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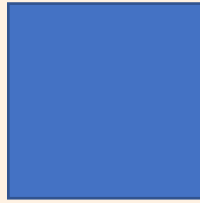
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**DIOCESE OF PENANG**  
MALAYSIA

# **PRIEST HANDBOOK**

**Policies, Faculties, Norms  
Ministry and Life of the Presbyterate  
Catholic Diocese of Penang**

Prepared By:  
PENINSULAR MALAYSIA ECCLESIASTICAL TRIBUNAL  
PENANG OFFICE  
2022

## DECREE OF PROMULGATION



The Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis, Bishop of the Diocese of Penang, hereby promulgate the accompanying priestly norms and faculties which are contained in the “**Diocese of Penang - Priest Handbook**”. dated this year of **August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

The Priest Handbook shall be a guide to the priest in the ministries and activities of the Diocese of Penang and are to take effect immediately. These policies, faculties, norms, and procedures are meant to provide the clergy in the Diocese of Penang clarity and confirmation, for the good order of the local church and its fidelity to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

**Given at the Diocese of Penang, Georgetown on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

***“Feast of St. John Mary Vianney”***

.....  
**Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis, DD**  
**Bishop of Penang**

## FOREWORD



My Dear Rev. Fathers,

I am happy to present this “**Diocese of Penang - Clergy Handbook**” for the Clergy and Deacons of the Diocese of Penang. This revision and updated version from the earlier ‘*Pastoral Directory for the Clergy of the Catholic Dioceses of Peninsular Malaysia (1989)*’ is to assist priest to have a broader understanding of the policies, norms regarding priestly life, priestly ministry, parish personnel, celebration of the word and sacraments, administration, pastoral visitation, and procedures relating to pastoral matters in the Parish.

The introduction to this Clergy Handbook explains the nature and mission of the Church and the role of the Bishop and priests in realizing this mission and in bringing clarity and understanding to the clergy. The Diocese of Penang will support its clergy in their ongoing human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation.

With this Clergy Handbook it is my ardent hope that it will be helpful in the ongoing formation by the presbyterate to bring about better ministerial effectiveness. As we move forward as Missionary Disciples, may we all be guided by the ever-present Grace of the Holy Spirit. May the same Holy Spirit continue to bless you in your faithful ministry to GOD’s people.

We also give thanks and acknowledgement to the works done in the 1989, ‘Pastoral Directory for the Clergy of the Catholic Dioceses of Peninsular Malaysia’ issued by the Bishops of Peninsular Malaysia for which this Priest Handbook is a revision and necessary amendments set for the present time.

**‘Be Disciples of Hope’**

Sincerely in Christ

.....  
**Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis**  
**Bishop of Penang**

# CONTENT

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

- A1 Human Societies before Christ
- A2 The Church: An independent and self-governing society
- A3 The Church: A unique society
- A4 The Church: A mystery
- A5 Mission of Christ
- A6 Mission of Apostles
- A7 Mission of Bishops
- A8 Priests: Participants of the one Priesthood of Christ
- A9 Priests: Co-operators of the Episcopal Order

## **B. FRATERNITY**

- B1 Bishops and Diocesan Priests
- B2 Duty of Priests to Bishops
- B3 Priests among themselves
- B4 Priests and Religious
- B5 Priests and Laity
- B6 Civil Authorities

## **C. PRIESTLY LIFE**

- C1 Introduction

### **SPIRITUAL LIFE**

#### **(i) Obligations**

- C2 To Seek Holiness
- C3 To Nourish Spiritual Life
- C4 To Pray Daily
- C5 To Approach Penance Frequently
- C6 Annual Retreat (PG23, PARA 6, rc)

- C7 Monthly Recollection
- C8 Celibacy
- C9 To Act Prudently
- C10 Reverence and Obedience
- C11 Remembering the Dead
- C12 Objectionable Association

**(ii) Means to Spiritual Perfection**

- C13 Union with Other Priests
- C14 Community Life
- C15 Simplicity of Life
- C16 Mental Prayer
- C17 Devotion to Mary
- C18 Spirit of Sharing

**INTELLECTUAL LIFE**

- C19 On-Going Formations
- C20 Study Programs
- C21 Retreat

**MATERIAL LIFE**

**(iii) Temporal Provisions**

- C22 Introduction
- C23 Diocesan Responsibility
- C24 Parish Responsibility
- C25 Allowances
- C26 Free Will Gift
- C27 Financial Assistance
- C28 Vehicle

**(iv) Bodily Health**

- C29 Self-care

- C30 Medical Check-up
- C31 Insurance and Hospitalization Benefit

(v) Vacation

- C32 Annual Leave
- C33 Holiday Allowance

(vi) Last Will and Testament

- C34 Preparation of Will

## **D. PRIESTLY MINISTRY**

- D1 Introduction

### **I. Priests**

(i) Priestly Rights

- D2 Power of Orders
- D3 Associations

(ii) Priestly Obligations

- D4 Spiritual Perfection
- D5 Ministry of the Word
- D6 Ministry of the Sacraments
- D7 Reverence and Obedience
- D8 Assignments
- D9 Absence
- D10 Associations
- D11 Attire
- D12 Unbecoming to Priestly State
- D13 Public Office
- D14 Proprietorship and Guarantors
- D15 Conducting Business
- D16 Political Factions
- D17 Military Service

## **E. PARISH AND CLERGY**

### Parish

- E1 Parish integral with the Diocese

### Clergy

- E2 Parish Priest
- E3 Parish Administrator
- E4 Assistant Parish Priests
- E5 Rectors
- E6 Deacons
  - (i) Their Functions
- E7 Clergy Residence
- E8 Priest in Residence
- E9 Special Assignment
- E10 Assignment Outside the Diocese
- E11 On Leave

## **F. PRIEST RETIREMENT**

- F1 Introduction
- F2 Retirement Age and Legal Instruments
- F3 Role of the Retired Priest
- F4 Living Arrangements upon Retirement
- F5 Retirement Benefits

## **G. ADMINISTRATION**

- I. Matters relating to Diocesan Priests
  - G1 Parish Priest's Personal Bank Account
- II. Matters relating to Parishes
  - (i) Pastoral Administration
    - G2 Collaboration with the Bishop and Clergy (Can 519)
    - G3 Peace and Harmony

## A. INTRODUCTION

The Clergy of the Diocese of Penang, will model a life consistent with the teachings of the Gospel, promoting through their own behaviour the way to love God and to love neighbour as self. Clergy will also exhibit a deep commitment to the Church and loyalty to its traditions and teachings in the way that they interact in the lives and circumstances of the people they serve.

