined to the living quarters of its owner, or be kept outdoors unless another arrangement is reached. A pet should be of a nature that does not pollute the atmosphere of the rectory or pose a risk of harm to others, including fear or allergic reactions. A pet may not infringe on the accessibility of parishioners to the parish office. Paid parish staff members are not to be expected to care for or feed a priest's pet. Parish funds are not to be used for the upkeep of a pet.
8. If a priest is a smoker, any damage beyond normal wear and tear in the parish office or residence is the financial responsibility of the priest. Before he moves, the priest must see that the parish office and residence is cleaned and repaired, and ready for occupancy from the next priest.