

POLICY ON ALTERNATE RESIDENCE OF PRIESTS

I. PREAMBLE

The Decree on Ministry and Life of priests of the Second Vatican Council reaffirms the traditional teaching that "priests are taken from among men and appointed for men in the things which pertain to God" (Decree, Article 3; Hebrews 5:11). Priests ought to be mindful of their own fundamental humanity in the exercise of their ministry.

It must be recognized that there can be different ways in which the ideal of service to community and the response to basic human needs can be attained.

Priests may or may not want or need to live alone or together for their own or the people's good. For those who choose to live together in mutual concern for one another as a means of deepening their own faith and charity, such a common living arrangement can be a testimony to their humanity and their spirit of service. Further, it offers striking illustration of the statement in the document of the Bishops of the United States, *Spiritual Renewal of the American Priesthood*: "The priest is inter- personal in his spiritual life as well as in his psychological development." (1973)

Whatever their situation, priests have a right to make some determination of their place of residence, maintaining always a proper balance with the community's right to responsible ministry. Yet it must be acknowledged that certain conditions may exist which would make the exercise of this right not feasible.

The thrust of this proposal is not to focus on the material aspects of shelter, but rather on the living relationships and living environment of priests, which in turn affect their ability to minister effectively.

Most American parish priests, either for their people's good or for their own benefit or simply out of established custom, live together in parish rectories. Although this arrangement has strong historical precedent in many parts of the United States, the ability of the Universal Church to accommodate itself to many different times and cultures has provided varied living arrangements for its secular clergy.

Canon Law states in 533 #1: The pastor is obligated to reside in a parish house close to the church. In particular cases, however, the local ordinary can permit him to live elsewhere, especially in a house shared by several presbyters, provided there is just cause and suitable and due provision is made for the performance of parochial functions.

Some priests today, serving a single parish, find the traditional rectory arrangement not helpful to effective ministry and prefer to live apart from the parish complex. Some, in single priest parishes, find a need to live with other priests in one central location. Other priests prefer to live alone.

We must realize that there has been a major shift in rectory living. In many places rectories are no longer homes, but meeting places. A new form of living environment is now surfacing called "alternate living" whereby parish priests live outside a parish rectory. This proposal deals with this form of alternate living.

II. FACTORS LEADING TOWARD ALTERNATE LIVING

1. There was found no regular place for a priest to get away from work, or a place for quiet, prayer, reading, or study.
2. Living in the working area was very stressful for some, and the possibility of causing burnout was being created.

3. Because more men are coming into the priesthood later in life, they have been accustomed to having a home environment away from their work.
4. By living in the neighborhood, priests have an identity with lay people.
5. The ministry to the individual parishes and institutions should not be affected.

III. POLICY

The following options for residence are available in the Diocese of Spokane:

1. Priests serving a particular parish or non-parochial ministry, for the spiritual good of their people and/or their own well-being, may continue to live together under one roof, i.e., traditional rectory living.
2. Pastors living alone in rural parishes may live together in a central location.
3. Pastors, associate pastors, and other priests serving different parishes or ministries may live together in a common house.
4. Priests in any parish or ministry may live alone outside the rectory; however, pastors and associate pastors are expected to reside within their parish boundaries.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

Priests desiring to choose alternate residence should follow this procedure:

1. The proposed model must be thoroughly and sensitively discussed with the members of the parish, the parish council, etc., to ascertain the financial feasibility of the proposal, and help educate the parish to this style of living.
2. The proposed model should be submitted in writing to the Bishop.
3. The Bishop's approval will be made in writing.
4. Funding for the project is to be negotiated with and provided by the parish or institution to which the priest is assigned.

V. GUIDELINES

1. The alternate residence situation must promote the ministry of the priest(s) involved. The priest is responsible for making certain that his people are well served, regardless of the location of the priest's residence.
2. The living arrangement must provide an atmosphere that makes possible the enhancement of the spiritual growth of the priest. It should also provide the opportunity for continued hospitality to his brother priests.
3. The pastoral assignment always takes precedence over the alternate living situation. Thus, a change of the pastoral assignment could be reason for a change from the alternate residence.

4. Priests who choose alternate residence should be aware of the inconvenience, but the necessity of returning to the place of work when emergency requests for counseling or help arise.

5. In planning future parish construction, the above policy and guidelines should be taken into consideration.