



ARCHDIOCESE
OF PORTLAND
IN OREGON

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL

Promulgated by
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Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon

Table of Content

I. Introduction	3
A. Preamble	3
B. Theological Principles for a Code of Conduct	3
1. Modeled on Jesus Christ	3
2. A Communion for Mission	4
3. Ministry in the Church	4
II. Ethical Standards in Ministry	4
A. Conduct in Offering Pastoral Care	4
B. Conduct in offering Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction	5
C. Sexual Conduct	6
D. Right Relationships in Ministry	7
E. Stewardship	8
F. Conflict of Interest	8
G. Good Reputation	8
H. Confidentiality	9
I. Records and Information	9
1. Sacramental Records	10
2. Financial Records	10
3. Other Records	10
III. Special Concerns for Ministry with Children and Youth	10
IV. Ethical Standards Related to Ordained Ministers	11
A. Exercising Leadership	11
B. Right Relationships	12
C. Teaching and Preaching	12
Formal Agreement Statement	13

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL

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I. Introduction

A. Preamble

This *Code of Conduct* (“*Code*”) is intended for all church personnel in the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon—clergy, staff, and volunteers—who work in parishes, schools, cemeteries, or other parochial or archdiocesan agencies and programs. It presents guidelines for behavior that reflect Christian moral values and standard ethical principles.

Pastoral ministry necessarily involves interaction with people. The purpose of this *Code* is to make sure that such interactions are always appropriate, that proper boundaries are observed, and that the dignity of each person is respected. While the guidelines in the *Code* are not exhaustive, they nonetheless provide a clear standard of behavior that can set the tone for ministry and help ensure right relationships with all people.

As church personnel—clergy, staff, and volunteers—our public and private conduct can inspire others and motivate them to good works. On the other hand, our conduct can also scandalize the people we serve and undermine their faith. Therefore, all church personnel have an obligation to monitor their behavior and to make sure that it reflects the highest standards of conduct.

It is expected, then, that all church personnel will read this *Code* and follow its directives. We owe such observance to our people. Those who disregard the *Code* may be subject to corrective action.

This *Code* is intended to supplement other policies and procedures applicable to church personnel, such as the *Employee Handbook for Parish and School Personnel*, the *Clergy Personnel Manual*, the *Archdiocese of Portland Child Abuse Policy*, and other such manuals and handbooks. Church personnel remain subject to and should be familiar with these policies and procedures.

B. Theological Principles for a Code of Conduct

1. Modeled on Jesus Christ

As men and women of faith, our words and actions are modeled on the person of Jesus Christ. In the sacraments of initiation we put on Christ, and we became members of his body, which is the Church. Therefore, we are called to lives of holiness befitting our status as Christians.

Jesus showed a profound respect for persons. Whether dealing with the highest official or the lowliest beggar, Jesus treated all men and women with dignity, love, and respect. Whether “Jew or Greek, slave or free,” Jesus preached an equality of persons in the Kingdom.

Therefore, as church personnel, we follow the example of Jesus Christ, and we show to all men and women the dignity and the respect they deserve as children of God.

2. A Communion for Mission

Men and women are created in the image of God, that is to say, in the image of the Trinity. The Trinity is a communion of persons. Created in this image, men and women not only share a deep communion with one another, but they also share in the mission of the Trinity. This mission is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, who preached the Good News of the Kingdom. The proper response to this Good News is discipleship.

As church personnel, whether ordained or lay, we recognize our call to discipleship. We also recognize that each of us brings to ministry his or her own unique gifts. These gifts, these charisms, are given for the building up of the Church and for the well-being of humanity. They are meant to unite, not divide, the people of God. As St. Paul says, “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). When our gifts work together, the body of Christ is made visible.

Therefore, we affirm the presence of God’s gifts in each other, and we commit ourselves to work collaboratively with our bishop, with our pastors, and with our fellow ministers. In this way, we shall preserve the unity of the Church, speak with a common voice, and bear witness to the love of the Trinity.

3. Ministry in the Church

The Church continues the mission of Jesus, announcing the Kingdom and transforming the world in light of the Gospel. As church personnel, we recognize that we represent the Catholic Church in what we say and do.

Therefore, we are bound to teach faithfully what is given to us by the Church’s Magisterium and to live in a manner that is consistent with the Church’s moral teachings.

II. Ethical Standards in Ministry

A. Conduct in Offering Pastoral Care

Church personnel and ecclesial ministers (those who work in specifically ministerial positions) must be faithful to their individual ministerial roles. The power inherent in ecclesial roles may exert influence over others. Those who hold these roles should be sensitive to that relative power and never use it inappropriately. Sometimes, church personnel will need to explain and even articulate appropriate boundaries to those who seek help from the Church but who may not themselves know what constitutes such a boundary. It is a fundamental principle that the one who has the greater power in a relationship has the greater responsibility to act ethically, morally, and legally.

