TESTIMONIAL LETTERS FOR SPOKANE CLERGY TO MINISTER IN ANOTHER DIOCESE

In dioceses of the United States it is normative to require a Testimonial Letter for a priest (or permanent deacon) travelling to another diocese to exercise ministry. Temporary ministry may include presiding at a wedding or funeral, presenting a retreat or conference, ministerial participation in an ordination, weekend pastoral assistance or other ecclesial events when the priest is present in a ministerial capacity. The Testimonial Letter is more specific and time sensitive than the celebret or “letter of introduction” mentioned in can. 903. The Testimonial Letter indicates the date or dates when the priest will be present in the diocese, where he will be present and the ministry he will provide. A Testimonial Letter from the Bishop of Spokane to the Bishop of the diocese to be visited, attests that the priest:

a) Is in good standing and of good reputation
b) Is suited to undertake the specified ministerial activity
c) Is not precluded from ministry involving minors
d) Has received safe environment training and has updated this training
e) Has undergone a background check and is not guilty of a crime against persons
f) Is bound by our Code of Conduct and Commitment for Church Persons

Testimonial Letters have no common form; a diocese may require additional information. You may receive a Testimonial Letter form from the other diocese to be filled in and signed by the proper diocesan authority. This may happen for a conference that priests of several dioceses attend, and the host diocese seeks to facilitate the process. In the Diocese of Spokane, the Bishop, Vicar General and Vicar for Priests may ex officio issue a Testimonial Letter. The Chancellor has delegated authority and normally processes the Letter.

Without a Testimonial letter, do not expect that you will be permitted to celebrate or concelebrate by virtue of the “presumption” allowed in can. 903, even if you are acquainted with the parish priest. Do not allow a priest of another jurisdiction to engage in ministry unless our Chancery has sent you notice of his Testimonial Letter (see) CLERGY POLICY FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING AND DOCUMENTATION

You are urged to request a Testimonial Letter well in advance of your visit to another diocese. If time constraints may make it impossible to send the Testimonial Letter by regular mail, an email may suffice. Provide the following information when requesting a Testimonial Letter:

• Name, address of place where you will minister, name of pastor or other person to be notified
• Date of ministry and ministry to be provided
• Name and address of the bishop of the diocese to be visited (or if you know who processes Testimonial Letters in the diocese, that person’s name).

Click here for the Testimonial Letter request form.

When you are traveling, especially in other countries but do not have specific times and places for ministerial activity, you may request a celebret from the Chancellor.