



Diocese of Cheyenne

Office of the Bishop

DECREE

The Diocese of Cheyenne is greatly blessed with those men who have been newly ordained to the priesthood. These priests dedicate themselves to the spiritual and temporal good of the faithful entrusted to them. They are coworkers in the vineyard with their Bishop, who has fraternal concern for assisting them in their life and ministry.

I, the Most Reverend Steven R. Biegler, am aware that the first priestly assignment is an important one. Transition from seminary to a full-time, permanent assignment is not without its challenges. I therefore, issue the **Directory** "*Accompaniment Program for Newly Ordained Priests.*"

This program is to ease the transition of the newly ordained, by providing a **Directory** with practical guidelines for interaction between the newly ordained and his spiritual director, pastor, and mentor. My hope is that the new **Directory** will offer a framework for fruitful interaction between the newly ordained and those who accompany him during his first years of priestly life.

This **Directory** "*Accompaniment Program for the Newly Ordained,*" becomes effective on February 22, 2020, the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle.

Given in Cheyenne, Wyoming, on February 22, 2020, the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle.

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Bishop of Cheyenne

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Chancellor

DIRECTORY

Accompaniment Program for Newly Ordained Priests

IMPLEMENTATION

The team to accompany a new priest during his first years of priesthood will consist of his pastor, a mentor priest, and a spiritual director. The bishop will assign the mentor after consulting with the new priest and potential mentor, regarding a workable rapport between the two priests. The bishop will refer the pastor, mentor, and new priest to these guidelines.

The new priest and pastor will begin working on the Accompaniment Program when the new priest begins his assignment. The new priest will initiate meeting times with his mentor, and they will arrange to meet within the first month after the mentor has been assigned.

The new priest will select a spiritual director within the first six months of his assignment. He will inform the bishop in writing that he has a spiritual director and has shared with the director the pertinent guidelines from the Accompaniment Program.

At the end of his first year of ordination, the new priest will write the bishop a letter, indicating the number of times he has met with his spiritual director for the purposes of spiritual direction.

INTRODUCTION

This four-year program is designed to help the newly ordained become integrated into priestly ministry in the Diocese of Cheyenne. This process includes the pastor of the parish to which the newly ordained is assigned, a mentor, and a spiritual director. Each has a distinct but interrelated role in the integration process.

Each newly ordained priest should have a priest **Spiritual Director** with whom he meets monthly if possible. The spiritual director must cultivate a relationship of trust and confidentiality with the new priest. The spiritual director offers feedback and guidance regarding the new priest's spiritual life. Their conversations are privileged. The spiritual director is a neutral party in this process and is a listener and guide with no authority except that which grows out of the ongoing relationship with the new priest. Suggestions for what might be included in this relationship are outlined in **Spiritual Growth**.

The **Pastor's** main responsibility is to introduce the new priest to the various aspects of pastoral ministry. He will instruct the new priest on the pastoral practice of the parish and the diocese in general. The pastor has a role in helping a new priest develop the skills necessary for collaborative ministry, staff interaction, and pastoral planning within the context of parish life. The pastor's responsibilities to the new priest are outlined in **Professional Growth**.

The **Mentor's** responsibilities are two-fold. In terms of personal growth, the mentor will build a relationship of trust and mutual respect with the new priest. He will help the new priest reflect upon his daily ministerial experiences. The mentor will offer suggestions and techniques or projects to help develop a habit of reflection. In addition, the mentor will work with the new

priest to help him integrate into the Presbyteral life of the diocese. The mentor's responsibilities to the new priest are outlined in **Personal Growth**.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The new priest is to select a priest as a spiritual director and meet with him monthly if possible or at least every six weeks. During the course of these meetings, reflections with the new priest will include but are not limited to the following:

- His developing relationship with the Lord as it relates to:
 - The necessity of daily prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours,
 - The centrality of the Word of God, and
 - Experiences of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation;
- Suggestions of books and other materials for the spiritual life;
- Practices of self-discipline or self-denial and his embrace of the circumstances of his life;
- Ministerial experiences of how and where the Lord is present and how these experiences can be integrated into an understanding and acceptance of the Lord's direction for the new priest;
- Interaction with the other priests as it relates to:
 - A support group,
 - Retreats and other clergy gatherings, and
 - The relationship with his mentor;
- Celibacy as it relates to:
 - The integration of the new priest's sexuality into the context of celibate living and the rationale for celibacy;
- Supportive resources for celibate living:
 - Priestly fraternity,
 - Support group, and
 - Family and Friends;
- The relationship to his bishop and Church authority, in general, and appreciation of the shared responsibility of episcopal ministry for the sake of the unity and mission of the Church;
- His lifestyle as it relates to:
 - Showing his gratitude and generosity,
 - His responsible use of material resources through tithing (10%) and financial planning, and
 - The simplicity of his lifestyle and avoidance of encumbrances.

