

DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR

ONGOING PRIESTLY FORMATION PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In the *Decree of Priestly Formation*, (October 28, 1965) Vatican II stressed the need of continuing education for priests, “Especially because of the circumstances of the modern society priestly training should be pursued and perfected even after the seminary course of studies has been completed. Hence, Episcopal Conferences ought to make use in their individual countries of the more effective means to this end....” (Chapter VII, No. 22).

The bishops of the United States reflect this in their 1972 statement, *The Program of Continuing Education of Priests*. The American bishops say, “Upon the priest himself falls the primary responsibility for taking the initiative in continuing his personal and professional education, which the changing needs of the Church and the world demand of him.” The call to growth and further education perceived by the priest cannot come to fulfillment without opportunities and support provided by within the structure of the priest’s ministry. While every priest has a right and obligation to continue his spiritual growth and education, he also has, according to the American bishops, “a right to strong support from his superiors, peers and the people he serves.”

Intervening years “have been marked by many changes in the world, in the Church and in the awareness of the priest himself. These years of development in continuing education have underscored the fact there are new directions in education which can enhance priestly ministry, but there are also new ways of learning.... In recent years, terms like ongoing formation and continuing growth and learning have replaced the phrase continuing education. The use of new terminology is more than a bow to the latest trends. Instead this new language reflects a new awareness. Continuing formation conveys the notion of growth as a lifelong dialogue-journey through which a priest comes to greater awareness of self, others and God.” (*The Continuing Formation of Priests “Growing in Wisdom, Age, and Grace,”* NCCB, November 1984).

In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (April 7, 1992) his post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the formation of priests, Pope John Paul II writes, “ongoing formation is an intrinsic requirement of the gift and sacramental ministry received; and it proves necessary in every age. It is particularly urgent today, not only because of rapid changes in the social and cultural conditions of individuals and peoples among whom priestly ministry is exercised, but also because of that ‘new evangelization’ which constitutes the essential and pressing task of the church at the end of the second millennium.”

“(The) responsibility (of ongoing formation) leads the bishop, in communion with the presbyterate, to outline a project and establish a program which can ensure that ongoing formation is not something haphazard but a systematic offering of subjects, which unfold by stages and take precise forms.”

Ongoing priestly formation is an ecclesial expression of support for a priest’s own perception of his need to grow spiritually, personally, academically and pastorally. In providing both time and financial resources, this (cf. Policy # 270) is the best investment of the resources of

the Church is in the development of its people. By investing in the growth of priests, the Catholic community invests in its own total growth.

The diocese currently provides for three programs of priests' continuing formation:

- I. Education/Sabbatical Program
- II. Ongoing Formation Program
- III. Annual Retreat Program

These programs are functionally and financially independent of one another, such that the extent of a priest's participation in one has no bearing upon how much he may participate in the others.

I. EDUCATION/SABBATICAL PROGRAM

A. Definition

Sabbatical leave is a period of time away from the priest's regular assignment for an opportunity to pursue his professional, intellectual, spiritual or personal growth by attending an approved, formal and ordered program of priestly formation which focuses on his responsibilities as a priest. A sabbatical is distinguished from:

1. Vacation which is used for rest, relaxation and recreation
2. Retreat which is oriented toward spiritual renewal
3. Sick leave which is intended for the recovery of health
4. Assignment to further studies by the bishop for diocesan needs
5. Continuing education which is intended for ongoing formation by attendance at workshops which total less than 50 hours per year.

B. Duration of the Sabbatical

Long-term Education Sabbatical Program (ESP) leaves are to be no more than three (3) months in duration and usually not less than one month. Requests for variances from this duration and the approved list may be granted only by the diocesan bishop upon the recommendation of the ESP Committee. Short-term ESP leaves are from two (2) weeks to one (1) month in duration.

C. Number of Priests on Sabbatical at Any One Time

No more than two (2) priests may be on sabbatical at any one time and no more than a total of 6 months of sabbatical leave may be granted during a fiscal year.

