

Parish Living - General Principles

The following *Parish Living* guidelines have been created to serve as a consistent framework for all parishes in the Diocese of Fall River. All priests and particularly pastors, are asked to fill a range of pastoral, administrative, and leadership roles, often in a setting that serves as a temporary home as well as an office. Establishing guidelines for priestly conduct, duties and stewardship are necessary. However, it is also important to enumerate priestly rights and expectations for parish living. Our guiding principles include:

1. The rectory is considered the home of each priest assigned to live there. While the pastor is ultimately responsible for the temporal and pastoral welfare of the parish, each priest in residence shares a common concern for the living situation.
2. Each priest is entitled to a living situation where his dignity, individuality, and privacy are respected.
3. Every priest is ultimately a temporary guest and should approach his situation with a grateful sense of stewardship and respect for the priest that will ultimately replace him in the rectory.
4. The rectory, in addition to serving as the home for priests often functions as the parish office, meeting place or setting for pastoral care.
 - a. *If possible*, the pastor should seek to have the parish offices in a building (parish center, etc.) separate from the parish rectory.
 - b. There should be a clear separation between private living quarters and work area for parish staff.
 - c. All priests should clearly segregate personal assets from parish assets.
5. Priests should take special care to ensure that living conditions, while adequate, are not ostentatious, recognizing the sacrifices made on a daily basis by parishioners to support the church.
6. Pastors, priests, and all parish staff need to provide proper documentation, including original third party receipts for all reimbursed expenses. Credit card summary statements will not serve as sufficient documentation.
7. In individual cases, the Bishop reserves the right to interpret, apply, or dispense from these guidelines.

Parish Living - Rectory and Related Benefits

In accordance with general principles 1-3, each priest is called to respect the rights of other priests and the property for which they are ultimately a temporary custodian. At the same time, each priest has a right to expect a situation where living standards are adequate and allow the priest to perform his pastoral and ministerial duties. Specifics on parsonage and related benefits for priests in the Diocese of Fall River are outlined below:

Parish provided living quarters, expectations, and amenities

1. Each priest should have a private living area that includes a bedroom, bathroom, and sitting room.
2. Housekeeping assistance for office, furniture, and bedding
3. Laundry service, and dry cleaning in select circumstances
4. Rectory food/groceries with special provisions made for dietary needs if necessary
 - a. In special cases priests may be reimbursed for reasonable meal expenses, purchased with personal funds.
 - b. Food purchased on vacation or days off is considered a personal expense.
5. Adequate heating and cooling of the premises
6. Phone and Internet service (Wi-Fi)
7. Office equipment and supplies
8. Secretarial/administrative support from parish staff

Pets

1. Priests are personally responsible for all pet costs, including food, grooming, veterinary bills, registration fees, etc.
2. Good stewardship of parish property must be maintained. Priests are personally responsible for any damage to parish property by pets.
3. If more than one priest resides in a property, the prospective pet owner should consult with the other priests before bringing a pet into the house.

Smoking

Smoking is strongly discouraged, and due to second-hand smoking impacts, is permitted only outside of the rectory and parish office. Please see note #2 in “Pastor Transitions” below. All smokers should take special care to ensure that rectories have been thoroughly cleaned and any lingering impact from cigarette smoke eliminated.

Pastor Transitions

1. When a priest transitions from one assignment to another, it is the responsibility of the parish from which the priest is transitioning to pay for reasonable moving expenses. This includes the cost of a moving van or truck if necessary.

2. For pastor transitions, the outgoing pastor should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the rectory is in an orderly and clean state.
3. All keys should be labeled (“Church,” “rectory,” etc.) for the incoming pastor, and a key file or listing provided along with a list of all alarm codes.
 - a. Staff with keys or knowledge of alarm codes should be kept to an absolute minimum (“need to know basis”).
 - b. The incoming pastor should be provided all copies of keys (including staff copies).
 - c. It is recommended that a new pastor should consider changing locks and alarm codes (note – changing locks for all locations may be cost prohibitive – use discretion).

Access

1. All parishes should have common areas from which to conduct parish business. These areas should be accessible to all and away from private living quarters.
2. Each priest should have the option of securing his room with a lock and key at the parish’s expense; however, provision must be made for access to the priest’s room in his absence.

Please refer to Section D “Guidelines for Rectories” in [Exhibit 1 – Code of Conduct for Clergy in the Diocese of Fall River](#), for rules pertaining to overnight guests and persons allowed in personal living spaces of clergy.

Time away/Vacation

1. Each priest is entitled to 1 night per week away from the rectory (beginning after morning mass and extending to the following evening).
2. Days off should be regularly scheduled in advance and consistent.
3. Priests shall have four weeks of vacation (including 3 weekends); vacation must be used within the fiscal year; unused days do not carry-over to the new year.
4. Each priest is entitled up to 5 days retreat each year (in addition to the vacation noted above).
5. Pastors on vacation should be accessible (by phone, e-mail, or text).
6. After 10 years each priest is allowed to request a 30-day sabbatical leave (see policy on ongoing formation).

Special Housing Arrangements (TBD)

Priests that wish to live in one residence to reduce redundant costs and share in priestly fraternity are required to submit a written request (signed by all priests involved), to the Bishop for approval. The letter should be sent to the Bishop’s Office to initiate the approval process.

Retirement

Priests in the Diocese of Fall River may submit a request to retire to the Bishop once they reach 70 years of age. The Bishop may accept or reject this request. Priests are mandated to submit a request to retire at 75 years of age. The Bishop may accept this request or may ask the priest to continue in service.