It is recommended that the spiritual director be attentive to and help the new priest with feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and being overwhelmed. Likewise, the newly ordained should be challenged to avoid a false sense of his ability and an inflexible or legalistic approach to ministry, as well as overreacting to ministerial experiences.

The spiritual director should also help the new priest develop an awareness of the grace of God at work in his life as it relates to:

- The wonder of the newness of ministry,
- The experience of being vulnerable, and
- The experience of parish and Presbyteral life.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Review the universal, diocesan, and parish Decrees, Directories, Statutes, and Instructions:

- Directory Concerning Personnel Issues of Presbyters
- Diocesan Statutes for Parish Pastoral Councils
- Diocesan Statutes for Parish Finance Councils
- Other Administrative Handbook Decrees, Directories, and Instructions

Sacramental Preparation – The pastor will make sure the newly ordained has completed each of the following tasks for the preparation of proper celebration of the sacraments of the Church. Observe and review ministerial experiences including, but not limited to:

- Two marriage preparation cases;
- Two baptismal preparation experiences;
- Two annulment cases, including at least one formal case;
- Practical discussions on anointing of the sick and ministry to the dying; and
- Discussions on procedures for release from censures reserved to higher authority.

Pastoral Counseling – The pastor will make sure the new priest has completed each of the following tasks in the area of pastoral counseling and be available to offer guidance as needed:

- Contact Catholic Charities to gain understanding of its operation and the assistance it can provide.
- Become familiar with civic and private agencies and persons who may be of assistance to the newly ordained as he is called to do pastoral counseling.
- Become aware of civil reporting requirements (e.g., any suspicion of neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult must be reported to the Department of Family Services).

Liturgy and Devotional Prayer Life – The pastor will make sure the new priest has completed each of the following tasks for the celebration of sacraments and devotions, including daily and weekend Eucharist, Baptism, Marriage, Funeral, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, and Stations of the Cross:

- Read and become familiar with parish and diocesan instructions related to each sacrament and devotional practice, while being attentive to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and Praenotanda for the sacraments and devotions.
- Plan, organize, and celebrate sacramental and devotional services in collaboration with parish personnel and/or committees, as well as with other persons outside the parish who are involved in the celebration of sacraments. This will include but is not limited to:
 - Communal and individual celebrations of the sacraments,

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- Recruitment and training of various lay liturgical ministers,
- Music selection,
- Art and Environment preparation,
- Meeting with the bride and groom for marriage preparation and conducting rehearsals,
- Meeting with the family of the deceased to plan funerals,
- Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, and
- Stations of the Cross.
- Assist other parishes when asked to participate in the celebration of the sacraments.

The pastor will observe the newly ordained in planning and celebrating the sacraments listed below. He will help him evaluate the experience, offer support, encouragement, and guidance as needed, and he will make suggestions to improve the new priest's leadership style.

- Several weekend and daily Eucharistic celebrations
- Two Baptisms, one in the context of a Mass and one outside the Mass
- Two Marriages, one in the context of a Mass and one outside the Mass
- Two funerals celebrated in the parish church and one in a funeral home
- Communal celebration of the Rite of Penance
- Communal celebration of the Anointing of the Sick

The pastor will discuss with the newly ordained the devotions celebrated in the parish so that he is aware of and respectful toward the local culture, which may differ (e.g., Native American, Hispanic, Anglo, Vietnamese, etc.). After the new priest has presided for devotions, the pastor will offer constructive feedback. For example:

- Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction service
- Stations of the Cross
- Blessing of Homes
- Las Mañanitas
- Divine Mercy
- Blessing of fields/seeds at planting time, etc.

Religious Education Program – The pastor will make sure the new priest has completed each of the following tasks for the parish faith formation programs, youth ministry, adult formation, First Reconciliation and First Communion preparation, Confirmation preparation, and RCIA:

- Meet with diocesan and parish personnel involved in religious education/formation and become familiar with the offices and formation programs.
- Review and become familiar with the various text books used and the criteria used to select a text for each area.
- Participate in recruiting and forming catechists and facilitators in each area.
- Participate in the classroom or formation setting, including but not limited to the following:
 - Visit religious education classes regularly;
 - Conduct classes on the elementary, middle school, and high school levels;
 - Conduct parent awareness sessions for sacramental preparation;

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- Become familiar with and participate in the First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation programs;
- Participate regularly in youth activities, both middle school and high school youth activities;
- Prepare and conduct RCIA formation sessions; and
- Participate in the celebration for First Reconciliation, First Communion, Confirmation, and the RCIA rituals.

Catholic School System: In those cases where a parish has a relationship with a school:

- The pastor will make sure the new priest is familiar with the operation of the Catholic school and its relationship to his parish.
- If the new priest is assigned to a specific ministry at the school, then the decision will be made after dialogue with the bishop, the pastor, school administration, and the new priest.