- Those whose work is primarily pastoral must not step beyond their competence in counseling situations. They should refer those seeking help to qualified professionals when appropriate.
- When beginning a pastoral counseling relationship, the ecclesial minister must inform the counselee of confidentiality and the limits of confidentiality (e.g., if a counselee discloses intent to put self and/or others in imminent danger). In such cases, the ecclesial minister must contact the necessary authorities, with or without consultation and assistance from other professionals, with or without the permission of the counselee.
- Ecclesial ministers, by reason of their relationship to the Church and to the People of God, occupy a position of trust. People often come to them with problems large and small. Ecclesial ministers must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person in every contact.
- In conducting workshops and programs, care should be taken that no individual be subject to trauma or abuse resulting from group interactions. Sessions of this type would also include faith sharing groups, Scripture groups, Confirmation groups, RCIA groups, and so forth.
- When a pre-existing personal or professional relationship exists (e.g., an employee, a professional colleague, or a friend), ecclesial ministers should avoid entering into an ongoing counseling relationship.

B. Conduct in Offering Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction

Ecclesial ministers whose work is primarily spiritual direction or pastoral counseling conform to additional standards in their relationship with those they counsel. These are relationships that are of a longer duration, more formal and more intimate.

- Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should be faithful to the ethical codes particular to their professions.
- Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should avoid unnecessary social contact with counsees during the course of counseling. Physical contact (e.g., hugging, holding) between pastoral counselors and spiritual directors and those they counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided. It is especially important that they never engage in sexual intimacies. This includes forced physical contact and inappropriate sexual comments. In these relationships, sexual intimacy is never consensual.
- Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors should not audiotape or videotape sessions.
- Sessions should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled. Therefore, sessions should be conducted in a professional setting and not in private quarters.

- Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors shall maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled. A simple notation in an appointment book which is kept as a permanent record is a sufficient record.
- Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors must safeguard individual personal information including, but not limited to, all information gathered from counseling sessions, staff discussions, home visitations, parishioner relationships, and marriage preparation discussions. Sharing information with others concerning these types of contacts must always be done prudently and solely for the benefit of the individuals involved, and with their explicit permission, except as required by law.
- When a pastoral counselor's or spiritual director's independent judgment is compromised (e.g., by prior or concurrent personal or professional relationships, when he or she becomes personally involved, or when he or she becomes an advocate for one person against another), the counselor or director must advise the party that s/he can no longer provide counseling and make a referral to other counselors.

C. Sexual Conduct

Our Roman Catholic tradition calls everyone to live a life of faithful chastity that views human sexuality in light of the Gospel. All Catholics are required to be chaste in accord with their state in life. Whether single or married, celibate priest or religious, all are committed to a life of chastity that reflects an understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God.

Proper sexual conduct is expected of all church personnel. Particular caution should be observed when ministering to or working with anyone who is particularly susceptible to manipulation because of age or a physical, emotional, or mental disability.

- Church personnel who have made a commitment to celibacy must bear witness to this charism in all their relationships. Likewise, those who have made a marital commitment must bear witness to this charism in all their relationships. All—whether celibate, married, or single—are expected to live chaste lives.
- Sexualized interactions with co-workers, or with persons who are served in ministry, are never part of the ministerial role. Sexualized interactions include, for example, unnecessary touching, sexual advances or sexual touching, sexual comments or sexual jokes, display of offensive materials (including electronic display or transmission).
- Church personnel must not, for sexual gain or sexual intimacy, or for any other reason, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.
- For the purpose of this policy, the term *sexual intimacy* means sexual contact of any kind (even if consensual) as well as sexually explicit conversations not related to the legitimate duties of church personnel, such as the transmission of the moral teachings of the Church in a catechetical ministry.

- Allegations of sexual misconduct must be taken seriously and, if appropriate, reported to the proper authority in the parish, school, archdiocese, or organization. If the situation involves a minor, the allegations may also need to be reported to civil authorities, following the *Archdiocese of Portland Child Abuse Policy* (<http://www.archdpx.org/abuse-policy-revised/>) and the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children* (<http://www.usccb.org/bishops/charter.pdf>).
- Church personnel should know the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the State of Oregon and follow those mandates.
- The Archdiocesan Office of Child Protection is available for assistance and consultation on all issues of sexual misconduct, including the notification of proper civil authorities.