Priests that are ready to request retirement should send a letter to the Bishop. If approved a process is put in place to start pension benefits and to transition priests to the retirement medical plan. Retirement benefits are addressed more specifically in the section titled, “Parish Administration – Clergy Compensation Structure.”

Please see [*Exhibit 3: Priest Retirement Process*](#) for the processes following a priest’s request to retire.

Please direct questions or comments on **Parish Living – Rectory and Related Benefits** to the Vicar General.

Parish Living - Parish vs. Personal Expenses

A clear delineation of parish vs. personal expenses is fundamental in keeping with general principles 4-6. It is more the rule than the exception in the Diocese of Fall River that rectories operate as both residences and parish offices. In this setting it can be easy for lines to blur between personal and parish assets. In this guide we seek to provide assistance with creating more clarity with respect to these boundary lines.

Chart of parish vs. personal expenses

Many of the basic living costs for priests (housing, utilities, rectory groceries), are covered by the parish as part of the overall compensation package for priests (clergy compensation will be covered in more detail in the “Parish Administration – Clergy Compensation Structure” section). However, all priests are also conscious of the financial stresses at many of our parishes. As such it is important to carefully consider those discretionary costs that are the responsibility of each individual. To aide in this process, please see *Exhibit 4: Parish vs. Personal Expenses* for detailed examples of parish and personal expenses. Note that those expenses shown as “personal” should not be paid with parish funds, and the costs thereof should not be included in parish financial reports.

Note that the Diocese reserves the right to update this listing of “Parish vs. Personal expenses” from time to time. Each change will be communicated to all priests within the Diocese of Fall River.

Expense reimbursement requests

All parish staff, including pastors, are asked to fill out detailed forms for expense reimbursement requests. Please see *Exhibit 5: Expense Reimbursement Form*, for information to be provided. Note that **all** staff, including pastors and parochial vicars are expected to complete forms, with appropriate descriptions of costs and store receipts. Using the form, a reviewer should be able to clearly understand the following:

1. Who submitted the request and when
2. What the expense was related to and how much it cost
3. Who approved the expense reimbursement

Expense reimbursement forms are to be filled out prior to releasing any funds for reimbursement.

Note that a review of credit card statements (typically for past 12 months), will be a standard part of the rolling financial reviews to be conducted at parishes and schools within the Diocese of Fall River. Credit card summary statements are insufficient back-up for expense reimbursement requests.

Clergy personal property list

An accurate accounting of parish and personal property is important to protect both the parish and the individual priest, and prevent unnecessary future conflicts. There are 2 forms essential to this process:

1. [Exhibit 6: Parish Property Supplied Clergy](#)
2. [Exhibit 7: Clergy Personal Property Listing](#)

The two exhibits listed above should be completed and sent to Joe Harrington – jharrington@dioc-fr.org, at the Chancery for filing every time a new priest takes up residence in a rectory.

[Please note that all questions related to **Parish Living - Parish vs. Personal Expenses** should be directed to Joe Harrington – Director of Financial Planning at the Chancery; jharrington@dioc-fr.org; (508) 985-6503]

Parish Administration - General Principles

The following *Parish Administration* guidelines have been created to serve as a consistent framework for parish administration across the Diocese of Fall River. We operate with an understanding that the limited financial resources available to each parish are a result of daily sacrifices made by parishioners. It is incumbent upon each pastor to act as a proper steward of each parish's funds, and this is spelled out with some detail in canon 1284 of the Code of Canon Law:

“All administrators are bound to fulfill their function with the diligence of a good householder. Consequently they must:

1. exercise vigilance so that the goods entrusted to their care are in no way lost or damaged, taking out insurance policies for this purpose insofar as necessary;
2. take care that the ownership of ecclesiastical goods is protected by civilly valid methods;
3. observe the prescripts of both canon and civil law or those imposed by a founder, a donor, or legitimate authority, and especially be on guard so that no damage comes to the Church from the non-observance of civil laws;
4. collect the return of goods and the income accurately and on time, protect what is collected, and use them according to the intention of the founder or legitimate norms;
5. pay at the stated time the interest due on a loan or mortgage and take care that the capital debt itself is repaid in a timely manner;
6. with the consent of the ordinary, invest the money which is left over after expenses and can be usefully set aside for the purposes of the juridic person;
7. keep well organized books of receipts and expenditures;
8. draw up a report of the administration at the end of each year;
9. organize correctly and protect in a suitable and proper archive the documents and records on which the property rights of the Church or the institute are based, and deposit authentic copies of them in the archive of the curia when it can be done conveniently.

It is strongly recommended that administrators **prepare budgets** of incomes and expenditures each year; it is left to particular law, however, to require them and to determine more precisely the ways in which they are to be presented.”

Within this document we seek to build upon the concepts outlined in the Code of Canon law, and further support the following principles for the Diocese of Fall River, including:

1. All priests should be adequately and consistently compensated. Guidelines provided by the Diocese will be clearly promulgated, with commentary on how the figures were derived.
2. The Chancery Office's mission is to pastorally serve and expertly guide our parishes, schools, and affiliates so as to foster Christ's work on earth. In this mission the Chancery will provide administrative support and information to foster success.

3. Priests should actively solicit advice from lay experts, specifically the parish finance council, to assist in the proper financial management of the parish. In this respect, the pastor and the parish staff are expected to provide appropriate and regular financial reports to the council to assist with this endeavor.

4. In individual cases, the Bishop reserves the right to interpret, apply, or dispense from these guidelines