



ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA

Minimum Requirements for the Pastoral Care of Catholic Personnel

Introduction:

Many priests have asked for clarification regarding the Archdiocesan policies on expectations of priest-chaplains, GS and contract priests and for the pastoral care of Catholics in the military. The following is provided to assist the priest in serving the men and women of the Armed Forces and the Veterans Administration entrusted to his care. It provides clarification on the expectations of this endorsing agent about Catholic ministry, and should be shared with one's senior supervisor.

Note: The term Catholic as used throughout this and other AMS documents refers not only to the Latin Catholic Church, but also to all the Eastern Catholic Churches in union with the Apostolic See.

1. Core elements in the life of Catholic personnel that are required for a Catholic Program.

1.1 Catholic priests with the endorsement and/or faculties of the Archdiocese for the Military Services to serve Catholic personnel are to ensure implementation and support of these elements in the interest of the Free Exercise of Religion.

1.1.1 Sunday, Holy Day, and daily Mass.

1.1.2 Comprehensive Religious Education and Sacramental preparation, with an emphasis on youth character formation, individual moral development, and military family cohesion and readiness.

1.1.3 Comprehensive Sacramental Ministry. This includes the sacraments of baptism, penance, First Communion, confirmation, anointing of the sick, and matrimony.

1.1.4 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

1.1.5 Young Adult Ministry focused on spiritual readiness for active duty (18–29 years of age).

1.1.6. Spiritual Enrichment programs (e.g., faith formation retreats, Life Teen, Troops Encounter Christ, marriage enrichment retreats, etc.).

1.1.7. Pastoral Counseling

2. Authority and Governance

2.1. The Senior Catholic priest-chaplain or GS priest will have the final authority over the entire Catholic program on any military installation or Veterans Affairs Medical Center. All assistants or pastoral associates must be accountable to the priest-chaplain or GS priest in all Catholic matters and must report to him in the interest of the common good of the Catholic community. The contract priest, although having no military authority, will nonetheless serve as the authoritative subject matter expert delegated by the AMS in all Catholic matters when he is the only priest at an installation or post. This function shall be specified in his contract before the AMS will consider the contract valid for Catholic ministry.

2.1.1. If the Catholic priest is not the senior chaplain of the installation, he will always serve as the definitive advisor to the senior chaplain regarding the Catholic program.

2.2. The Catholic chaplain should utilize a Pastoral Council to assist him in providing for those in his care. Such councils are consultative and not deliberative. Given that the priest is assigned to care for the active-duty population and their dependents the priest may restrict retiree representation on the pastoral council.

3. Primary place of the Blessed Sacrament in the life of Catholics.

3.1. Catholics believe the Blessed Sacrament is the real presence of Jesus Christ in our midst. It is central to their spirituality.

3.2. The Blessed Sacrament must be reserved on all installations, ships and hospitals that have a priest-chaplain assigned. Catholics have a right to access the Blessed Sacrament for their devotion and spiritual growth. When a Blessed Sacrament Room is authorized by regulations, it shall be for the exclusive use by the Catholic chaplain and faithful and for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

3.3. The Blessed Sacrament must be reserved in a safe, reverential, and known place (preferably a tabernacle in a small Blessed Sacrament Room/Chapel) under the exclusive care of the endorsed Catholic priest. This responsibility of safeguarding and care of the Sacrament must never be entrusted to any other person or non-Catholic chaplain under any condition. The priest is responsible and accountable for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) who are trained and appointed to assist him in this responsibility.

3.4. Only Catholics approved by the Archdiocese may function as Lay Leaders (LL), Catholic Representatives (CR), and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC). Additionally, the CR and LL must be active duty in the grade of E-5 or higher. Authorizations are specific as to duration as well as to location. There is a mandatory training requirement for each of these three functions.

3.5. Priest-trainers are accountable for ongoing communication with deployed LLs/CRs. In the absence of a priest-chaplain, CRs and LLs, when authorized by the AMS, may conduct a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest and the Liturgy of the Hours. However, this will not include the reservation, transportation or distribution of Holy Communion. Communion Services are not permitted in the AMS.

