

**THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SPOKANE**  
**MANUAL OF DIOCESAN LAWS,**  
**POLICIES, REGULATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS**  
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Promulgated by the Most Reverend William S. Skylstad

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The first edition of the Policy Manual of the Diocese of Spokane was published in 1982. In 1992 the Manual was updated with new and revised policies and provisions. Furthermore, this second edition was reorganized to reflect the divisions of the revised Code of Canon Law, promulgated in November of 1983. This is a helpful principle for organization because in many instances, diocesan policies develop and make specific provisions concerning the implementation of universal laws. As diocesan policies continued to be revised and developed, new materials were sent to pastoral ministers for insertion into the Manual. However, in many instances manuals were not updated, and policy revisions were not always distributed in a timely manner.

With the advent of new technologies, especially the internet, it is now possible for a centralized and official Manual to be maintained that relieves pastoral ministers and local administrators of the burden of maintaining their own copies. Similar projects have been completed or are underway for the policies concerning Catholic schools and the Personnel Policies of employees of the Diocese and member institutions. Policies can be accessed through the internet, reviewed and downloaded for printing according to one's needs. Revisions and new policies can be made available readily and universally. Outmoded and revoked policies and provisions can be removed. It is our hope that this use of technology proves both helpful and convenient.

As stated above, the Manual has been organized according to the 1983 Code of Canon Law. The use of the Code of Canon Law as the basis for organizing the Manual may simplify the task of locating particular policies and providing for the placement of new ones. Each policy has been assigned a numerical value that reflects its proper context, for example, 2.02.04, Retirement Policy for Diocesan Priests. The first number (2) refers to the book of the Code of Canon Law that pertains to the policy; the next number (02) is a subset or section of related policies grouped together concerning priests. The final number (04) indicates that this is the fourth of several policies concerning priests (there are 11 in all at the present time in section 02).

The Canons of the first book of the Code of Canon Law (CC 1 - 203) are valuable tools for the interpretation of all ecclesiastical laws, of which this Policy Manual is an example. In applying the policies of this manual, one should keep in mind basic principles of interpretation such as Canon 17:

Ecclesiastical laws are to be understood in accord with the proper meaning of the words considered in their text and context. If the meaning remains doubtful and obscure, recourse is to be taken to parallel passages, if such exist, to the purpose and the circumstances of the law, and the mind of the legislator.

The content of this Manual reflects the ongoing effort of the Bishop of Spokane to fulfill his obligation and right (1) to protect the unity of the universal Church through urging the observance of ecclesiastical laws (cf. C 392 §1) (2) to enact legislation for his own diocese (C 391 §2); and (3) to determine the methods to be observed in applying the law or clarifying the law's precepts (CC 32-34). Not every provision of this manual is "law" in a technical sense. A "policy" promulgated by the Bishop is diocesan law in the proper sense (cf. C 29). "Guidelines" are the equivalent of what the Code calls "general executory decrees" or "instructions" (cf. CC 32, 34) and may be issued by the Vicar General or one to whom this power is delegated. In

the application of universal law to the particular church, decrees or instructions contrary to laws lack all force (CC 33 §1, 34 §2). "A lower legislator cannot validly issue a law contrary to higher law." (Cf. C 135 §2).

Diocesan laws can only be legislated and interpreted by the Diocesan Bishop (CC 16, 391 §2, 466). The Bishop and Vicar General may, in individual instances, dispense from diocesan laws (C. 88).