RETIREMENT POLICY

PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE OF SPOKANE

Approved by the Presbyteral Council on September 9th, 2021.

PREAMBLE

The Presbyterate of the Diocese of Spokane is an integral part of the community of faith. Its welfare concerns all the Christian faithful. The Diocese recognizes the right and necessity that after many years of service priests retire with dignity and security. Thus, can. 281 §2 states: “Provision must also be made so that (priests) possess that social assistance which provides for their needs suitably if they suffer from illness, incapacity or old age.” It is the Policy of the Diocese of Spokane to provide for the dignity and security of its retired priests by adopting and implementing the Norms proposed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops concerning priestly retirement or priests in the “third age.” Furthermore, rights and obligations, especially of a monetary nature, are specified in the Priests’ Retirement Agreement. This Agreement is not simply a business contract. It is the manifestation of a familial concern for the person of priests who have served this Diocese. Furthermore, the Presbyterate of this Diocese commits itself to the care of our retired brothers. Our concern is not simply about economic security, but about their total well being as men of faith and service.

The Agreement appended to this policy addresses, for the most part, the ordinary circumstances of priestly retirement. It is difficult to spell out all the possible situations. Extraordinary circumstances must be dealt with in an equitable manner through dialogue and fraternal concern.

Incardination is the canonical term for the covenant between a priest and the Diocese. Incardination in the Diocese of Spokane is effected (1) by ordination to the diaconate (can. 266); (2) by excardination from another diocese or religious institute together with incardination in the Diocese of Spokane according to can. 267; or (3) by the law itself after five years of service according to the provisions of can. 268. In (2) and (3), the Bishop of Spokane will negotiate with the priest’s proper ordinary regarding the priest’s retirement funding. This policy does not apply to priests ministering in the Diocese who are not incardinated and not seeking incardination. If a priest is seeking incardination, all service in the Diocese before incardination is credited to him.

As regards this policy, “retired priest,” “senior priest,” or “priest in the third age” are equivalent.

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS NORMS FOR THE RETIREMENT OF PRIESTS: The Diocese accepts for implementation the Vatican approved USCCB Priestly Retirement norms:

1. 75 is the normal retirement age, but for pastoral or personal reasons it may occur earlier. Pastors are to submit letters of resignation by the age of 75.

2. Diocesan policies should specify the age when a priest will enter a process of discernment regarding when and how retirement will be effected. Also dioceses should provide for earlier disability retirement.
3. Retirement committees may be named to help bishops with the process, but bishops retain the right of final decision in these matters.

4. Dioceses are to keep lists of senior priests noting the kinds of ministry for which they are available so that pastors may easily call upon them.

5. Bishops should develop plans and programs to assist priests in preparing for third age ministry.

6. Bishops should appoint a priest whose duties include assisting senior priests with their third age and being their advocate. Dioceses should provide options for third age ministry.

7. Bishops should strongly promote programs encouraging the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of all priests, including senior priests; and sufficient medical insurance for senior priests is essential.

8. Diocese should provide housing options for third age priests, so that retiring priests may be given choices in regard to retirement housing.

9. Bishops should provide special arrangements for those physically or emotionally in need of care.

10. Adequate support should be guaranteed priests through long-range, financially independent and professionally managed pension funds. Priests should pursue personally responsible stewardship via Social Security, IRA’s and other forms of saving; and they should remember needs of the local church in their estate planning.

11. Bishops should insure that diocesan programs (conferences, retreats, etc.) give specific consideration to the spiritual growth of senior priests.

12. Bishops and priests should be sensitive to the needs and inclusion of senior priests in diocesan life.

13. In providing effective retirement policies and procedures, dioceses should be aware of resources and expertise provided by national organizations with the Church and outside it.

These Norms are addressed in the following provisions:

(1) RETIREMENT AGREEMENT

A legally binding Priests’ Retirement Agreement between the Bishop and the priests of the Diocese that is appended to this policy defines the retirement age, monetary and health care benefits relating to the priest’s retirement.

(2) FUNDING

Priests’ Retirement is funded through:
(a) A Diocesan assessment of each parish and institution under the governance of the Bishop of Spokane that is served by a priest of the Diocese. The assessment varies from place to place according to the calculations of the Fiscal Services Office in light of the income of the parish or institution and the budget of the Priests’ Retirement Program after other revenue sources are taken into account.