4. Sunday and Daily Mass

4.1. The celebration of Sunday Mass is critical to the spiritual life of the community and must be available at all military installations whenever possible. This celebration must conform to the General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM).

4.2. The unnecessary multiplication of Sunday Masses is discouraged. Saturday anticipated Masses that are mere celebrations of convenience, of poor quality, or divisive of the community are likewise discouraged.

4.3. The priest without exception is expected to celebrate daily Mass – even if privately on days off, holidays, or times when a scheduled Mass is not feasible. Personal spiritual sustenance is sufficient justification for this expectation because of the special challenges of the priest-chaplain living a military lifestyle.

4.4. Catholics in the military should have access to daily Mass scheduled at times convenient for them.

4.5. This sacred duty of the priest-chaplain must take precedence over all other responsibilities unless mission-essential requirements warrant otherwise.

5. Sacrament of Penance

5.1. Catholics in the military will have access to a weekly scheduled celebration of the sacrament of penance. The scheduled times must be separated from Mass by at least 15 minutes.

6. Availability of the Priest for Spiritual Care and Formation of Christian Community

6.1. The principal responsibility of the military priest-chaplain and contract civilian priest is to provide for the spiritual care of Catholic military personnel and their families. Such spiritual care includes the moral formation and spiritual readiness of Catholics. The military priest-chaplain also facilitates religious support for non-Catholics in the event that a non-Catholic chaplain is unavailable.

6.2. Consistent with operational contingencies and mission essential requirements, the priest-chaplain must be freely available for active-duty Catholics and/or family members seeking his counsel. Since this is a primary mission responsibility, his access to work spaces near these work areas conducive to confidential counseling/confession is a mission essential requirement. Military personnel and their family members have a right to absolute confidentiality.

6.3. Consideration and recognition should be given to the intensity of the demands made upon the priest-chaplain with regard to Catholic needs when supervisors are assigning them to collateral duties and in assessing their performance. Such demands involve sacramental celebrations including daily Mass, sacramental instruction, religious education and marriage preparation.

6.4. Supervisors should recognize that at times the priest-chaplain is in need of assistance in providing for even basic pastoral care. In such circumstances, deacons and qualified religious and laity should be contracted to assist the priest-chaplain at that installation. Deacons exercising any ministry to Catholics must be endorsed by the AMS and be granted faculties by the AMS.

6.5. In keeping with the essential requirements named above, the priest-chaplain must also see that suitable lay ministers are properly selected, trained, commissioned, and certified (when required), ensuring comprehensive religious education and normative liturgical celebrations.

6.6. To have and maintain a Catholic program at a military installation, the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA requires the ministry of a priest at least twenty hours per week. Active-duty military priest-chaplains and full-time GS priests fulfill this requirement at their assignments.

6.6.1. With due regard for collateral duties assigned to priest-chaplains (see 6.3 above), civilian priests can be contracted to supplement Catholic pastoral care at the same installation, e.g., to cover for deployments, etc. These contracts can be for as many hours as required by pastoral need.

6.6.2. If requirements or constraints preclude the presence of a uniformed priest-chaplain, a GS or contract position of at least twenty hours per week should be available to have and maintain a Catholic program. The twenty-hour minimum requirement can be met by contracting multiple priests. Where feasible, nearby installations may consider sharing one priest with two part-time contracts. Contracts must list the specific duties to be performed.

6.6.3. Because Catholic personnel and their families are best served by full-time priests, the Archdiocese encourages installations to offer contracts well in excess of the minimum twenty hours.

6.6.4. All contract priests must personally obtain the endorsement and faculties from the Archdiocese for the Military Services. No priest presented by a third-party contractor will be endorsed.

7. Directors of Religious Education, Musicians and others assisting in the Catholic Program.

7.1. The Director of Religious Education (DRE) is the priest. He has the vested responsibility as pastor of souls to provide catechesis within his area of responsibility (cc. 773 and 776). This responsibility flows from his bishop (the Military Ordinary) who is the teaching authority within his territory (c. 753).