D. Right Relationships in Ministry

Christian ministry involves the exercise of leadership in various settings, including the parish, the Pastoral Center, a hospital or nursing facility, retreat locations, and various educational venues. In all places, church personnel are to exercise their leadership in an ethical manner. In particular, this means the just treatment of all persons whom they encounter in the daily operation and administration of their programs and services.

The sections below emphasize respect, empowerment, and communication when working with church personnel, including both professionals and volunteers.

- Church personnel shall seek right relationships in their ministry. This means that they will relate to others with respect, sensitivity, and reverence. There is no place within the ministerial role for ethnic or racial slurs or similarly derogatory statements based on other negative stereotypes.
- Meetings are to be conducted with courtesy and openness toward the views of others. Church personnel will cultivate an environment where it is safe for others to speak, exchange ideas, or to offer constructive criticism as needed.
- Church personnel shall work to call forth the gifts of others. They shall also respect the various talents that others bring to the Church. When supervision is appropriate, this shall be done with clear communication and expectations.
- Those in the Church who make personnel and other administrative decisions should do so in agreement with civil and canon law obligations. These decisions should also reflect Gospel values and Catholic social teaching.

Church personnel must be committed to establishing and maintaining an environment for ministry in which the just and ethical treatment of all persons is paramount.

E. Stewardship

Church personnel must exercise responsible stewardship of all financial and material resources within the areas of their ministry.

- Church personnel are to recognize that the resources which support church ministries come largely from the contributions of the Christian faithful. Therefore, resources should be prudently and responsibly utilized, avoiding mismanagement and waste.
- Proper stewardship includes a regular reporting of the parish finances in a manner that is transparent.
- Church personnel are to act within the approved directives of the *Archdiocesan Parish Administration Manual* and the *Employee Handbook for Parishes and School Personnel*.

F. Conflict of Interest

Church personnel must avoid conflicts of interest, since the existence of or even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call into question the person's integrity and harm the organization's reputation.

- Situations which have the *potential* for a conflict of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - ◊ conducting private business with the Church or any of its members; accepting or giving substantial (non token) gifts for services or favors;
 - ◊ employing family members or friends without the approval of competent ecclesiastical authority;
 - ◊ acting with undue partiality toward certain employees or church members, especially in situations involving church business;
 - ◊ violating the confidence of another person for personal gain.
- Church personnel who receive financial compensation for their ministerial service are not to receive dual compensation for work which falls ordinarily under the scope of their pastoral assignment or ministry.
- Church personnel should disclose to proper authority all relevant factors that might cause a potential conflict of interest.

G. Good Reputation

Church teaching emphasizes the dignity of the human person and the value of each person's reputation.

Church personnel are, therefore, not to damage unlawfully the good reputation of another nor are they to violate the privacy of another person.

H. Confidentiality

Persons who come in contact with church personnel are entering a relationship marked by respect, trust, and confidentiality. This confidentiality is absolute and inviolable in the confessional. Therefore, under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure, whether direct or indirect, of information received in the absolute confidentiality of sacramental confession.

Beyond the absolute confidentiality of confession, the following obligations are to be observed:

- Information disclosed during the course of counseling, advising, spiritual direction, or any other ministerial contact must be held in strictest confidence.
- Church personnel are required to safeguard personal information and the confidentiality of any notes, files, or computer records pertaining to ministerial contacts with individuals.
- Knowledge that arises from ministerial contact may be used in teaching, writing, preaching, or other public presentations only when effective measures have been taken to safeguard individual identity and confidentiality.
- In certain circumstances, breaking confidentiality is permissible. For example, church personnel may, and sometimes must, communicate with the appropriate civil and church authorities and/or with parents and legal guardians when an individual poses clear and imminent danger to self or to others, or in a case of child abuse.
- If consultation with qualified professionals becomes necessary, care should be taken to protect the identity of individuals and limit the content of the information to be shared. Church personnel must consider what information needs to be shared, with whom, and the rationale for disclosure.
- In legal proceedings in which the church worker is a defendant and the allegations stem from a professional contact (other than sacramental confession), the disclosure of confidential information gained in that contact may be permitted as needed for legal defense. Legal advice should be sought in this situation.

I. Records and Information

Appropriate confidentiality shall be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of records and information.

Church personnel are to safeguard individual personal information including, but not limited to, all information gathered from counseling sessions, staff discussions, home visitations, parishioner relationships, and marriage preparation discussions. Sharing information with others concerning these types of contacts must always be done prudently, solely for the benefit of the individuals involved, and always with the individuals' specific permission, except as required by law.

1. Sacramental Records

Sacramental records and certificates shall be regarded as confidential by church personnel and the employees and volunteers under their direction. When, for valid Church reporting or parish statistical purposes, and with the approval of the pastor or pastoral administrator and following the guidelines in the *Sacramental Records* manual, information from these records is made public, great care must be taken to preserve the privacy of individuals.

