

## Senior Priest Care Description

The Archdiocese acknowledges that senior priests, who have devoted their lives to the priestly service of the Church, are deserving of our gratitude, respect, recognition and support. Building on the commitment of the Archdiocese to its senior priests, the Office of the Vicar for Clergy is pleased to provide them with support, recognition and care through a wide variety of policies and resources. This ministry, flowing from the teachings and precepts outlined here, and expressed through the core values of: respect, honor, spirituality, gratitude, security, community, participation and recognition of gifts. Based on these precepts and values, the Office of the Vicar for Clergy wishes to provide guidance for the support, love, care, dignity and value of planning ahead for both for those approaching senior status and the senior priests of Archdiocese.

The respect and care which guide the policies and practices which support the senior priests of the Archdiocese emerges from the biblical, theological and pastoral teachings of the Church. To remind ourselves and to affirm the rights and gifts of the senior priests as well as the Church's responsibilities of respect, love, recognition and support for them, we begin with a reflection from the Sacred Scripture, Church teachings and Canon Law.

## Sacred Scripture

“Stand up in the presence of the elderly, and show respect for the aged. Fear your God, I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:32)

“Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.” (Job 12:12)

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12)

“Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as you would to your father.” (Timothy 5:1)

“Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’.” (1 Peter 5:5)

“With length of days I will satisfy them...” (Psalm 91.16)



“The just shall flourish like the palm tree, they shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, they shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bear fruit even in old age, always vigorous and sturdy. As the proclaim: ‘The Lord is just; our rock, in whom there is no wrong’.” (Psalm 92:13-16)

### Pastoral Teachings

Pope John Paul II reminds us, “Arriving at an older age is to be considered a privilege: not simply because not everyone has the good fortune to reach this stage of life, but also, and above all, because this period provides real possibilities for better evaluating the past, for knowing and living more deeply in Paschal Mystery, for becoming an example in the Church for the whole People of God. (Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1999, p. 1)

Addressing Older Persons, and based on the U.S. Bishop’s pastoral statement, “Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium” (1995), the Bishops encourage older persons to experience, respond and frame their spiritual lives through calls to holiness, to community, to service and to the wisdom that come with maturity.

In their Statement, *Blessings of Age*, the U.S. Catholic Bishops offer foundational principles for parish ministry with older persons (which includes senior priests).

#### *Blessings of Age: Pastoral Message on Growing Older Within the Faith* Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1999

“We are growing older, not just as individuals but as members of a faith community. The spiritual growth of the aging person is affected by the community and affects the community. Aging demands the attention of the entire Church. How the faith community relates to its older members—recognizing their presence, encouraging their contributions, responding to their needs, and providing appropriate opportunities for spiritual growth—as a sign of the community’s spiritual health and maturity.” (p. 2)

“Older people are providers, not just participants, of pastoral care. Our first question should not be ‘How can the parish serve older people?’ but instead ‘How can the parish receive and fully embrace the gifts of older persons?’ Older people bring a wealth of spiritual resources, deep faith, skills, experience, and, especially after retirement, time in which to offer them. ... By encouraging older persons to make their unique contributions, we affirm their dignity and value within the community of faith.”

## Canon Law

The Code of Canon Law, Title III, outlines the Obligations and Rights of Clerics. It states:

- Canon 275 &1. “Since clerics all work for the same purpose, namely, the building up of the Body of Christ, they are to united among themselves by a bond of brotherhood and prayer and are to strive for cooperation among themselves according to the prescripts of particular law.”
- Canon 281 &1. “Since clerics dedicate themselves to ecclesiastical ministry, they deserve remuneration which is consistent with their condition, taking into account the nature of their function and the conditions of places and times, and by which they can provide for the necessities of their life as well as for the equitable payment of those whose services they need.”
- Canon 281 &2. “Provision must also be made so that they possess that social assistance which provides for their needs suitably if they suffer from illness, incapacity, or old age.”