D. Eligibility for Sabbaticals

All incardinated priests of the diocese and religious order priests actively engaged in pastoral work within the diocese are eligible for a long-term ESP after ten (10) years of service to the diocese, subject to the personnel requirements of the diocese. A Short-term ESP is available after five (5) years of service to the diocese.

A sabbatical leave is given with the condition that the priest intends to continue to function actively in the Diocese of Superior following the conclusion of his sabbatical.

The general norm for participation in a sabbatical is “seniores priores”. No priest may receive more than three (3) months of sabbatical leave within ten (10) years of the outset of his first sabbatical.

E. Procedures for Application

1. A priest should apply to the chairman of the ESP Committee for permission to engage in a sabbatical program. He may do this only after completing ten (10) years of service in the diocese for a Long- Term ESP, five (5) years for a Short-Term ESP. The attached application form (cf. pp.6-7) must be completed and returned to the chairman of the personnel board. All applications will be evaluated by the ESP Committee in consultation with the chairman of the personnel board. Special consideration will be given to those who have seniority in years of ordination and those who have not yet taken a sabbatical.
2. Upon receiving permission to take a sabbatical, a priest consults with the chairman of the ESP Committee for the development of his sabbatical plan. Plans for sabbaticals and the educational programs involved are then submitted to the ESP Committee for review and approval.
3. After receiving approval for the sabbatical plan and program, the priest with the assistance of the chairman of the ESP Committee is to make application for the program approved.
4. Before a sabbatical is approved, the priest applicant must make arrangements mutually acceptable to the Bishop, the Personnel board and the parish or institution to provide for the pastoral care of the people whom he serves. Ordinarily, he must notify these concerned parties one year in advance for a long-term ESP and six (6) months for a Short Term ESP.
5. The priest application statement should include: his goals, steps to achieve these goals, how this will relate to his future priestly ministry and the positive implications this will have for the diocese.

F. Financing

After the prior approval of the Bishop as indicated by his signature of authorization on the Program Application Form (cf. pp. 6-7), the ESP Committee will authorize the reimbursement of all expenses associated with a priest’s sabbatical leave in accordance with the following funding sources and their limitations.

1. The ESP FUND will provide the following per priest/per year for a maximum of three (3) months:
 - a. An amount for room and board as determined by the bishop.
 - b. An amount for salary as determined by the bishop.
 - c. The current rate for health, dental, and long term disability insurance will be reimbursed to the parish or the institution served including St. Pius Priest Fund dues for three (3) months maximum.
2. The Seminary Fund or Religious Province (for religious order priests) will provide the following per priest/per year for a maximum of three (3) months: An amount for tuition, books and registration as determined by the Bishop. This will be paid directly to the vendor after the diocesan finance director reviews the invoices.
3. The priest on sabbatical will provide the following:
 - a. Transportation to and from the place of the sabbatical.
 - b. All automobile expenses while on sabbatical.
 - c. Personal dues to St. Pius Priest Fund.
4. The parish or institution will pay for the cost of the priest's replacement for a maximum of three (3) months.
5. The amount allocated from the ESP Fund and the Seminary Fund will be adjusted on July 1 of each fiscal year based on the annual cost of living index for this area of the State of Wisconsin.
6. Short Term ESP will be reimbursed on a pro rata basis.

G. Replacement Procedure

1. The priest, with the assistance of the Personnel Board and the Chancery or religious province (for religious order priests), is primarily responsible for finding his replacement for the duration of the sabbatical.
2. In the case of a priest in specialized ministry, the replacement will be provided by the institution he serves.