In all personal and professional relationships, clerics will, by their words, actions and attitudes, reflect fidelity to the promises they made at ordination. A consistent fidelity to the Church's teaching in pastoral practice and selflessness in pastoral service are essential dimensions of priestly life and ministry.

The collaborative relationship with the Bishop and with other members of the Presbyterium and Diaconate further exemplifies the ecclesial reality of the sacred orders they have received.

Clerics are to be faithful to the pursuit of holiness through their commitment to the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours and the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, and to prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, and the study of the Scriptures and an annual retreat. These disciplines are fundamental to the effective proclamation of the Gospel and their fulfilment of their ministerial responsibilities.

Clerics are responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health. They are to strive to keep physically and emotionally healthy by getting proper nutrition and adequate sleep, by exercise, by taking allotted days off and vacations, by guarding against addictive or abusive behaviours and by nurturing appropriate friendships outside pastoral relationships.

Priests make a promise of celibacy and are called to witness faithfully to this promise in all their relationships. They are to be aware of warning signs of potential problems in regard to their own health and in their personal and professional lives and are to strive for greater self-awareness in order to



recognize the unique dynamics at work in pastoral relationships and to heed the warning signs in their lives which indicate when they may be approaching boundary violations.

Clerics will honour the equality of all people, avoiding all forms of discrimination and respecting the dignity of each person by providing service without regard to economic status, age, gender, race ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or physical or mental abilities.

Clerics will reach out to all people in a spirit of humility, reverence, and respect, especially to those who feel estranged from the Church. Clerics will take care to be approachable and available to help those who seek their assistance and to be sensitive to the good of the community as they respond to the diverse forms of spirituality and theology within it.

Clerics should not restrict the rights of the Christian faithful beyond what the laws of the Church provide.

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## **A1 Human Societies before Christ<sup>1</sup>**

Men need the company of their fellow brothers and God has willed those men, living in society, should contribute one family through living together in brotherhood. Men are to attain their common destiny, God himself, not as separate units, but as a people.

Man is social by nature and is a composite of the material and the spiritual. Clearly, he can only develop and society itself can only progress when the social order caters for man's material and spiritual needs. Therefore, every human society man had formed on earth was ordered for man's religious and material good. But, up to the time of Christ there was confusion between man's religious needs and the demands of civil authority in every human society. Civil life came to be regarded as most important and the material needs of man were considered as all-important. This resulted in the neglect of man's spiritual and immortal soul – the distinguishing feature which makes him like God and master of all earthly creatures.

## **A2 The Church: An independent and self-governing society<sup>2</sup>**

For this reason, Jesus Christ, when founding his Church as a society, separated the religious concerns of man from the State, and transferred them to the Church. The Church was made independent of the State, to function as a self-governing society. For this reason, he said, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."<sup>3</sup>

Christ founded his Church as an independent, self-governing society. He gave full power to his Apostles and their successors to teach, sanctify and rule. He entrusted them with the power to make laws, to judge and to punish. This power was so complete that it cannot be limited by reason of territory<sup>4</sup>, persons<sup>5</sup>, matter<sup>6</sup> and time<sup>7</sup>. He made it quite clear that such a

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<sup>1</sup> Pastoral Directory for the clergy of the Catholic Dioceses of Peninsular Malaysia, 1989, pg.1

<sup>2</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.2

<sup>3</sup> Mt. 22:21

<sup>4</sup> Mk. 16:16

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Mt. 28:19

<sup>6</sup> Mt. 28:20

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

power could not be limited by any human authority when he said, “Whatever you bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: whatever you loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”<sup>8</sup>

### **A3 The Church: A unique society<sup>9</sup>**

In a way the Church is like any other society, in that she is made up of human beings who are members of the earthly city. She is in the world, lives and acts in it. To fulfil her mission, she needs help from the talents and industry of individuals and from society as a whole. She is also equipped with what is suitable for her as a visible and social unity.

Yet the Church is not quite the same as a civil society. The purpose of her existence is unique: she is in the world to carry forward the work of Christ Himself – the salvation of all; to make God the Father and his Incarnate Son present and, in a sense, visible; to communicate divine life to all. The Church is not moved to action by earthly ambition but by a zeal to give witness to the truth. Her purpose is not to sit in judgement but to rescue, and not to be served but to serve. The Church as a society therefore has to use supernatural and spiritual means to fulfil her mission.

### **A4 The Church: A mystery**

It is in this point that the Church goes beyond human understanding. It is both a visible assembly and also a spiritual community. It lives in the world yet is not of the world. It is set apart from the civil order, and yet not separated. It is zealous in action and yet dedicated to contemplation; present in the world but as a pilgrim, conforming to proper laws but only in order to bring them into harmony with the spiritual order. The Church accepts the imperfections of the world, yet tries to perfect it. She undergoes the same experience as other men but in it and through it expresses the newness of the life in Christ. The Church therefore is not merely a society but a mystery.

