

DIOCESE OF CLOYNE SABBATICAL POLICY

CONTEXT

Mk. 6:31: “You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while.”

1 Tim. 4:14-16: “You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you when the prophets spoke and the body of elders laid their hands on you; do not let it lie unused. Think hard about all this, and put it into practice, and everyone will be able to see how you are advancing. Take great care about what you do and what you teach; always do this, and in this way you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.”

Can. 279 §1 Clerics are to continue their sacred studies even after ordination to the priesthood. They are to hold to that solid doctrine based on sacred Scripture which has been handed down by our forebears and which is generally received by the Church, as set out especially in the documents of the Councils and of the Roman Pontiffs. They are to avoid profane novelties and pseudo-science.

§2 Priests are to attend pastoral courses to be arranged for them after their ordination, in accordance with the provisions of particular law. At times determined by the same law, they are to attend other courses, theological meetings or conferences, which offer them an occasion to acquire further knowledge of the sacred sciences and of pastoral methods.

§3 They are also to seek a knowledge of other sciences, especially those linked to the sacred sciences, particularly insofar as they benefit the exercise of the pastoral ministry.

PASTORES DABO VOBIS (1992)

78 THE AGENTS OF ONGOING FORMATION

The conditions in which the ministry of priests often and in many places has to be carried out nowadays do not make it easy to undertake a serious commitment to formation. The multiplication of responsibilities and services, the complexity of human life in general and the life of the Christian communities in particular, the activism and anxiety that are features of vast areas of society today often deprive priests of the time and energies they need to “take heed of themselves” (cf. *1 Tim 4:16*).

This should increase the responsibility of the priests to overcome these difficulties and see them as a challenge to plan and carry out a permanent formation which will respond appropriately to the greatness of God’s gift and to the urgency of the demands and requirement of our time.

Those responsible for the ongoing formation of priests are to be found in the Church as “communion”. In this sense, the *entire particular Church* has the responsibility, under the guidance of the Bishop, to develop and look after the different aspects of her priests’ permanent formation. Priests are not there to serve themselves but the People of God. So, ongoing formation, in ensuring the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral maturity of priests, is doing good to the People of God itself.

DIRECTORY ON THE MINISTRY AND LIFE OF PRIESTS

(Congregation for the Clergy) 1994

83 “Sabbatical” Periods

Among other factors that may cause discouragement in the souls of pastors are the danger of routine, physical exhaustion due to overwork, psychological fatigue caused by having to struggle against misunderstanding, prejudice, going against organized forces that tend to give the impression that the priests of today belong to a culturally obsolete minority.

Notwithstanding pastoral urgency, and precisely to face up to these problems adequately, priests must be provided with time, as much as reasonably possible, so as to facilitate longer periods spent with the Lord Jesus, thus recovering strength and courage to continue the road to holiness.

To respond to this particular demand, in many Diocese various initiatives have already been tested — often with promising results.

These results are valid and may be taken into consideration, despite the difficulties that may be encountered in some areas where the scarcity of priests is more acutely felt.

For this purpose, monasteries, sanctuaries or other places of spirituality, which are far from the main urban centres, may lend a helping hand in sparing the priest from direct pastoral responsibilities.

In some cases, it may be useful to employ this time for study or updating oneself in the sacred sciences, yet the primary goal of strengthening spiritual and apostolic life must not be forgotten.

In any case, the danger of considering the sabbatical period as vacation time or claiming it as a right should be avoided.

89.In this delicate work (ongoing formation of priests) the Bishop, while performing an irreplaceable and undelegatable role, will know how to seek the collaboration of the council of priests, for it is an organism which, by its nature and purpose, is a suitable aid, especially in certain tasks such as that of drawing up a plan of formation.

POLICY

The opportunity to undertake a sabbatical is an important aspect of a priest's ministry and should be viewed as a normal feature of diocesan life. This policy is to facilitate priests who wish to avail of such a facility, and to encourage those who might be hesitant about it.

1. What is a Sabbatical?

- An extended period of time away from normal duties for the purpose of renewal and enrichment both as a person and a minister of the Gospel.
- A significant part of this time shall consist of a period of constructive growth and study in a formal programme which will enable the priest to become more effective in his ministry by enhancing his skills, knowledge, ability and spiritual development.

2. Duration/Eligibility:

All priests incardinated in the diocese and who have ministered for fifteen (15) years or more are eligible for a sabbatical of up to a period of six months. This does not include his annual leave.

3. Supply/Replacement arrangements during a Sabbatical:

It should be understood that the absence of a priest on sabbatical might involve some curtailment of services. The responsibility of providing cover lies with the local Vicar Forane and the other priests of the parish from which the priest will be absent. There should be a willingness among priests to work together at providing cover. This would be particularly relevant for those in 'one priest' parishes.

4. Application procedure:

All sabbatical leave will require the approval of the Bishop.

Applications, in writing, should be submitted to the Bishop during the month of January each year. The Bishop shall appoint a committee of three to consider individual applications for sabbatical and make recommendations to him. At least one member of this committee shall be drawn from the *Diocesan Personnel Board*. Applications should be accompanied by a proposed schedule of relevant activities for the duration of the sabbatical.

5. Funding:

The priest will receive his salary from his parish for the period plus €2,500 from the Diocese and €2,500 from his parish. Subventions to be reviewed every three years. Applications from priests whose income is not primarily derived from Parish Ministry shall be considered on an individual basis by the Bishop in consultation with the Sabbatical Committee.

6. Review:

This sabbatical policy is to be reviewed after three years from the date of its final approval.