(b) Revenue from diocesan priests serving in institutions not immediately governed by the Bishop of Spokane, who wish to accrue retirement benefits in accord with the Retirement Agreement.

(c) Income distributed from endowments or trusts established to fund priests’ retirement. Bequests and grants designated for priests’ retirement will normally be placed in an endowment for this purpose. The Bishop may call for a campaign for the purpose of building this endowment.

(3) TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

It is the responsibility of the Bishop, the Vicar for Priests, the Vicar for Finance or another agent of the Diocese appointed by the Bishop to assist a senior priest who faces difficulties in adjusting to senior status, and to counsel senior priests in times of need.

(4) HOUSING

The retired priest is responsible for his housing and living expenses, with due regard for exceptional circumstances specified in the Retirement Agreement. He may rent, purchase or otherwise obtain living accommodations in the Diocese or elsewhere.

In addition, a retired priest may arrange, as part of his retirement compensation, to exchange ministerial services for room and board at the parish rectory.

The Diocese has occupancy rights to certain units at the Rockwood Lane Retirement Community in Spokane. When available, senior priests are given priority for occupancy. The priest is responsible for the maintenance fee and household expenses.

(5) MINISTRY IN RETIREMENT

To the extent of his desire and ability, retired priests are encouraged to provide priestly service to the Diocese. A senior priest is at liberty to make a long-term arrangement with a particular parish; to provide ministry as a substitute on an ad hoc basis; to accept requests for weddings and funerals with the consent of the proper pastor; to direct retreats and other spiritual exercises; and to provide other ministry that may be requested. It is presumed that the priest will receive compensation for his service unless he has specified otherwise.

(6) PARTICIPATION IN THE PRESbyterate

Senior priests are always welcome at organized events for the life and ministry of priests. These include retreats, study days, deanery meetings and other professional or social gatherings of the Presbyterate. There is a seat on the Presbyteral Council for a senior priest. Their service may be requested on other Boards, Councils or Committees. The Diocese will fund the expense of the annual priests’ retreat and priests’ study days or assemblies for the retired priests who participate.

Policy 2.02.04
Priests’ Retirement Policy (2021-09-09)
(7) PRIESTS’ RETIREMENT COMMITTEE
This Committee (cf. Priests’ Retirement Agreement, Article IX) assists the Bishop in implementation of this Policy and the Priests’ Retirement Agreement. (Cf. policy 2.-2.04a)

(8) ESTATE PLANNING
As is the case for every priest, senior priests are to be mindful of the financial needs of the Church and the poor. Priests’ retirement it is not a previously funded program; it is not a program to which the priest as an employee has monetarily contributed. Priests should be particularly attentive to the needs of our retired priests in their estate planning. They may consult the Executive Director of the Catholic Foundation for assistance.

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS ACCORDING TO THE PRIESTS’ RETIREMENT AGREEMENT
(This summary has no official status, but is provided as an overview of the Retirement Agreement’s basic provisions. The Retirement Agreement must be consulted for complete details.)

I. Retirement under normal circumstances: Normal circumstances include the following:
   A. A priest is incardinated in the Diocese of Spokane
   B. He has served in the Diocese for at least 30 years
   C. He has reached the “full retirement age” as defined by the Social Security Administration.

If these conditions are fulfilled, the following options are available to the priest:

1. He may retire and will receive 100% of the defined monthly benefit.

2. The priest may remain in a full-time assignment, receive regular compensation but not receive the retirement benefit. In this instance he will accrue additional retirement benefit at the rate 3.3% of the defined benefit for each year of service after his full retirement age.

II. Retirement benefits for priests who have served less than 30 years:

1. At his full retirement age, the priest may retire and receive the benefit he has accrued (3.3% of the defined benefit for each year of service).

2. The priest may continue in full time ministry, not draw retirement benefits and continue to accrue benefit.

3. The priest may retire at age 70 and will receive 100% of the defined benefit unless other arrangements were made with the Bishop at the time of ordination/incardination in the Diocese of Spokane.

III. Retirement benefits for those who leave priestly ministry:
1. There is no entitlement to a retirement benefit until after three years in ministry. A priest is fully vested after seven years in ministry. The retirement payment to a priest who leaves ministry or transfers to another diocese is negotiated on a case-by-case basis.