The Church is called the Mystical Body of Christ because like Christ himself, she is both divine and human. The human always looks to the

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<sup>8</sup> Mt. 16:19, 18:18

<sup>9</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.3

divine and is subordinated to it. In all her life she looks not towards the earthly city but to the Kingdom of God for her laws and the inspiration to action. We know about this mystery of the Church only because it has been revealed to us. We cannot come to a full knowledge of the truth about her, but only strive to understand more deeply her nature and penetrate it in order to share it more intimately. So, as a mystery, the Church cannot be defined but only described. Scripture gives us various images to help us understand better the nature of the Church. Four groups of such images come especially to mind: the Church as the Flock of Christ, the Vineyard of God, the Temple of the Holy Spirit and the Spouse of the Immaculate Lamb.<sup>10</sup>

The Church is the **FLOCK** of which God himself foretold that he would be the shepherd.<sup>11</sup> She is also a sheepfold whose only door is Christ.<sup>12</sup>

The Church is the **VINEYARD** of God.<sup>13</sup> It is like a piece of land cultivated by Him and the True Vine is Christ who gives life to his branches.<sup>14</sup>

She is the **TEMPLE** of the Holy Spirit<sup>15</sup> of which Christ is the corner stone.<sup>16</sup>

The Church is the **SPOUSE** of the Spotless Lamb<sup>17</sup>, for he loved her so much so as to give himself up for her. He has created an unbreakable union with her and he has filled her with heavenly gifts.

These images supplement one another and illuminate Christ's relationship with his Church. There are other metaphors which attempt to throw light on the nature of the Church. She is our Mother, since she brings to birth children to a new, immortal life, conceived by the Holy Spirit. The Church is called the Community of the Faithful as she is composed of all those who have received Christ in faith and love and are united among themselves in love and are united among themselves in love and mutual service. The Church is the new Israel, the new People of God

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<sup>10</sup> LG No.6

<sup>11</sup> Is. 40:11, Ez. 34:11

<sup>12</sup> Jn. 10:1-10

<sup>13</sup> Mt. 21:33-43

<sup>14</sup> Jn. 15:1-17

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor 3:12

<sup>16</sup> Mt. 21:42, Acts 4:11, 1 Pet. 2:7

<sup>17</sup> Rev. 19:7, 21:2-9, 22:17

according to God's Sacrament because she is a sign of salvation witnessing to Christ's saving mission.<sup>18</sup>

### **A5 Mission of Christ<sup>19</sup>**

The Father sent Christ into the world to teach, to sanctify and to rule according to His will. This mission did not end with his ascension into heaven, but continues in the Church. From the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Lord Jesus lives in the Church in such a way that she lives by Him. Continually present to the Church, he will shepherd his flock until the Day of Judgment when he will separate the sheep from the goats.<sup>20</sup>

### **A6 Mission of Apostles<sup>21</sup>**

Just as he was sent by the Father, Christ sent his Apostles<sup>22</sup> to glorify the Father on earth and enrol new members into the Church, the Body of Christ. The mission will last till the end of the world<sup>23</sup>. Thus, the Apostles appointed successors and passed on to them the duty of perfecting the work begun by themselves. This arrangement for appointing successors was to continue through the ages.

### **A7 Mission of Bishops<sup>24</sup>**

Amongst those various offices which have been exercised in the Church from the earliest times, the chief place, according to the witness of tradition, is held by the function of those who, through their appointment to the dignity and responsibility of Bishop, and in virtue consequently of the unbroken succession going back to the beginning, are regarded as transmitters of the apostolic line. Thus, according to the testimony of St Irenaeus, the apostolic tradition is manifested and preserved in the whole

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<sup>18</sup> LG No. 11

<sup>19</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg. 6

<sup>20</sup> Mt. 25:31 ff

<sup>21</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.7

<sup>22</sup> Jn. 20:21

<sup>23</sup> Mt. 28:20

<sup>24</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.7-9

world by those who were made Bishops by the Apostles and sent by their successors down to our own time.<sup>25</sup>

The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the source and foundation of the unity of the Bishops and among the faithful. The individual Bishop, however, is the visible principle and foundation of unity in his particular church, fashioned after the model of the universal Church. The universal Church is made up of the sum of these particular churches. Thus, each Bishop represents his own church, but all of them together in union with the Pope represent the entire Church in the bond of peace, love and unity.

Bishops are to regard their priests as brothers and friends. They are to take the greatest interest they are capable of in their welfare both temporal and spiritual. For on their shoulders particularly falls the burden of sanctifying their priests.<sup>26</sup>

#### **A8 Priests: Participants of the one Priesthood of Christ<sup>27</sup>**

Christ whom the Father hallowed and sent into the world<sup>28</sup> has, through his apostles, made their successors, namely the bishops, sharers in his consecration and mission; and these, in their turn, duly entrust in varying degrees, various members of the Church with the office of their ministry. Thus, the divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry is exercised on different degrees by those who even from ancient times have been called bishops, priests, and deacons.<sup>29</sup>

#### **A9 Priests: Co-operators of the Episcopal Order<sup>30</sup>**

All priests, whether diocesan or religious, share and exercise with the bishop the one priesthood of Christ. They are thus constituted providential co-operators of this episcopal order. The diocesan clergy have, however,

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<sup>25</sup> LG No.20

<sup>26</sup> CD No.28, PO No.7

<sup>27</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.8

<sup>28</sup> Jn. 10:36

<sup>29</sup> LG No.28

<sup>30</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.9

a primary role in the care of souls... and accordingly from one body and one family of which the bishop is the father.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> CD No.28

## **B. FRATERNITY**

### **B1 Bishops and Diocesan Priests<sup>32</sup>**

The relations between the bishop and the diocesan clergy should be based before all else on supernatural charity, so that their unity of purpose will make their pastoral activity even more effective.<sup>33</sup>

### **B2 Duty of Priests to Bishops<sup>34</sup>**

Priests for their part should keep in mind the fullness of the sacrament of Order which bishops enjoy and should reverence in their persons the authority of Christ, the supreme Pastor. They should therefore be attached to their bishop with sincere charity and obedience... inspired by the spirit of cooperation. There is all the more need in our day for union of priests with their bishops and carry out their mission by joining forces with other priests under the leadership of those who are rulers of the Church.<sup>35</sup>

### **B3 Priests among Themselves<sup>36</sup>**

Diocesan priests should be united among themselves and should be genuinely zealous for the spiritual welfare of the whole diocese. They should bear in mind that the worldly goods which they acquire through their ecclesiastical functions are closely connected with their sacred office, and they shall therefore contribute liberally to the material needs of the diocese in accordance with the Bishop's directives.<sup>37</sup>

