



TO: Pastors, Administrators and Archdiocesan Services

FROM: Sister Veronica Schueler, F.S.E.
Chancellor

DATE: September 30, 2022

RE: **TESTIMONIALS AND LETTERS OF SUITABILITY FOR CLERGY**

Our policy requires that all Archdiocesan parishes, agencies, media outlets and organizations (anyone listed in the *Oregon Catholic Directory*) provide the Office of the Chancellor with a testimonial letter each time a priest or deacon from outside the Archdiocese is going to engage in any public ministry within the Archdiocese of Portland. This could include, but is not limited to, celebrating the Eucharist, providing sacramental ministry, giving missions, retreats or presenting lectures.

Parish Events – NEW!

We have had many problems this summer trying to clear clergy and speakers for retreats organized by volunteers, especially when they involve clergy or lay people from outside the U.S. For the future, we will only work with pastors or parish/organizational staff in clearing outside clergy and speakers for parish or Archdiocesan events. We can no longer accept requests for clearance from individual parishioners or people who do not work for the parish. Parishioners will need to contact parish staff to initiate a parish retreat or other event. The pastor will need to approve the incoming individual's ministry and appropriately document any delegated sacramental faculties in the parish.

Please note that no event sponsored by a parish or organization can be promoted on the Archdiocesan website or in the *Parish Link* newsletter until the speakers have submitted their letters of good standing or recommendation to the Office of the Chancellor. Likewise, speaker travel plans should not be confirmed until the letters have been submitted and approved.

Letters for Visiting Clergy Seeking to Perform Ministry in the Archdiocese

- Except in cases of emergency, letters need to be submitted to the Office of the Chancellor at least **two weeks** before the intended visit in order to give our office time to review them and notify the parish or other location whether the visit is approved.
- All testimonials or letters of suitability must include the following:
 - Complete information about where the person will be going, the dates of his stay and what he will be doing in the Archdiocese.
 - a statement that the subject of the letter has no history of inappropriate behavior with minors.

- the dates of the individual's last background check and safe environment training. If these are more than five years old, the individual will need to have them redone before being granted permission to come to the Archdiocese.
- The letter must come directly to the Chancellor's Office from the sending diocese.
- We will not accept cell phone photos of documents or emails from private parties.
- The letter of suitability must be obtained **each time** the priest or deacon applies to come to the Archdiocese. *An exception to this would be vocation directors coming to visit their men in the seminary; they can submit one letter for the year.*
- A letter should be submitted even by priests who do not plan to celebrate Eucharist or the sacraments (i.e., if they are on vacation or visiting family).
- **Any priest or deacon coming from outside the United States** will be required to:
 - undergo an international background check or submit a clearance letter (*antecedentes penales in Latin American countries*) issued in the last six months by police authorities
 - Provide information about his U.S. immigration status and should be advised that without a work visa (i.e., R-1), he cannot be paid for any service performed in the Archdiocese and cannot fundraise.

Please also note that invitations issued to outside clergy by priests for parish coverage must first be cleared by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy.

The Office of the Vicar for Clergy requires that Bishops visiting the Archdiocese are subject to the same requirements as priests and in addition, should submit a courtesy letter advising the Archbishop that they will be in his territory.

Archdiocesan Clergy Seeking to Perform Ministry Outside the Archdiocese

- Request a testimonial letter from the Office of the Chancellor.
- Your background check cannot be more than three years old.
- Child Protection Training must have been done within the last year.
- Celebrets will be provided to priests and deacons traveling outside the United States for ministry, pilgrimage or vacation.
- Please make these requests at least **two weeks** in advance so that we will have time to process them. We will always work with you to expedite matters in cases of emergency.

Thank you for your help and cooperation in this area. If you need assistance with obtaining testimonials or letters of good standing, or have questions about specific situations, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of the Chancellor (vschueler@archdpdx.org or srpmiller@archdpdx.org)