

## **Appendix A. Code of Ethical Standards**

### **1. Preamble**

Leadership in the church founded by Jesus Christ is always a work of service to others, as the Savior clearly taught: “anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest, and whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all.” Matthew, 20: 26-27.

As ministerial leaders in the Catholic Church, those who serve within our parishes and institutions, whether employees or volunteers, must always seek to uphold Christian values and conduct. In addition to following the Gospel and its mandates, it is expected that they will act properly at all times in the light of contemporary society and its needs. This Code of Ethical Standards does not presume to provide the answers to all the ethical questions facing Church leaders. What it does establish is a set of general ethical standards for their lives and ministry. These standards will help to delineate boundaries by which ethical questions can be evaluated and actions judged.

This Code will aid in the education of new church leaders and it will demand accountability from Church leaders who fail to live within the ethical standards of the Code. (This Code is not intended to supersede canon or civil law or Diocesan Directives.)

Responsibility for adherence to this Code of Ethical Standards rests with the Church leaders themselves. It is anticipated, however, that disregard of this Code by Church leaders will be dealt with by the appropriate employing/appointing organization’s representative (e.g., the pastor, administrator, program director, religious superior, the Bishop). Remedial action may take various forms from counseling to removal from ministry.

The conduct of Church leaders, both public and private, has the potential to inspire and motivate people, or scandalize and weaken their faith. These leaders must be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They also know that God’s goodness and grace support them in their ministry.

### **2. General Principles**

Five key principles underlie the ethical stance of this Code. The ethical Church leader is one who embraces the principles of ecclesiastical commitment, integrity, respect for others, well-being and competence.

#### **A. Ecclesiastical Commitment**

1) Church leaders embrace the teachings of Jesus and work to promote the Gospel. They shall have an intimate knowledge of the scriptures and be able to relate them to day-to-day situations encountered in the parish, community or diocese.

2) **Church leaders must show a commitment not only to the parish or school family, but also to the larger diocesan and neighborhood community in which the parish is located. They must show a special care and concern for the needs of the poor and the oppressed of society. Church leaders shall support diocesan leadership and programs. They shall address local community social concerns by active reflection on Catholic social teachings and involvement in works of charity. Church leaders shall share the spirit of ecumenism in their interactions with other community religious groups.**

### **B. Integrity**

Church leaders are expected to be persons of integrity and must conduct themselves in an honest and open manner, free from deception or corruption. They shall handle the responsibilities of their office in a conscientious fashion. Leaders in a Church that sets a high moral standard for its members have a responsibility to lead by example. It is realized that self knowledge is hard won and takes hard work on behalf of the Church leader. This integrity requires honest stewardship of money and other resources as outlined in diocesan financial policies.

### **C. Respect for Others**

1) Church leaders respect each individual as a creation of God without regard to economic status or degree of participation in parish life. Church leaders establish relationships of trust with those whom they work. Church leaders uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their professional roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior, and seek to manage conflicts of interest that could lead to exploitation or harm. Church leaders shall respect the rights, dignity and worth of each person, especially members of the Church community who are most vulnerable.

2) Church leaders strive to be sensitive to cultural differences among people and appreciate the opportunities that diversity brings. Church leaders take the time to understand the collective journeys of their congregations and understand the role of history in Church development.

3) Church leaders are aware that issues of aging, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, physical and mental disabilities, and language all affect how the message of the Gospel is received and interpreted. They are especially protective of children and young people and supportive of a safe environment for them.

**D. Well-Being.** Church leaders are expected to attend to their own human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral well-being.

#### 1) Human Well-Being.

a) Church leaders are encouraged to be attuned to their physical, mental, and emotional health. They must be aware of warning signs in their behavior and moods that can indicate conditions that can be detrimental to their health. Inappropriate use of alcohol or misuse of

prescription drugs are examples. Church leaders must immediately seek help when they identify warning signs in their professional or personal lives.

b) Church leaders have a responsibility to be supportive of one another, in terms of both affirmation and holding one another accountable for their physical and emotional well-being. Intervention in the maladaptive behavior of Church ministers is an act of charity. Church leaders must determine healthy limits in their work environment and live within these limits as much as possible.

c) They need to make use of allotted time for vacation and days away from the work environment. Church leaders should participate socially with their communities in the celebration of feasts and other observances.

d) Caregivers also need care. They cannot be of help to others if they are in need of help themselves. Church leaders need support, encouragement, nurturing, time away from the work environment, and positive peer interactions. Anchors for these needs can be found in prayer, spiritual direction, counseling/therapy (as needed), relaxation, and time spent in genuine friendship.

2) Spiritual Well-Being. Church leaders have a duty to stay attuned to their own spiritual health. They must maintain and nurture an ongoing prayer life. They need to address their own spiritual needs in order to remain focused in the faith. Regularly meeting with a spiritual director is highly recommended. Church leaders need to take advantage of time provided for retreats and days of reflection.

3) Intellectual Well-Being. Church leaders have a responsibility to attend to their ongoing intellectual development. They should participate in seminars and workshops in areas that are relevant to their current ministry and should stay current through reading both religious and secular sources. Church leaders have a responsibility to participate in a regular process of evaluation of their effectiveness in ministry. Diocesan instruments and procedures should be used where these exist. Church leaders need to make use of the time and funding provided for ongoing formation.

4) Pastoral Well-Being. Church leaders are responsible for providing for and nurturing the life of the diocesan, institutional or parish community. They have a responsibility to know and respect the people entrusted to them for ministry. As appropriate to their ministry, clerics must celebrate the sacraments with decorum, in fidelity to the official rites of the Roman Catholic Church. Church leaders must know and respect the policies and procedures of the diocese and nurture in themselves the pastoral heart necessary to lead their people in word, worship and service.

## **E. Competence**

Church leaders shall maintain high levels of professional competence in their particular ministry. Training, education and experience all contribute to make them competent and

credible in their areas of expertise. Church leaders shall not attempt to provide services in those areas in which they lack competence; competence also means knowing one's limitations.