

GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTING PRIESTS INTO THE DIOCESE

(For permanent deacon and deacon guidelines, refer to Permanent Diaconate Policies and Procedures)

Screening and Acceptance of Priests into the Diocese for Assignment

The Diocese of Fresno does not accept for ministry any priests whom it knows to have sexually abused a minor or anything in his background that would indicate he would be a danger to young people. The Vicar General must be notified by the pastor seeking the admission of a priest to the Diocese or by the priest seeking admission to the Diocese to begin the screening process.

The Vicar General will send the priest an application. Every priest given an assignment in the Diocese of Fresno must complete this application.

The Vicar General will send the applicant priest's bishop/superior a letter requesting a written recommendation and a Diocese of Fresno questionnaire for his completion pertaining to the applicant priest's history on ethical issues, sexual misconduct, and boundaries. If the applicant priest is not a United States citizen, then all Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services documentation information must be presented and in order. The priest must also be fingerprinted. The completed letter, documentation, fingerprint clearance and questionnaire must be returned directly to the Vicar General for further consideration.

Priests Seeking Hospitality or Permission to Assist on a Temporary Basis in a Parish

Supply Priest – For Temporary Coverage of One Month or Less

A pastor/administrator has permission to make arrangements for a supply priest with a priest known to him and who has an approved assignment in his own diocese or religious community. The priest must provide a current letter of suitability to the Vicar General's Office from his bishop or religious community well in advance of his expected supply ministry.

In order to have any other priest, not known by the pastor/administrator, provide priestly ministry in the parish for any reason, the pastor/administrator must request a current letter of suitability from their bishop/religious superior be sent to the Office of the Vicar General in advance of their expected ministry in the parish. This applies to retired priests residing outside of the diocese.

PROCEDURE

- When a Priest is Known by the Pastor/Administrator

Weekend or temporary coverage of one month or less by a visiting priest known by the pastor/administrator to be in a current assignment and known to be in good standing and has been fingerprinted within his diocese or religious community.

- » The pastor/administrator informs the Vicar General of his personal acquaintance with the visiting priest and of his status and current assignment.
- » The Vicar General may grant temporary faculties.

- When a Priest is Unknown by the Pastor/Administrator

The approval process for priests requesting to provide temporary coverage for any amount of time but whose current assignment or diocesan/religious community status is unknown.

- » The pastor/administrator identifies a priest available to provide the necessary coverage and contacts the Vicar General. Adequate time must be allowed for completion of this approval process.
- » The Vicar General's Office sends the priest the following
 - Notification that the priest must request a letter of recommendation from his bishop/superior.
 - Questionnaire – to be completed by the priest's bishop/superior.
 - Application to be completed by the supply priest.
 - Approval cannot be granted by the Office of the Vicar General if any of the required materials are incomplete or not received.
 - All Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services documentation information must be in order, a priest who is not a permanent resident, US citizen or who does not possess the proper immigration visa status, will not be given permission to provide supply ministry for the diocese.
- Upon receipt and review of the completed materials, the Vicar General will make a recommendation to the bishop.
- The pastor/administrator will be notified of the bishop's approval and granting of temporary faculties by the Vicar General.
- The pastor/administrator then notifies the priest and coordinates the details of hospitality anticipating his arrival, temporary assignment and fingerprint requirements.

Supply Priest – No Current Assignment or Not in Good Standing

No priest without a current assignment and not in good standing in his diocese or in his religious community is to be given hospitality or allowed to exercise priestly ministry in a parish within the Diocese of Fresno. A Letter of Suitability must be received by the Vicar General prior to his coming to the Diocese of Fresno and a letter of permission will be sent to the local Pastor once the visiting priest has been vetted and cleared.