Older priests should sincerely accept the younger priests as brothers and be a help to them in facing the first tasks and responsibilities of the ministry. They should make an effort also to understand their outlook even though it may be different from their own, and should give kindly encouragement to their projects. Young priests for their part are to respect

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<sup>32</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.9

<sup>33</sup> CD No.28

<sup>34</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg. 10

<sup>35</sup> PO No.7

<sup>36</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.11-12

<sup>37</sup> CD No.28



the age and experience of the elders; they ought to consult with them on matters concerning the care of souls and willingly cooperate with them.<sup>38</sup>

#### **B4 Priests and Religious<sup>39</sup>**

Religious, on their part, must give witness that they effectively and willingly belong to the diocesan family.<sup>40</sup> They will do this not only by being available for the needs of the local church according to the charism of their institute<sup>41</sup>, but even more so by sharing their spiritual experience with the diocesan priests and by facilitating prayer groups for the faithful.

There is, furthermore, a particularly important matter which deserves to be mentioned today: that of the close relation between the religious institutes and the clergy regarding the contemplative dimension that every dedicated life to the Lord must have as its fundamental element. Diocesan priests need to draw from contemplation, strength and support for their apostolate. As in the past, they must normally seek help from experienced religious and from monasteries that should be ready to receive them for spiritual exercises and for periods of meditation and renewal. Besides, their participation in prayer exercises promoted by the local church could contribute to the growth and enrichment of the spiritual life of the whole Christian community<sup>42</sup>.

#### **B5 Priests and Laity<sup>43</sup>**

Priests should acknowledge and promote the dignity of the laity and the role which is proper to them in the mission of the Church. They should listen to the laity willingly, consider their wishes in a fraternal spirit and recognize their experiences and competence in the difficult areas of human activity. Priests should also entrust the laity with duties in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. They could invite them to undertake works on their own initiative.<sup>44</sup> In a word,

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<sup>38</sup> PO No.8

<sup>39</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.12-13

<sup>40</sup> cf CD 24

<sup>41</sup> cf CD 35

<sup>42</sup> The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life, no.24-25

<sup>43</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.13-14

<sup>44</sup> PO No.9

priests should admit, observe and try to put into practice those things which they can do regarding the state of the faithful in the Church, about their dignity, rights and duties, as also their relationship to the hierarchy.

## **B6 Civil Authorities<sup>45</sup>**

The needs of the pastoral ministry and for the common good of the earthly city demand that priests have contact directly or indirectly with those who govern the state or who direct political, socio-economic, or military affairs and people in similar positions.

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<sup>45</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.14

## C. PRIESTLY LIFE

### C1 Introduction<sup>46</sup>

By the Sacrament of Orders priests are configured to Christ, the priest, as servants of the Head, so that as co-workers with the episcopal order they may build up the Body of Christ, the Church. They are bound by a special reason to acquire perfection according to the Lord's word:

***“You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>47</sup>***

As they are ministers of the Word of God, they read and hear every day the Word of God which they must teach to others. If they strive at the same time to make it part of their own lives, they will become daily more perfect disciples of the Lord, according to the saying of the apostle Paul to Timothy:

***“Practice these duties, devote yourself to them; so that all may see your progress. Take heed to thyself and to your teaching; hold to that, for in doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers.”<sup>48</sup>***

For by seeking more effective ways of conveying to others what they have meditated on they will savour more profoundly the ***“unsearchable riches of Christ”<sup>49</sup>*** and the many-sided wisdom of God.

Priests as ministers of the sacred mysteries, especially in the sacrifice of the Mass, act in a special way in the person of Christ who gave himself as victim to sanctify men. And this is why they are invited to imitate what they handle, so that as they celebrate the mystery of the Lord's death, they may take care to mortify their members from vices and concupiscence.<sup>50</sup>

Priests, who are consecrated by the anointing of the Holy Spirit and sent by Christ, mortify the works of the flesh in themselves and dedicate

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<sup>46</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.16 -18

<sup>47</sup> Mt. 5:48, PO No.12

<sup>48</sup> 1 Tim. 4:15-16

<sup>49</sup> Eph. 3:8

<sup>50</sup> PO No.13

themselves completely to the service of people, and so are able, in the holiness with which they have been enriched in Christ, to make progress towards the perfect man.<sup>51</sup>

The very holiness of priests is of the greatest benefit for the fruitful fulfilment of their ministry.<sup>52</sup>

Among the virtues especially demanded by the ministry of priests it must be reckoned that disposition of mind by which they are always prepared to seek not their own will but the will of Him who has sent them is most important. The divine task for fulfilment of which they have been set apart by the Holy Spirit transcends all human strength and human wisdom; for

***“God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong”***<sup>53, 54</sup>

Therefore, the true minister of Christ is conscious of his own weakness and labours in humility.<sup>55</sup>

## **I. SPIRITUAL LIFE**

### **(i) Obligations<sup>56</sup>**

#### **C2 To Seek Holiness**

Clerics should be **men of God**. Hence, they have a special obligation to seek holiness in their lives.<sup>57</sup>

#### **C3 To Nourish Spiritual Life**

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<sup>51</sup> PO No.12

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>53</sup> 1 Cor. 1:27

<sup>54</sup> PO No.15

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>56</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.18-22

<sup>57</sup> Can. 276 § 1

They are to nourish their spiritual life at the two-fold table of sacred Scripture and the Eucharist.<sup>58</sup>

#### **C4 To Pray daily**

They are bound to daily recitation of the Divine Office.<sup>59</sup>

#### **C5 To Approach Penance frequently**

They are to approach the sacrament of reconciliation frequently.<sup>60</sup>

#### **C6. Annual Retreat**

They are required to make an annual 5-day spiritual retreat.<sup>61</sup>

#### **C7. Monthly Recollection**

They are required to participate in monthly recollections.<sup>62</sup>

#### **C8. Celibacy**

They are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence and are therefore bound to celibacy.<sup>63</sup>

#### **C9. To act prudently**

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<sup>58</sup> Can. 276 § 2,2°

<sup>59</sup> Can. 276 § 2,3°

<sup>60</sup> Can. 276 § 2,5°

<sup>61</sup> Can. 276 § 2,4°

<sup>62</sup> Can. 276 § 2,4°

<sup>63</sup> Can. 277 § 1

They are to behave with due prudence in relation to persons whose company can be a danger to their obligation of preserving continence or can lead to scandal of the faithful.<sup>64</sup>

## **C10 Reverence and Obedience**

They have a special obligation to show reverence and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and to their own Ordinary.<sup>65</sup>

## **C11 Remembering the Dead**

They have a special obligation to say masses for the Bishop/priest from the Diocese as soon as they know of his death and to say one mass annually for all the departed Bishops and priests of the Diocese.