Parish Administration

Building and Grounds Maintenance: Through meeting with the maintenance personnel of the parish and ongoing discussion with the pastor, the new priest will become familiar with the facility and the responsibilities and duties of maintaining a parish complex. The new priest will participate in an annual inspection as required by the insurance company.

Personnel Management: The pastor will make job descriptions, personnel policies, and procedures for employees available to the new priest and review these documents with him.

Finance and Database Record Keeping: The new priest will attend a seminar held by the diocese to understand the basic bookkeeping and database record-keeping for parishes in the diocese and work with necessary personnel to further understand the bookkeeping and database record-keeping in the parish. This will include but not be limited to:

- Parish financial reports that are submitted to the diocese;
- Diocesan policy regarding salary, Mass offerings, other offerings on the occasion of sacraments or sacramentals, and other financial benefits; and
- Payroll issues and reporting requirements.

The new priest will become familiar with and participate in the diocesan fundraising campaigns.

The new priest will learn how to keep sacramental records:

- Record all sacraments received in the parish.
- Send sacramental notifications to other parishes and process those notices received from other parishes.

The new priest will become familiar with the Safe Environment policy of the diocese for the protection of children, young adults, and vulnerable adults.

Parish Councils, Committees, and Organizations

- The new priest will read and become familiar with the corporate documents of the parish, guiding documents for the Pastoral Council, Finance Council, Liturgy Committee, or other foundational documents for parish groups that he and the pastor deem necessary.
- The new priest will participate on a regular basis in the committee and organization life of the parish, especially with the Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and Liturgy Committee.

Church Building and Renovation

- The new priest will be required to read the USCCB document *Built of Living Stones* and the Diocesan Building Regulations.

Other Diocesan Issues

- The diocese will provide a two-day orientation session every August at the Chancery Office. These gatherings will alternate between the following two groups: newly ordained and new pastors with recently received extern priests.
- Within two years of ordination, the new priest will meet with directors of diocesan offices for a two-day gathering in Cheyenne to become familiar with those offices and how they interface with parish life. These include but are not limited to:
 - Chancellor
 - Safe Environment
 - Communications
 - Finance
 - Human Resources
 - Tribunal
 - Vocations
 - Pastoral Ministries
 - Legislative Liaison
 - Building Commission
- The pastor will help the new priest become familiarized with independent Catholic entities such as:
 - Wyoming Catholic Ministries Foundation
 - St. Joseph's Children's Home
 - Catholic Charities
 - Council of Catholic Women
 - Knights of Columbus, etc.
- The new priest will attend:
 - The two annual Institutes
 - Annual retreat
 - Day of Reflection
 - Chrism Mass

- Deanery gatherings:

The pastor will encourage and facilitate the building of relationships between the new priest and the ecumenical and civic community (e.g., ministerial association and civic events).

The pastor will review these formation experiences with the new priest and offer support encouragement, and suggestions for growth in these areas.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Reflections on the new priest's everyday life: The new priest and his mentor will meet every six to eight weeks. In general, their conversations are privileged and are not to be shared with anyone else. This atmosphere will allow for forthright, honest, and open dialogue.

If a situation arises, which causes the mentor to have serious concern for the new priest's health, happiness, or well-being, the mentor should encourage the new priest to speak directly with the bishop. If the new priest is unwilling to do so, the mentor should inform the new priest that he will speak to the bishop about the serious matter.

During the course of their meetings, reflections will include but not be limited to the following topics regarding the new priest:

Professional growth experience:

- Assess ministerial experiences;
- Offer support, encouragement, and assistance; and
- Explore options and suggest alternative approaches, different ways of approaching ministerial situations, and ways to resolve problems and conflicts.

Time management as it relates to:

- Daily schedule;
- Prayer time;
- Continuing education plan;
- Use of days off, personal care, and vacation plans; and
- Appropriateness of declining or accepting invitations and opportunities.

Relationships with his pastor, other priests, staff, volunteers, and parishioners as these relate to:

- Diocesan policies regarding appropriate balance between professional relationships, boundaries and friendships, and
- Conflict resolution and problem solving.

Personal life as it relates to:

- His physical well-being;
- The appropriate use of personal financial resources guided by tithing (10%);
- Recommended accountant for taxes; and financial planner for retirement;
- Appropriate attire for ministerial purposes and other situations; and
- Family issues and how they impact his ministry.

Integration into the Presbyteral life of the diocese: The mentor will assist the new priest in becoming integrated into the Presbyteral life of the diocese by:

- Encouraging and, if requested, assisting the new priest in participating in a support group;
- Encouraging him to participate in diocesan events and social gatherings with the priests;
- Helping the new priest understand the importance of the annual retreat, Institutes, Chrism Mass Day, and other opportunities for interaction and mutual support; and
- Assisting with conflict resolution and problem solving as it relates to this integration even to the point of determining a course of action and the outcomes desired.