7.2. The Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE) is that individual who manages the day-to-day operation of the religious education program. Together with other catechists, they are one of the means by which the Word is proclaimed and catechesis presented (c. 761). This must be done "in cooperation with the bishop and the priest..." (c. 759).

7.3. All final decisions for the content of Catholic religious instruction belong to the Catholic priest rather than hired GS lay employees or contracted lay CREs. Instructional materials used in catechesis must be contained in the Conformity Listing maintained by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

7.4. The CRE should have a master's degree in Religious Education or the equivalent and be experienced in Catholic theology and catechesis. The CRE must possess a valid Catechist Certificate issued by the AMS. The Catholic priest will directly supervise and evaluate the CRE contract.

7.5. A Catholic priest who is a uniformed chaplain or GS employee must have the final authority over the Catholic program on any military installation or VA Medical Center. All assistants, pastoral associates, and music directors/musicians must be accountable to the priest and must report to him in the interest of the common good of the Catholic community.

8. Ecumenical and Inter-religious opportunities for Understanding and Unity

8.1. The Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA values highly its historic collaboration with families of other faith groups who serve our military communities. It is our continuing desire and the desire of our priest-chaplains to work with commanders and chaplains of all faiths to provide complete spiritual care for the men and women in uniform and their families.

8.2. In that spirit, the Catholic priest provides first and foremost for the needs of his own Catholic people in the military and then helps facilitate the spiritual care of those belonging to other faith groups. All priest-chaplains must care for the spiritual and moral needs of all our military and VA personnel regardless of their religious preferences.

8.3. An Ecumenical and/or Inter-religious Service is one which prays for and fosters unity and understanding among all those sharing in the Service. A Catholic priest who participates in a true Ecumenical/Inter-religious Service should bring something of our Catholic tradition to the celebration (Catholic prayers, excerpts from Conciliar / Papal documents, early Church Fathers, etc.).

8.4. The Easter Vigil, which must begin no earlier than thirty (30) minutes after sunset, is the most important liturgy of the year. Its celebration should be a privileged moment in the life of the Catholic Community.

8.5. Given the unique centrality of Holy Week in Catholic tradition, Easter Sunrise Services are not appropriate Ecumenical opportunities in which Catholics or Catholic priests should participate. The feast of the Resurrection is the most sacred feast in the Catholic Church, and Catholics are required to participate actively in the celebration of the Mass. Alternative services may confuse some about their obligations.

9. Annual Responsibilities of Priest-Chaplains to maintain their Endorsements.

9.1. The Law of the Church and the frequent exhortations of the Bishops of Rome advocate spiritual retreats for the good of the spiritual lives of all priests. Therefore, the priests serving in the Archdiocese for the Military Services are to arrange for an annual spiritual retreat, preferably in a religious institution, of at least five consecutive days. This is to be considered mandatory unless military mission requirements render it impossible. This retreat is additional to any “service retreats” or workshops. Spiritual retreats arranged by the priest-chaplain’s bishop or religious superior are particularly recommended. These retreats should be accomplished in a TDY status.

9.2. Active duty Catholic priests, GS priests and full-time contract priests, unless deployed or TDY/TAD, will attend the biennial Convocation of the Archdiocese for the Military Services. Even if deployed, priest-chaplains should make every effort to attend. Reserve, National Guard and part-time contract priests are highly encouraged to attend. VA chaplains will attend the annual conference of the National Conference of VA Catholic Chaplains (NCVACC). In case of extenuating circumstances and with the permission of the archbishop, they may fulfill this requirement by attending an AMS Convocation.

9.3. The Catholic bishops and religious superiors who provide priests expect that the responsibility of the priest-chaplain for sacramental, pastoral and spiritual welfare of our Catholic people will be

acknowledged, protected, and fostered by authorities within the military and the Veterans Administration.

9.4. The priest-chaplain is expected to maintain dialogue with his diocesan bishop or religious superior, and to share with him copies of his Quarterly Reports.

This document replaces previous Minimum Requirements of the Archdiocese for the Military Services for the Pastoral Care of our Catholic Personnel, dated 01 August 2011.

Imprimatur

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