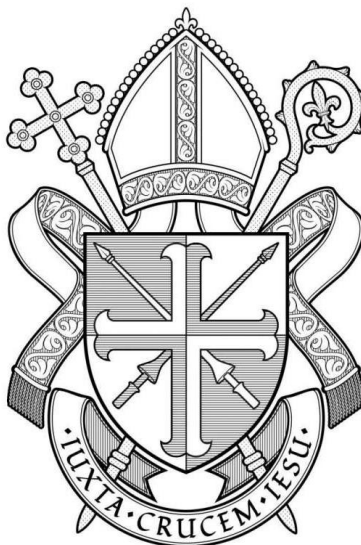


**Diocese of Lansing
Protocol for Extern Priests
in Parish Ministry**



**Presented to the Presbyteral Council
and Approved by the Most Reverend Earl Boyea**

Bishop of Lansing

March 22, 2022

SECTION ONE

UNITED IN THE MISSION OF CHRIST: CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR EXTERN PRIESTS IN PARISH MINISTRY

We welcome extern priests to service in the Diocese of Lansing. These priests, from a variety of backgrounds, offer many gifts to our parishes, including a broader sense of the Church's universality as well as valued pastoral assistance.

While there are many priests who might offer themselves as externs in the Diocese of Lansing, there may be those who, for any number of reasons, may not find ministry among us to be compatible. It is therefore necessary to ensure that those who present themselves from other dioceses or religious communities to serve in our midst are, in fact, excellent and zealous priests, already well-proven men of prayer, who, if from another background, are capable of serving in a different culture and language.

This section presents some of the key characteristics that should be brought into consideration throughout the process to help discern whether a particular extern priest will advance the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Diocese of Lansing:

Prayerful

Does he understand the importance of prayer in his daily life, particularly the Liturgy of the Hours? How does he show a desire to grow ever more deeply in prayer? What efforts does he put into place to develop his prayer life? Is he open to spiritual direction?

Docile

Does he faithfully adhere to the teaching of the Church's Magisterium? Does he observe the Church's norms in celebrating the sacraments? What is his attitude toward leadership? Is he open to on-going formation?

Attentive to the Faithful

How has he shown himself to be attentive to and authentically concerned about the welfare of the people of God? Does he have sufficient pastoral experience? Does he seek to understand and address legitimate concerns within the community? Is he concerned with forming missionary disciples? Is he accomplished in English and does he have competencies in other languages?

Socially Adept

Does he know, understand, and observe proper boundaries? Does he exhibit good social skills? What are his leadership qualities? Does he collaborate with others? Is he capable of recognizing the laity, especially women, as co-responsible for building up the Kingdom of God. Is there anything in his background (criminal, abuse of minors or others, etc.) which would disqualify him for ministry in the diocese?

Wisdom and Understanding

How does he communicate the Lord Jesus Christ in his demeanor, counsel, and actions?

Adaptable yet Firm in Encouraging Holiness

Does he appreciate and understand the richness of Catholic spirituality? Does he encourage and challenge people to an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ and others in the community?

Physically Healthy

Is he in good physical health and open to a physical examination? Is he capable of handling the normal physical demands of his vocation?

Personal Responsibility

Is he a good steward of his personal resources? Of his time? Does he have an attitude of personal entitlement? Is he free of demanding family obligations?

Psychologically Sound

Is he psychologically sound and open to a psychological assessment? Is he aware of and able to address any dysfunctional traits?

Sexual Integration

Does he live chastely? What are the clear indications that he successfully integrates his sexuality within his person and lives according to the virtue of chastity?

SECTION TWO

THE PROCESS

PRELIMINARY MATERIALS

1. A letter of introduction and *nihil obstat* from the priest's proper Ordinary/delegate/Superior informing the Bishop of Lansing of the purpose of his residence and/or proposed ministry in the Diocese of Lansing and length of stay (if known);
2. Suitability Form completed with the Official Seal of the Diocese/Community affixed;
3. A letter from the place where he has exercised ministry, including a summary of the principal responsibilities;
4. A letter of petition addressed to the Bishop of Lansing, with the petitioner's correct address of residence (not P.O. Box), and phone number(s) requesting the Faculties of the Diocese of Lansing;

In the letter, the priest is to state that he will observe universal law (the provisions of Canon Law, liturgical law, etc.) and particular law (diocesan norms and policies);

5. Curriculum Vitae; an autobiographical essay listing the priest's personal reasons for seeking pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Lansing, his hopes, expectations, and potential contributions to this local Church;
6. Two testimonial letters of recommendation from other priests or co-workers;
7. Physical health report;
8. (If not a US citizen) A copy of his passport picture page and the US Visa page: R-1, I-360 or "green card" is required;
9. Proof of having participated in a "Protecting God's Children" (Virtus) session (This can be satisfied within the first 90 days of arrival);

10. Criminal background check subject to approval by the Diocese of Lansing Office of Child and Youth Protection. Any expenses are the responsibility of the priest or community.
11. A signed acknowledgment of the Code of Conduct for those who minister in the Diocese of Lansing;
12. For priests belonging to any of the Eastern Catholic Churches who seek to function in Latin rite parishes – a copy of the indult of bi-ritualism from the Congregation for Oriental Churches.

PROCESS OF ACCEPTANCE

The Episcopal Vicar for Clergy may convoke an ad hoc group to meet with the candidate to seek its advice. Priests incardinated in religious congregations with a long-term/contractual relationship with the Diocese of Lansing (i.e., the Midwest Province of the Society of Jesus, the Toledo-Detroit Province of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales, and the Fransalian Congregation) are generally considered to be exempt from this provision.

The Bishop may offer a provisional “In Residence” status in order to:

- a. Provide time for evaluation, with particular attention to matters concerning his medical and psychological well-being, especially if the priest is coming from overseas.
- b. Provide time for adequate evaluation of the priest’s adaptability to the Church in the Lansing Diocese.
- c. Communicate with the appropriate agencies of the U.S. government to assure status, as well as to provide in the case that a candidate, who is in possession of a 3-year R-1 Visa, may have to leave the Diocese at the end of such discernment time.
- d. Give the Diocese sufficient time to secure a replacement, if needed.

The Bishop then accepts and assigns the priest to minister as an extern in the diocese, providing him with appropriate faculties.

Mentoring may be provided for the initial years of assignment. This could involve spiritual, pastoral, and “practical” accompaniment to help an international priest in parish ministry to adjust to the new assignment.

- a. Upon acceptance, the Vicar for Priests may recommend a Priest-Mentor to the international priest.
- b. The Priest-Mentor will meet with the international priest from time to time to provide support in his life and ministry.
- c. In addition, a group of selected lay people may provide ongoing support.

On-going Acculturation:

- a. The international priest with the faculties of the Diocese of Lansing will be expected to attend orientation and ongoing formation as provided by the Diocese of Lansing.
- b. The host pastor will be attentive to understanding the customs and culture of the international priest and clarifying roles and responsibilities in the ministerial setting.
- c. English as a Second Language (ESL) and accent modification. When and if necessary, an international priest may seek assistance with English as a Second Language and/or accent modification through established programs, workshops, and tutorials.