## **C12 Objectionable Groups**

They are to refrain from establishing or joining associations whose purpose or activity cannot be reconciled with clerical obligations.<sup>66</sup>

### **(ii) Means to Spiritual Perfection<sup>67</sup>**

## **C13 Union with Other Priests**

They are to be united with one another in the bond of the brotherhood and prayer. They should strive to co-operate with one another.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Can. 277 § 2

<sup>65</sup> Can. 273

<sup>66</sup> Can. 278 § 3

<sup>67</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.21-22

<sup>68</sup> Can. 275 § 1

## **C14 Community Life**

Some manner of common life (e.g., sharing a meal, watching movies, outings...) is highly recommended to priests; where it exists, it is as far as possible to be maintained.<sup>69</sup>

## **C15 Simplicity of Life**

Priests should cultivate a simplicity of life and shun anything that smacks of worldliness.<sup>70</sup>

## **C16 Mental Prayer**

Priests should engage regularly in mental prayer.<sup>13</sup>

## **C17 Devotion of Mary**

Priests should honour the Blessed Virgin Mary with particular veneration.<sup>13</sup>

## **C18 Spirit of Sharing**

Priests are exhorted to give away any surplus funds they may have after providing for their own necessities, to the activities of the Church and to charitable causes.<sup>71</sup>

## **II. INTELLECTUAL LIFE <sup>72</sup>**

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<sup>69</sup> Can. 280

<sup>70</sup> Can. 282 § 1

<sup>71</sup> Can. 282 § 2

<sup>72</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.22

## **C19 ON-GOING FORMATIONS**

Priests should pay special attention to their own on-going formation in the sacred scriptures, theological studies, and human formation which would help them to be more efficient in the exercise of their pastoral ministry.<sup>73</sup>

All priests are expected to determine their personal and professional growth needs and to plan a program to meet these needs. They shall be expected to demonstrate their continued development in the areas of personal and ministerial growth.

The needs of the Diocese at times will require that certain priests will be asked to forego their present ministry and enter formal training to become skilled in helping to meet the diocesan needs.

## **C20 STUDY PROGRAMS**

Generally, any priest who has had the opportunities of continuing education and gained skills should make himself available to the diocese in general and to local parishes or institutions for the purpose of sharing his skills and talents.

Therefore,

1. All priests are to be sent for a refresher course every 5 years. The duration of the course may be from 1 -3 months.
2. All priests should go for higher studies after their 5<sup>th</sup> year in priesthood or when necessary, according to the needs of the diocese. The higher studies may be for Degree or Masters course.

The Bishop may ask a particular priest(s) to pursue further studies or to begin extended study for the future benefit of the diocese. The Bishop shall consider both the needs of the Church as well as the personal inclinations and abilities of the priest when he is making his decision. The "Formation Committee"<sup>74</sup> is to assist Bishop in identifying and selecting the priest for the relevant studies. The Bishop along with the chosen

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<sup>73</sup> Can. 279 § 1-3

<sup>74</sup> consists of a group of not more than 3 priests in assisting Bishop in the formation of the diocesan priests.



priest will determine the place, length, and program of study or training.

## **C21 RETREAT**

All priests are obliged to make an annual spiritual retreat<sup>75</sup> and participate in monthly recollections.<sup>76</sup> The days spent in the retreat do not count as part of the vacation. No one shall be exempted from the retreat, except in a particular case, for a just reason, and with the explicit permission of the Local Ordinary.

## **III. Material Life**

### **(iii) Temporal Provisions**

## **C22 Introduction**

*“Since Clerics dedicated themselves to the ecclesiastical ministry, they deserve the remuneration that befits their condition, taking into account both the nature of their office and condition of time and place. It is to be such that it provides for the necessities of their life and for the just remuneration of those whose services they need.”<sup>77</sup>*

## **C23 Diocesan Responsibility<sup>78</sup>**

“Each priest is to be provided with a just and appropriate timely remuneration established and reviewed by the diocese annually”<sup>79</sup>

## **C24 Parish Responsibility<sup>80</sup>**

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<sup>75</sup> either communitarian or individual

<sup>76</sup> Can. 276 § 2,4°

<sup>77</sup> Can 281 §1

<sup>78</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.23

<sup>79</sup> Richmond p.19; to review an addition of minimum 5% of the current allowance

<sup>80</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.23

The allowances are to be paid by the parish (or other institution).

### **C25 Allowances<sup>81</sup>**

The allowances consist of Monthly remuneration, meal, phone, and miscellaneous expenses.

### **C26 Free Will Gift**

The cultural gift of “Ang pow” and any other gifts given with a clear intention directly to the priest, will belong to the priest.

### **C27 Financial Assistance<sup>82</sup>**

#### a. Loan scheme

If the priest is in need of financial assistance, the diocese is to provide a loan. Repayment is to be settled in the given time frame.

#### b. Special Circumstances

A request for financial assistance in special circumstance (aged parents, family hardship etc.) is to be given the appropriate consideration by the Diocese.

#### c. IT Gadgets for Ministry

Hand-phone and laptop are to be given to each priest to better serve the people of God in the diocese. The policy regarding this matter is to be established by the diocese.