H. Education/Sabbatical Program (ESP) Committee

1. The ESP Committee consisting of three (3) members will be appointed by the Bishop.
2. The ESP Committee will:

- a. Establish fair and just procedures to make sabbaticals equally available for all priests of the diocese.
- b. Review and make recommendations to the Bishop on all applications. While the content of a sabbatical may vary greatly, the terms mutually agreed to by the Bishop, the ESP Committee and the priest become the terms of the sabbatical for that particular priest.
- c. Prepare and make available applications for sabbatical requests.
- d. Keep the Presbyterate aware of existing sabbatical programs.
- e. Determine measures of accountability for each sabbatical.
- f. Administer the education/sabbatical program, and process all applications.

I. Follow Up

Within thirty (30) days of his return, the priest is to report his sabbatical experience in writing to the ESP Committee indicating how it benefited him and evaluate the place and or institution which provided the sabbatical program. The evaluation form (cf. pp.8-9) should be used for this purpose.

DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR EDUCATION/SABBATICAL PROGRAM APPLICATION FORM

(Please check one)

_____ Short-Term ESP (from two weeks to one month)

_____ Long-Term ESP (from more than one month to three months)

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Year Ordained: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Place of Assignment: _____

I. Program for which you are applying:

A. Dates: _____

B. Place: _____

C. Brief description: Include any printed material available on this program.
(Use back or attached sheet.)

D. What are your goals in taking part in this program, steps to achieve these goals, and how will this relate to your future priestly ministry and the positive implications this will have for the diocese?
(Use back or attached sheet.)

<u>E. Expenses</u>	<u>Amount Requested</u>
Room and Board	_____
Salary	_____
Health Insurance	_____
Total	_____
Tuition	_____
Books	_____
Registration	_____
Total	_____

Parish or Institution to pay cost of priest's replacement.

For Committee Use Only
Amount approved

ESP FUND

SEM/REL FUND

II. My place of assignment has been duly notified of my plans in accordance with the procedures for application (cf. p.4, E.4.)

Applicant's signature: _____

Submit to: Diocesan Bishop for approval

I hereby authorize the above special program with the following reimbursement from the diocese:

\$_____ from ESP FUND

\$_____ from SEM/REL FUND

Signed: _____ Date Received: _____

Diocesan Bishop

DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR EDUCATION/SABBATICAL
EVALUATION FORM

(Please check one)

_____ Short-Term ESP (from two weeks to one month)

_____ Long-Term ESP (from more than one month to three months)

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Year Ordained: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Place of Assignment: _____

I. Program for which you participated

Dates: _____

Place: _____

Tuition	Room	Board
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Cost: _____

Brief description: Include any printed material on this program, if you have not done so already.

Please rate the following: (1 poor, 5 excellent)

A. Content of the program	1 2 3 4 5
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B. Presentations by faculty	1 2 3 4 5
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C. Facility	1 2 3 4 5
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D. Process or methodology	1 2 3 4 5
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What I liked best about the program: _____

What I did not like: _____

I would/would not recommend this program. (CIRCLE ONE)

Signed: _____

Please return one month after completion of program. Return to:

Educational/Sabbatical Program
Diocese of Superior
P.O. Box 969
Superior, WI 54880

II. ONGOING FORMATION PROGRAM

A. Responsibility

The church expects that each priest will take seriously his responsibility to continue his education and formation. So, even though the diocese develops programs to support the priest in this indispensable aspect of his ministry, nevertheless it must be emphasized that continuing education and formation remain the life-long responsibility of the individual priest.

B. Description

The ongoing formation program for a priest can be described as a priest's personally designed, systematic yet flexible, program for learning which begins when his basic formal education ends, and continues throughout his years of ministry and beyond. This represents an unfolding and deepening process which links personal study and reflection with healthy participation in organized programs, seminars, institutes, and the like. It grows out of a mature decision by the priest to read and reflect on his own initiative and in consort with others for the purpose of keeping abreast of developments in the branches of theology and other studies which have to do with his relationship with the people entrusted to his pastoral ministry (ref. Mark A. Rauch, *Competent Ministry: A Guide to Effective Continuing Education*).

