

## CONTINUING EDUCATION AND FORMATION OF PRIESTS

In conformity with *The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*, published in 2001 by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, all priests incardinated in the Diocese of Spokane (and those holding official pastoral assignments in the Diocese) are expected to engage each year in a self-directed and substantial continuing education/formation program for their personal and professional development. The program is to be focused on the four areas of priestly formation: human, academic, spiritual, and pastoral. Priests are accountable to the Bishop in meeting this expectation.

A priest may fulfill this expectation in part through personal study and participation in programs/workshops/conferences, etc. He is encouraged to take advantage of on-line resources, written and recorded materials, conferences, workshops, etc. The Director of Continuing Education/Formation also will advise priests of opportunities provided in other dioceses.

In conjunction with the Continuing Education Committee and in consultation with the Bishop, the Director of Continuing Education/Formation will plan and publicize a variety of opportunities for on-going formation of priests to assist them in fulfilling this expectation. They are to be holistic in vision, providing programs/events which address the four areas of priestly formation. Two to four programs/events are to be provided each year which all priests are encouraged to attend. Some of these may be designated by the Bishop as mandatory.

Reasonable costs incurred by a priest engaging in continuing education programs qualify as a "professional expense" as covered by the parish/institution to which he is assigned. Priests are encouraged to seek out other sources of funding for their on-going education and formation (e.g. grants, scholarships, etc.).

With the approval of the Bishop, a priest is able to pursue formal advanced studies in a field which will be of benefit to the ministry of the priest and/or the Diocese. Arrangements for expenses incurred in the course of these studies are to be approved in writing by the Bishop.

## **SABBATICALS FOR DIOCESAN PRIESTS**

Recognizing the spiritual, emotional, and physical importance of occasionally taking a sabbatical from active priestly ministry, priests are encouraged to request a time of sabbatical according to the following schematic:

- After seven years of active ministry, a priest may request a sabbatical of three months
- After fourteen years of active ministry, a priest may request a sabbatical of six months
- After twenty-one years of active ministry, a priest may request a sabbatical of twelve months

The specifics of a sabbatical plan (including its financing) as well as the request for the sabbatical at these or other intervals not reflected on this schematic are to be submitted to the Bishop in writing for his approval. This plan is to focus on any or all of the four areas of priestly formation: human, academic, spiritual, and pastoral.

The request is to be submitted before the month of March, at least one year before the desired time of sabbatical in order to allow time for anticipating costs in the budgeting process of the Diocese (March-May). Normally, the parish/institution (or in some instances, the Diocese itself) will pay the salary and related expenses of the priest on sabbatical. In some instances, similar arrangements will be made for the payment of the expenses of a priest substitute. It is not to be presumed that the Diocese will pay all of these costs; priests preparing for sabbatical are encouraged to seek out alternate funding-sources (Foundations, Grants, etc.) to assist with the sabbatical costs. The payment of expenses related to the sabbatical program is arranged with proper authorities in consultation with the Bishop.

After approval of a request for sabbatical has been granted, the Bishop and his College of Consultors will arrange for priestly ministry in the parish/institution to which the priest on sabbatical is assigned.

Approved: Most Reverend Blase J. Cupich

May 15, 2012