

POLICY 3.6.1 Pastoral Help When a Priest is Absent from his Parish

The Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan has established its policies on vacation and other leave for priests in accordance with the Code of Canon Law and the relevant legislation of the Government of Alberta (cf. Policy 3.6.2). The Archdiocese requests that every priest ensure that the pastoral needs of his parish(es) will be provided for in his absence. This policy describes the requirements, suggestions and recommendations that priests and parishes are to follow when arranging for pastoral assistance in the absence of the priest.

A. The priest's responsibilities

- **Notification of absence to parishes and to the Archdiocese**

In the Archdiocese, the parish priest is an essential role and his absence affects himself, his parish(es) and the Archdiocese. Therefore, **for absences of more than four (4) days or absences from Sunday Mass celebrations, except where the absence is at the request or invitation of the Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan**, the priest is to complete a Form 3.6.1.a (see below for guidelines on filling in the form.) The priest will submit the completed form to the Chancellor of the Archdiocese **at least two months in advance of the absence (or as much in advance as possible.)**

- **Arrangements for pastoral coverage and assistance**

The priest must arrange for two types of pastoral coverage during his absence: general coverage (for emergency situations, funerals, etc.) and weekend coverage (for Sunday Masses). These arrangements must be indicated on Form 3.6.1.a, in as much detail as possible.

The priests of the Archdiocese are accorded 35 days of vacation each calendar year. Many priests take all these days consecutively which means that parishes are without their parish priest for four or five Sundays in a row. To minimize the disruption to parishes and quasi-parishes, **priests must ensure that the pastoral assistance arrangements they make do not require changes to the regular Sunday Mass times for their parish(es).** Priests are to consult with the Vicar General if there are any concerns about leaving the Mass schedule unaffected during an absence.

Priests with responsibility for missions are to consult with the Vicar General before making any changes to the usual schedule for Sunday Masses in these communities.

When the priest has completed the Form 3.6.1.a, he must discuss his arrangements for pastoral coverage with the PPC Chairperson in his parish(es). The PPC Chairperson in each parish will sign the completed Form 3.6.1.a, indicating that he/she has reviewed the arrangements. The priest will submit the Form 3.6.1.a once all required signatures have been obtained.

In addition to pastoral coverage, the priest must also arrange for someone to check the exterior and interior condition of his residence during his absence. The checks must be performed **at least every four days** while the priest is away. This is to ensure that all the terms and conditions of the residential property insurance policy are met, in the event that damage occurs while the priest is away.

- **Notification to Chancery upon return to parish**

The priest will notify the Vicar General and the Executive Assistant to the Archbishop of his return to his parish, within three days of making his return. The notification may be made by email or by phone call.

B. The parish's responsibilities

The parish is expected to provide its pastor's customary living allowance during the time of his absence, up to 35 days per year for vacation leave, as well as for any other approved leave time.

The parish is also responsible for paying the expenses related to pastoral help provided by other clergy during its pastor's absence. Please note, though, that the parish is not to pay the visiting clergy directly. Rather, pursuant to policy 3.5.1, the visiting cleric submits his request for payment to the Finance Section of the Archdiocese. The Finance Section pays the cleric and then invoices the parish for the amount.

The details of a pastor's absence and coverage during his absence are to be announced in the parish bulletin. This must include both scheduled services and cases of emergency.

C. The Archdiocese's responsibilities

All priests who provide pastoral help are required to submit a completed Form 3.6.1.b to the Finance Section of the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese will pay the visiting priest and will then invoice the parish. **Please do not submit the form directly to the parish.**

In circumstances where an absent priest has not provided a Form 3.6.1.a, and the Archdiocese receives Form 3.6.1.b (Claims for Ministerial Services Rendered), those claims will be paid but the parish will not be invoiced for the amount. Rather, the amount will be garnered from the next payroll cheque of the absent priest.

D. When a priest is absent beyond 35 days

International travel includes risks that, if they occur, can make it necessary for the affected priest to extend his absence beyond the authorized 35 days (cf. Policy 3.6.2).

- **The priest's responsibilities**

The priest is responsible for notifying the Vicar General and the Finance Administrator **immediately** upon learning he will not return to the Archdiocese as scheduled. Where possible, the priest is responsible for notifying his parish of his extended absence.

The priest will take all reasonable steps to return to the Archdiocese as soon as possible. The priest will not receive the living allowance for clergy for his absence beyond 35 days.

- **The parish's responsibilities**

The parish is responsible for following any instructions issued by the Archbishop, Vicar General, and/or Finance Administrator during the extended absence of its parish priest. During this absence, the parish **must seek authorization** from the Vicar General and/or the Finance Administrator for any pastoral or financial decisions or actions that would normally be taken by the parish priest.

The parish is responsible for paying for any pastoral assistance received during the extended absence of the priest.

- **The Archdiocese's responsibilities**

The Archdiocese is responsible for arranging pastoral assistance in the extended absence of the priest.

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