The public may be given access to sacramental records older than 70 years, except for information related to adoption and legitimacy which may never be made public. A trained staff member who is authorized to locate the requested information or supervise the use of such records shall handle requests for more recent records.

2. Financial Records

While the pastor or pastoral administrator is to be accountable to the parish for its financial condition, some parish financial records are confidential documents. When legally required, however, these records may need to be made available to qualified church or civil authorities. The Department of Financial Services at the Pastoral Center should be contacted concerning release of confidential financial information.

The records of individual contributions by church members are to be considered confidential. Summarized tabulations of contributions can be used for informational and budgetary use, so long as the identity of individual contributors is not made public. If an individual wishes to have an in-kind or financial contribution made public, a record of that person's permission should be documented and retained.

3. Other Records

Other confidential records (e.g., educational records, personnel files, medical and health insurance information) shall be maintained, used, disclosed and disposed of in accordance with archdiocesan policies and applicable civil law.

III. Special Concerns for Ministry with Children and Youth

Those who assist parents in the Christian formation of their children express the concern and gifts of the entire faith community. Parents and those involved in the lives and training of children and youth share a formative and powerful relationship. Church personnel are honored by this opportunity and are committed to respecting the confidence parents place in them.

Because of the heightened vulnerability of these young people and the church personnel who serve them, special consideration is demanded in this work.

- Church personnel support the rights and roles of parents while ministering to the needs and concerns of their dependent children.
- All church personnel who are engaged in ministry with children and youth must follow archdiocesan policy by having background checks and regular safe environment training in abuse awareness, prevention, and reporting procedures.
- All ministry with children and youth must be sanctioned by the proper authorities, conducted within a team approach, and comply with all archdiocesan and parish policies relating to safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergencies.
- Corporal punishment or demeaning language can never be used in disciplining or organizing children and youth.
- Physical contact (hugging, etc.) with children and youth can be easily misconstrued and should therefore occur only when it is completely non-sexual and other adults are present.
- Overnight accommodations should never provide a shared, private sleeping room for a single youth and single adult either on or off church property, unless it involves a parent or legal guardian and a child.
- Any use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana (in any form) or illicit drugs (or being under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or drugs) is absolutely forbidden while ministering with children and youth.
- Church personnel must avoid developing inappropriate relationships with minors, staff, or volunteers.
- Observation of serious misconduct, including sexual misconduct, regardless of the circumstances, should be taken seriously and should be reported to the pastor or other supervisor, and, when appropriate, civil authorities.

IV. Ethical Standards Related to Ordained Ministers

While all these ethical standards for ministry apply to ordained ministers as well as lay ecclesial ministers, priests and deacons enter into a sacramental relationship with the faithful through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. In Catholic tradition this affords the ordained a position of reverence and influence in the lives of the people they serve. It therefore calls the ordained to pay special attention to the ethical exercise of this power and influence.

A. Exercising Leadership

- Ordained ministers serve by bringing forth, accepting, and using the gifts and talents of the laity, both professionals and volunteers.
- Ordained ministers must use extreme caution so as to never cause or exploit divisiveness or alienation in the church community.

- Similarly, the ordained minister must never use his ministerial position to solicit personal favors or to achieve financial gain.
- Ordained ministers have an ethical responsibility to respond to directives of legitimate authority in matters of faith, pastoral care, administration, and personal behavior.

B. Right Relationships

- In personal and professional relationships, a priest or deacon should never use the position he has to foster a relationship of psychological or emotional dependency, nor should he engage in sexual intimacy of any kind outside of marriage.
- The ordained minister should not foster any relationship with the appearance of impropriety to reasonable persons and should be attentive to avoiding scandal.
- Personal and professional contact with minors should take place in a visible area or in situations that are public. Under no circumstances should minors be allowed in living quarters.

C. Teaching and Preaching

- It is unethical for a member of the clergy to represent his personal opinion as the official teaching of the Church.
- The ordained minister should not use his position to publicly deny dignity and respect to any person or group of persons because of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious faith, lifestyle, physical or mental condition, or past experience.
- Similarly, the ordained minister should not use his position to refuse the reasonable rights of persons to the sacraments or the pastoral care of the Church.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL
Formal Agreement Statement

Location Name: _____ City: _____

Clergy/Employee/Volunteer's Name _____

I formally acknowledge that I have read and agree to comply with the ***Archdiocese of Portland Code of Conduct for Church Personnel***.

Clergy/Employee/Volunteer signature _____

Date _____