



Catholic Diocese  
of Cleveland

Office of the Bishop

**Sabbatical Policy for Priests of the Diocese of Cleveland Update**

Having consulted with the Presbyteral Council regarding the policy for sabbaticals to be taken by priests of the Diocese of Cleveland, and wishing to update the previous policy to be more suitable for the present day, I hereby establish the revised Sabbatical Policy for Priests of the Diocese of Cleveland.

This Sabbatical Policy replaces the previous Sabbatical Policy effective April 24, 1987 [Prot. N. 560/1987]. The Diocese of Cleveland *Clergy Personnel Handbook – Book I: Priests* [2009] §704 remains in effect. This policy is not intended to replace sabbatical policies already in effect in any of the institutions of the Diocese. This Policy comes into effect on June 1, 2021, and is to be promulgated via the *Diocesan Memorandum*.

Given at the Chancery, Cleveland, Ohio, this eleventh day of May in the Year of Our Lord two thousand and twenty one.

+ Edward C. Malesic

Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, JCL.  
Bishop of Cleveland

V. Gaudin

Chancellor

## **Sabbatical Policy for Priests of the Diocese of Cleveland**

### **I. Introduction**

A sabbatical is meant to be an experience that allows for intellectual, spiritual, human and pastoral enlightenment which is available periodically so that a priest might remain effective and satisfied in his ministry. Sabbaticals, therefore, are primarily initiated by the priest himself to pursue his own needs and interests.

The various sabbatical programs available offer resources in two basic areas:

- 1) Human, Spiritual, Intellectual and Pastoral development; and
- 2) Growth in theological understanding. The choice of the best program is primarily the responsibility of the priest after consulting with those who might help him clarify his needs.

### **II. Definition**

A sabbatical will be defined as an extended period of time away from a priest's normal assignment:

- 1) for the purpose of Human, Spiritual, Intellectual and Pastoral growth
- 2) for the purpose of study in a formal program which will allow the priest to become more effective, skilled, satisfied, and knowledgeable.

A sabbatical is distinguished from other authorized time away from an assignment such as vacation, sick leave, assigned and/or special studies.

### **III. Length Of Time**

Sabbaticals shall ordinarily be for one to two academic semesters. (*approx. 3 to 6 months*), however, a sabbatical can be as short as one month.

### **IV. Eligibility**

Priests of the Diocese of Cleveland are eligible for a sabbatical after every seven years of service to the diocese.

### **V. Absence From Assignment**

A priest's absence from his assignment, for a sabbatical, shall be determined in light of the needs of his present assignment, after consultation with the Vicar for Clergy, staff members, the availability of replacement, and due consultation with the administrator of the sabbatical program.

### **VI. Priest's Salary**

A priest on sabbatical retains his right to salary and benefits from the institution to which he is assigned. In the situation where the sabbatical occurs during the transition time between two assignments, the last place of assignment will ordinarily continue to pay his salary and benefits during the time of sabbatical.

### **VII. Financing Of A Sabbatical**

The cost of the sabbatical will be shared by the Diocese to the extent possible through funds already available to the Office of Ongoing Formation for Clergy (OOFC); the parish or institution of assignment through the present voucher system; and the priest himself.

### **VIII. Follow-Up**

At the conclusion of the sabbatical, the priest is asked to share his experience with the Director of the OOFC with a written report.

### **IX. Implementation**

The Bishop and/or his delegate shall be responsible for the administration of this policy. The administrator or administrative body shall determine.

#### **1. Application procedures:**

- a. A priest interested in a sabbatical shall consult with the Director of the OOFC regarding the various options that are available to him. The purpose of this consultation is to receive information and evaluation of these options and to determine availability.
- b. The applicant sends a letter of request and initial proposal to the Director of the OOFC.
- c. Applications must be submitted at least twelve months prior to the beginning of the sabbatical.
- d. After consultation with the Vicar for Clergy and Clergy Personnel Board, the Director of OOFC will present the request and the recommendation to the Bishop.
- e. If approved, the priest will receive a letter from the Bishop authorizing his participation in a sabbatical.

#### **2. Method of selection of priests:**

- a. Fulfillment of eligibility requirements.
- b. Personal interest and need for human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral growth and development.
- c. Relationship to the overall needs of the Diocese.
- d. Availability of the applicant at a particular time and the availability of replacement personnel, if required.
- e. Quality of the program and potential for profiting from the experience.
- f. Seniority (length and quality of previous service)

g. Plans for future service to the Diocese.

h. Date of application.

**3. Number of priests eligible during a year:**

a. It is hoped that several priests will avail themselves of the opportunity for a sabbatical during the course of each year.

b. The pastoral needs of the Diocese will necessarily limit the number of participants.

**4. Financial details:**

a. A grant of up to \$1,000 is available from the OOFC to help fund tuition, room and board. There is an established application process or requesting such a grant.

b. The applicant may apply the annual allotment for his retreat and continuing education during the year of his sabbatical toward the cost of his sabbatical program.

c. The applicant may deposit up \$650.00 of that allotment each year in anticipation of a sabbatical by establishing a "Personal Sabbatical Account" with the OOFC. A priest may accumulate a maximum of \$6,500.00 in a "Personal Sabbatical Account."

***To establish such an account:***

1) The priest should write a letter of intent to the OOFC and file a copy with his place of assignment.

2) The place of assignment shall deposit the stipulated amount up to \$650.00 in the priest's "Personal Sabbatical Account" on an annual basis (no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>) and deduct that amount from his annual continuing education allotment.

a. The Finance Office of the Diocese of Cleveland shall oversee the management of the funds deposited with the OOFC in the "Personal Sabbatical Accounts".

b. The interest earned on the "Personal Sabbatical Accounts" shall be used to establish a "Sabbatical Fund" administered by the OOFC to assist parishes and institutions that otherwise would lack the financial resources to support a priest on sabbatical. A parish or institution with a priest on sabbatical may apply to the OOFC for partial reimbursement of his salary and benefits from this fund. The application for assistance should be made in consultation with the Finance Office of the Diocese.

- c. Unclaimed funds from the “Personal Sabbatical Accounts” shall revert to the “Sabbatical Fund.” Unclaimed funds would result in the event of a death of a priest or his resignation from active ministry. Entitlement to the funds deposited in a “Personal Sabbatical Account” is contingent exclusively upon use for the purpose for which the account was established viz. a sabbatical for study or personal growth, for priests in active ministry. Funds deposited in a “Personal Sabbatical Account” are not to be construed as compensation for past services. Funds deposited in a “Personal Sabbatical Account” may not be claimed except under the terms of the Sabbatical Policy.

**5. Replacement procedures while priest is on sabbatical:**

- a. It is the responsibility of the priest going on sabbatical to make arrangements so that the essential work in his assignment is covered.
- b. In an instance where substitute help is necessary, it is the responsibility of the priest to obtain such assistance in consultation with the Vicar for Clergy, Clergy Personnel Board and the OOFC.
- c. Substitute help is paid for by the place of assignment, if such assistance is necessary.

**6. Distribution of information on sabbatical programs:**

- a. Information on sabbatical programs is available through the OOFC and on the OOFC Resource Page of the Diocesan Website.
  - b. It is the responsibility of the OOFC to gather information about sabbatical programs and to make this data available to the priests of the Diocese.
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