### **C28 Vehicle<sup>83</sup>**

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<sup>81</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg.24

<sup>82</sup> Refer to the Policy of the Diocese of Penang

<sup>83</sup> Refer to the Policy of the Diocese of Penang

Each diocesan clergy in the diocese is entitled for a proper car or vehicle to minister the people of God. Diocese is to establish and review the policy on the vehicle purchase every 5 years.

#### **(iv) Bodily Health**

##### **C29 Self-care**

Mental and physical health are necessary in serving the people of God. Clerics are to exercise regularly and maintain a good and healthy lifestyle.

##### **C30 Medical Check-up**

All priests are to go for an annual medical check-up.

##### **C31 Insurance and Hospitalization Benefit<sup>84</sup>**

Diocese is to provide for medical insurance and hospital benefits for all diocesan Clergy and those serving in the Diocese of Penang.

#### **(v) Vacation**

##### **C32 Annual Leave**

The clerics that are assigned within the diocese of Penang, are entitled for an annual leave of 30 days. This leave cannot be carried forward to the following year.

##### **C33 Holiday Allowance**

A timely and appropriate holiday allowance is to be established by the Diocese and to be reviewed regularly. The holiday allowance is to be paid by the parish.

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<sup>84</sup> Refer to the Policy of the Diocese of Penang

## **(vi) Last Will and Testament<sup>85</sup>**

### **C34 Preparation of Will**

Each diocesan priest is required to make a legally valid last will and testament.

To be legally valid the following must be carefully observed:

- (a) the name and address of the testator must be clearly stated;
- (b) an executor must be named and his address given;
- (c) the document must be signed by two witnesses in the presence of the testator and in the presence of one another, and their addresses given;
- (d) mention must be made of the place and date on which it was made.

NB: 1. To ensure legal validity it is recommended that a local solicitor be consulted.

2. Last wills and testaments made by priests belonging to religious orders or societies in accordance with their own constitutions may not be valid according to the civil law of Malaysia.

3. A copy of the will carefully sealed is to be kept by the diocesan procure.

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<sup>85</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg. 27- 28

## **D. PRIESTLY MINISTRY<sup>86</sup>**

### **D1 Introduction**

Priests should look at their rights and obligations in the light of the nature of priesthood.

As rights arise from the dignity and responsibility of the priesthood, so also certain obligations follow consequent upon their indispensable ministries all which should be carried out as the continued mission of Jesus Christ.

Priests' obligations, humanly speaking, may be burdensome. But for those who love Christ and his inseparable cross, for those who long to imitate Christ for whom the only food was God's Will, find their priestly yoke light and the burden sweet.

### **I. PRIESTS**

#### **(i) Priestly Rights**

### **D2 Power of Orders**

Only the clergy can assume offices which require the power of orders.<sup>87</sup> Although the law allows deacons and lay persons to participate in pastoral ministry due to the shortage of priests<sup>88</sup> only a priest can be appointed to the full pastoral care of souls.<sup>89</sup>

### **D3 Associations**

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<sup>86</sup> Pastoral Directory, 1989, pg. 29- 37

<sup>87</sup> Can. 274 §1

<sup>88</sup> Can. 517 §2

<sup>89</sup> Can. 150

The secular clergy has a right to join or associate with others in the pursuit of goals that conform to the priestly state.<sup>90</sup>

## **(ii) Priestly Obligations**

### **D4 Spiritual perfection**

Bound by celibacy, they are to seek their own spiritual perfection using all the spiritual aids available to a priest.

### **D5 Ministry of the Word**

As co-operators with the Bishop, priests have the duty to proclaim the gospel of God.<sup>91</sup>

Priests must regard preaching as a priority in as much as their primary responsibility is the proclamation of the gospel to everyone.<sup>92</sup>

They must see to it with zeal that they stir up and teach the Christian faith especially through the ministry of the word.<sup>93</sup>

### **D6 Ministry of the sacraments**

Priests have the obligation to give the sacraments to the faithful who are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.<sup>94</sup>

They are obliged to give the sacraments only to Catholics and are forbidden to give them to non-Catholics except in circumstances permitted in the law.<sup>95</sup>

### **D7 Reverence and Obedience**

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<sup>90</sup> Can. 278 §1

<sup>91</sup> Can. 757

<sup>92</sup> Can. 762

<sup>93</sup> Can. 836

<sup>94</sup> Can. 843 §1

<sup>95</sup> Can. 844 §1

They are bound by a special obligation to reverence and obedience to the Holy Father and to their own Ordinary.<sup>96</sup>

## **D8 Assignments**

Unless legitimately prevented, priests are bound to assume and faithfully fulfil the assignment given to them by their Ordinary.<sup>97</sup>

## **D9 Absence**

Priests may not be absent from their parish/ assignment for more than a week without the permission of the Ordinary.

## **D10 Associations**

They should avoid groups of associations whose goals and activities are not in conformity with clerical obligations or interfere with the fulfilment of their priestly responsibilities.<sup>98</sup>

## **D11 Attire**

Clerics are to wear suitable ecclesiastical dress in accord with norms of episcopal conference and local custom.<sup>99</sup>

The following are norms of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei:

i. In liturgical celebrations:

The prescribed vestments according to liturgical books shall be used.<sup>100</sup> However, a white cassock may replace alb.

ii. In para- liturgical celebrations:

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<sup>96</sup> Can. 273

<sup>97</sup> Can. 274 §2

<sup>98</sup> Can. 278 §3

<sup>99</sup> Can. 284

<sup>100</sup> Can. 929

(e.g., Benediction) A stole shall be used over the alb or cassock.

iii. In civil and official functions:

Priests should wear a cassock, clergy suit or a shirt with a Roman collar prescribed by the Episcopal Conference.

iv. For ordinary occasions:

Priests should exercise discretion in their choice of dress keeping in mind, in addition to simplicity and propriety, the expectations of the faithful in this regard. A small cross to identify himself should be worn with the dress.