C. Sponsorship

The diocesan Bishop with the Presbyteral Council sponsors the ongoing formation program for the benefit of all diocesan and religious order priests of the diocese. Nonetheless, other priests and transitional/permanent deacons may attend and participate in these programs as invited guests.

Moreover, priests are encouraged to receive additional ongoing formation by attending the spring workshop, training programs of the permanent diaconate, etc., even though these programs are not sponsored and controlled by the Presbyteral Council. Conversely, deacons, for example, could receive continuing education credit for their attendance at such programs as the priest fall workshop when they are invited as guests.

D. General Norms

1. Planning is integral to continuing education and formation. Each priest is strongly encouraged to develop and review with his dean a systematic yet flexible plan for his own ongoing formation. This plan can include personal reading and reflection as well as organized programs, workshops and institutes.
2. All priests active in pastoral work within the diocese are entitled to an annual subsidy of \$500 for ongoing formation in accord with the above referenced norms.

Areas covered by the subsidy are broadly interpreted as those which contribute to the priest's professional growth as a public minister: biblical topics, systematic and sacramental theology, canon law, religious ethics, spiritual theology, liturgy, preaching, catechetics, behavioral sciences, parochial administration, etc.

In selecting programs, the priest should keep in mind his personal study plan as well as the needs of the parish or institution he is serving.

- a. The \$500 subsidy is in addition to monies received for the fall workshop and Chrism Mass/priests' assembly. If a priest incurs expenses associated with these events which exceed the amount allotted, he is allowed reimbursement from the unused \$500 annual subsidy.
 - b. This money must be used only for workshops, conferences and other educational courses which will enhance the priest's public ministry, rather than for purely personal and private pursuits. It is generally expected and encouraged that priests will use their \$500 subsidy annually. Unused portions of this subsidy may not be carried over to following years.
 - c. This subsidy expressly excludes travel costs.
 - d. A priest who does not attend a prescribed continuing education program is considered to have used the time and the money allotted for this program in that he may not compensate for the prescribed program by attending another continuing education program of his choice without the prior approval of his dean.
3. Diocesan-sponsored programs will be made available to our retired priests at reduced rates, or gratis where possible.
 4. The ongoing fiscal management of continuing education funds, reimbursements and the tracking of continuing education credits for individual priests is an administrative function and should therefore be handled by Chancery staff, such as the diocesan Finance Director and/or one of the secretaries.

E. Types of Programs

There are four types of ongoing formation programs for which the annual allotment of \$500 may be used:

1. Programs prescribed by the Bishop (priests' assembly, fall workshop, etc.)
2. Programs sponsored by a diocesan agency.
3. Optional programs selected by individual priests with the approval of the dean.
4. Video tapes, audio tapes, journals, books, etc., approved by the dean.

F. Implementation

The ongoing formation committee of the Presbyteral Council will:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive program of continuing education for priests;
2. Publish and distribute information about local and national education opportunities for priests.

III. PRIESTS' ANNUAL RETREAT PROGRAM

Priests are bound to make a retreat according to prescriptions of particular law (cf. c. 276 § 2[4]). Accordingly, priests serving in the Diocese of Superior are required to make an annual spiritual retreat. Retired priests who cannot afford the retreat fee may contact the treasurer of the Presbyteral Council for financial assistance.

A. Annual Retreat

The annual retreat is normally held during the month of September. Although religious order priests are not required to attend this retreat, they are always welcome to do so.

To assist with the retreat expenses, each priest is allotted an amount approved by the Bishop for the annual retreat to be paid by the parish/institution which he serves.

Diocesan priests must request in writing the Bishop's prior approval to make a private retreat or to be excused from the annual diocesan retreat.

B. General Retreat

Every five years a general retreat is scheduled for priests of the diocese. Any priest, diocesan or religious, unable to attend this event must, prior to the retreat, state, in writing to the Bishop, his excuse.

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