### **D13 Unbecoming to Priestly State**

1) In accord with local norms:

They should completely avoid whatever is unbecoming to their state of life in accord with local norms. <sup>101</sup> e.g., gambling

2) Inconsistent with priesthood:

They should avoid those things which, though not unbecoming in themselves, are inconsistent with the priestly state. <sup>102</sup>

### **D14 Public Office**

Priests are forbidden to assume public office, especially one which involves the exercise of civil power, without permission of both proper Bishop and the bishop of the place where he intends to exercise administrative authority. <sup>103</sup>

### **D15 Proprietorship and Guarantors**

Without the permission of the Bishop, priests may not undertake the administration of property which belongs to lay persons or assume the

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<sup>101</sup> Can. 285 §1

<sup>102</sup> Can. 285 §2

<sup>103</sup> Can. 285 §3



office of a secular organization. Priests are also forbidden in being trustees and executors of wills, guarantors for personal or corporate loans, sureties for bail or bond undertakings.

### **D16 Conducting business**

Without permission of legitimate ecclesiastical authority priests are forbidden to conduct business or trade either personally or through others, for personal gain or for benefit of others. <sup>104</sup>

### **D17 Political factions**

They may not take an active role in political factions or in the management of labour unions unless the judgment of the competent ecclesiastical authority and with its permission, it would be required for the protection of the rights of the Church and for the common good. <sup>105</sup>

### **D18 Military service**

They may not enter military service without permission of Bishop. <sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Can. 286

<sup>105</sup> Can. 287 §2

<sup>106</sup> Can. 289 §1

## **E. PARISH AND CLERGY**

### **PARISH**

#### **E1 Parish Integral with the Diocese**

A parish is a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to parish priest as its proper pastor.<sup>107</sup>

The basic element of the parish is the existence of the group of the faithful who are in need of spiritual help, but to whom the diocesan Bishop is not personally able to minister to because of the great number of faithful in his Diocese, also call the particular church, for which he is responsible.<sup>108</sup>

The parish priests are in a special sense collaborators with the Bishop. They are given, in a specific section of the diocese, and under the authority of the Bishop, the care of souls as their particular shepherd.<sup>109</sup>

### **CLERGY**

#### **E2 Parish Priest**

The appointment of a parish priest is for an indefinite period of time.<sup>110</sup>

The parish priest is the proper pastor of the parish entrusted him. He exercises the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for this community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of Christ's faithful, in accordance with the law.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Can. 515 §1

<sup>108</sup> Sweeny, E. A., *The Obligations and Rights of the Pastor of a Parish According to the Code of Canon Law, Society of St. Paul*, New York 2002, pg. 6.

<sup>109</sup> *Christus Dominus*, n.30 - 31

<sup>110</sup> Can. 522

<sup>111</sup> Can. 519

A parish priest is to have the parochial care of one parish only. However, because of the shortage of priests or other circumstances, the care of a number of neighbouring parishes can be entrusted to the one parish priest.<sup>112</sup>

The functions are as follows<sup>113</sup>:

- 1° The administration of baptism:
- 2° The administration of the sacrament of confirmation to those in danger of death, in accordance with Can.833,3°
- 3° The administration of Viaticum and of the anointing of the sick, without prejudice to Can. 1003 § 2 and 3, and the imparting of the apostolic blessing.
- 4° The assistance at marriages and the nuptial blessing.
- 5° The conducting of funerals.
- 6° The blessing of the baptismal font at paschal time, the conduct of procession outside the church, and the giving of solemn blessings outside the church.
- 7° The more solemn celebration of the Eucharist on Sundays and holydays of obligation.

### **E3 Parish Administrator**

When a parish is vacant, or when the priest is prevented from exercising his pastoral office in the parish by reason of captivity, exile or banishment, incapacity or ill health, or some other cause, the diocesan bishop is to designate as soon as possible a parochial administrator, that is, a priest who takes the place of the pastor according to the norm of can. 540.<sup>114</sup>

A parish administrator is bound by the same duties and possesses the same rights as a parish priest unless the diocesan bishop establishes otherwise.<sup>115</sup> The parish administrator is not permitted to do anything which prejudices the rights of the parish priest or can harm parish

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<sup>112</sup> Can. 526 §1

<sup>113</sup> Can. 530

<sup>114</sup> Can. 539

<sup>115</sup> Can 540 §1

goods.<sup>116</sup> After he has completed his function, a parish administrator is to render an account to the parish priest.<sup>117</sup>

#### **E4 Assistant Parish Priest**

Whenever it is necessary or opportune for the due pastoral care of the parish, one or more assistant parish priests can be joined with the parish priest. As co-operators with the parish priest and sharers in his concern, they are, by common counsel and effort with the parish priest and under his authority, to labour in the pastoral ministry.<sup>118</sup>

Unless it is otherwise expressly provided in the letter of the diocesan Bishop, the assistant parish priest is by virtue of his office bound to help the parish priest in the entire parochial ministry. Likewise, if the matter should arise in accordance with the law, he is bound to take the place of the parish priest.<sup>119</sup>

The assistant parish priest is to report regularly to the parish priest on pastoral initiatives, both those planned and those already undertaken.<sup>120</sup>

They are to act for the parish priest when the latter is on leave (short or long). They are also bound to reside in the parish.<sup>121</sup>

Parish priests / assistant parish priests who have completed their 75<sup>th</sup> year of age or for some other grave reason are unable to perform their duties adequately and fruitfully are earnestly requested to tender their resignation spontaneously, or when the Bishop invites them to do so.

#### **E5 Rectors**

Rectors of churches are here understood to be priests to whom is entrusted the care of some church building (e.g., shrine) or a parish<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> Can 540 §2

<sup>117</sup> Can 540 §3

<sup>118</sup> Can. 545 §1

<sup>119</sup> Can. 548 §2

<sup>120</sup> Can. 548 §3; *officially or informally; e.g., over a meal*

<sup>121</sup> Can. 549

<sup>122</sup> Can. 556

## **E6 Deacons**

A seminarian is ordained to the diaconate and serves as a deacon for a period of time (often six months to a year or more) before his ordination to the priesthood<sup>123</sup>.

Transitional deacons are seminarians in the last stage before being ordained to the Catholic priesthood.

### **(i) Their Functions**

If, because of a shortage of priests, the diocesan Bishop has judged that a deacon, or some other person who is not a priest, or a community of persons, should be entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral ministry of a parish, he is to appoint some priest who, with the powers and faculties of a parish priest, will direct the pastoral care.<sup>124</sup>

All deacons, including permanent deacons, may conduct the following rites:

- a) administer baptism.
- b) distribute Holy Communion at Mass and outside Mass.
- c) conduct the rite of Viaticum.
- d) impart benediction of the Blessed Sacrament to the faithful.
- e) assist at marriages, but only in the parish to which he is assigned.
- f) administer sacramentals.
- g) preside at wake, funeral and burial rites.
- h) proclaim the gospel, read the Scriptures, teach and preach to the faithful, preside over prayer meetings and Bible services.

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<sup>123</sup> Can. 1031§1

<sup>124</sup> Can. 517 §2

A deacon may give all blessings contained in rites in which he is a minister.

## **E7 Clergy Residence**

The parish priest is obliged to reside in the parochial house, near the church.<sup>125</sup>

The assistant parish priest is bound to reside in the parish he is appointed to.<sup>126</sup> Likewise, transitional deacons.<sup>127</sup>

## **E8 Priest In Residence**

Those priests to whom the faculties of the Diocese of Penang have been given and who are in residence in a parish, whether in the parish house or in other institutions in the Diocese, have the faculties to celebrate the Sacraments that is not contrary to the office of parish priest.

## **E9 Special Assignment**

Those with special diocesan assignments enjoy the powers specified for those offices. In the parishes where they reside, they have the faculty of the position to which they are assigned i.e., Parish Priest, Assistant Parish Priest, Priest in Residence.

## **E10 Assignment Outside the Diocese**

Priests assigned to serve any ecclesiastical office or ministry outside the Diocese of Penang retain the faculties. However, the faculties of priests may be restricted by the local ordinary of the receiving Diocese.

A yearly written statement of assignment should be sent to the Diocesan Bishop. Recall or return to the Diocese should be preceded by a reasonable period of notice.

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<sup>125</sup> Can. 533§1

<sup>126</sup> Can. 550§1

<sup>127</sup> For permanent deacons, refer to their own handbook.

## **E11 On Leave**

1. **Study Leave:** When the Bishop grants a Study Leave to the priests, the duration of the Study Leave is the time taken to complete the particular study.
2. **Authorised Leave of Absence:** When the Bishop grants a leave of absence, diocesan faculties are automatically withdrawn, unless otherwise indicated by the Bishop in his letter of authorisation. The priest may not exercise his ministry in public without special authorisation of the Bishop.
3. **Unauthorised Leave of Absence:** When a priest leaves his assignment of designated residence without the express permission of the Bishop or Vicar for Clergy, his faculties are automatically withdrawn. He is forbidden to exercise any function of his priestly ministry with the exceptions noted in Canon 976.
4. **Sabbatical Leave:** When a priest request for sabbatical leave, the Bishop may grant leave for not more than 12 months.

## **F. PRIEST RETIREMENT**

### **F1 Introduction**

The priesthood of Jesus Christ involves a lifelong call to ministry. Retired priests therefore remain part of the presbyterate and continue to share in its mission. To the degree that their health, energy, personal circumstances, and interest permit, retired priests are encouraged to continue in some form of priestly ministry, and to participate in clergy monthly recollections.

### **F2 Retirement Age and Legal Instruments**

1. The retirement age for priest shall be at 75 years. In special circumstances the priest can request in writing to the Bishop for early retirement from full-time ministry because of current health or other factors that suggest an earlier age is more appropriate.
2. On retirement, the priest should execute a valid and updated will, and if necessary, a properly executed power of attorney for financial matters.
3. The names and addresses of the priest's next of kin and the telephone number of an emergency contact should be documented. Information should also be written concerning any arrangements regarding funeral, burial or cremation requests that he may wish to make.

### **F3 Role of the Retired Priest**

1. Retired priests are invited to stay fully informed concerning the Diocese of Penang activities through meetings, regular communications via social media apps, emails or mobile phones.
2. If a priest chooses retirement from full-time ministry and resides in a parish house, whether in a parish in which he had previously served or another parish to which he is invited to move upon retirement, he should be invited to participate in the ministry of that parish and be given suitable opportunities to do so.



3. On retirement, the priest is expected to be cooperative and supportive of the parish priest/ parish administrator.

#### **F4 Living Arrangements upon Retirement**

1. The Bishop or the Council of Priests will evaluate and review each case with the effected parties to determine the appropriate living arrangements. The spirituality, emotional stability, physical health, and temperament of the retiring priest are important factors in arriving at a decision.
2. If a priest elects to live outside the parish house or diocesan facility, the arrangement is to be made with the local ordinary.

#### **F5 Retirement Benefits**

1. A priest retired in a parish house; the parish should provide for his daily sustenance.
2. Priest to have annual medical examination and medical expenses to be borne by the Diocese. Sickly and dependent priests are to be given adequate nursing and medical care.
3. Upon retirement, unless health or safety reasons, a retired priest is given a suitable vehicle by the Diocese. The Diocese to cover usual vehicle operating and maintenance expenses for retired priest who live in the parish house and are able to drive.
4. Appropriate monthly allowance is to be given. Additionally, an ex-gratia payment should be given upon retirement.

## **G. ADMINISTRATION**

### **I. Matters relating to Diocesan Priests**

#### **G1 Parish Priest's Personal Bank Account**

The parish priest is to see to it that his personal bank account, if any, is administratively separate from the parish bank account.

### **II. Matters relating to Parishes**

#### **(i). Pastoral Administration**

#### **G2 Collaboration with the Bishop and Clergy (Can 519)**

Clergy in the parish are to collaborate with the diocesan bishop, presbyters and deacons in striving to achieve a vibrant parish community centred in Christ. He must bring the people to the point where they see themselves also as members of the diocese and of the universal Church.

#### **G3 Peace and Harmony**

They should promote as much as possible the preservation of peace and harmony among all people.