

**DEACONS' COMMUNITY**I. Name

- A. This body will be known as the Deacons' Community of the Diocese of Las Cruces.

II. Objectives

The objectives of this body will be:

- A. To encourage dialogue, mutual support, understanding, and collaboration among the deacons, priests, and all people in meeting the needs of the diocese.
- B. To promote the spiritual, ministerial, and cultural enrichment of the deacons and to encourage their ongoing formation.
- C. To create a greater awareness among the deacons of the needs of the diocese.
- D. To raise the consciousness of deacons in regard to social justice and to assist with the implementation of programs in response to needs.
- E. To ensure adequate involvement of deacons in the making of decisions and policies which affect their diaconal life and ministry.

III. Membership

- A. The Deacons' Community will be open to all deacons who live and/or minister in the Diocese of Las Cruces.

IV. Meetings

- A. General meetings will be held twice a year at the annual retreat and the annual continuing education weekends.
- B. It is strongly recommended that regional meetings of the deacons be held monthly.
- C. Wives of deacons are invited to attend all meetings, and their attendance is encouraged.

V. Continuing Formation and Education

- A. All deacons are expected to attend the annual retreat for deacons. If they are unable to attend this retreat, they shall notify the bishop in writing and attend a retreat approved by the chairman of the Deacons' Council. Deacons' wives are encouraged to attend the annual retreat.
- B. All deacons are required to meet regularly with a spiritual director.
- C. All deacons should complete ten (10) hours of continuing education a year. The Deacons' Council schedules an annual continuing education weekend to assist deacons in fulfilling this requirement.

VI. Assignments of Deacons

- A. Deacons may be assigned to parishes, quasi-parishes (missions), diocesan offices, or special ministries.
  - 1. Assignments are recommended to the bishop through the Director of Deacons on receipt of a completed Covenant of Diaconal Services, which requires the concurrence of the deacon, the pastor/director, the deacon's wife (if married), and the Director of Deacons.
  - 2. These assignments become effective with the written approval of the Covenant by the bishop.
  - 3. Each deacon should meet with his pastor/director each year and review the Covenant of Diaconal Services; and every two years the Covenant is formally reviewed and renewed, revised, or canceled with the same concurrence and approval as indicated in subparagraph 1 above.
- B. Those deacons who wish a change in assignment should initiate a request through the Director of Deacons. The Director will take the request to the bishop who may request the recommendations of the Clergy Personnel Board. All reassignments become effective on the written approval of a Covenant of Diaconal Services by the bishop.
- C. A deacon will be assigned to a parish only after consultation with the pastor who will consult with others as he deems appropriate. In those parishes with deacons, special consideration will be given to the assignment of new pastors, administrators, and parish life coordinators.

VII. Reimbursements

- A. The parish will compensate each deacon for his continuing formation and education, program expenses, supplies, and mileage. These items will be provided for in the parish budget.
- B. In the event that a deacon works at a ministry outside his parish assignment, he will have the approval of his pastor.
- C. If a deacon is appointed to an office or ministry overseen by the diocese, the diocese will take the financial responsibility for the ministry.
- D. It may be permissible and proper for a deacon to be paid a salary for full or part-time ministerial services that exceed the requirement to donate 10 hours per week to the Church. Such arrangements are made through the completion of the appropriate section(s) of the Covenant of Diaconal Services.
- E. Deacons are to follow the diocesan policy regarding stole fees located in the diocesan Pastoral Manual.

VIII. Leave of Absence

- A. Leave will be granted by the bishop for a specific period of time. Leaves may be granted for reasons of health, personal problems, family commitments, temporary transfer in occupation, and temporary dislocation from the diocese.

- B. A leave of absence may be granted by the bishop when requested in writing by the deacon. The bishop may consult with the Director of Deacons, the Deacons' Council and the Director of Clergy Personnel.

IX. Inactive Deacons

- A. An inactive deacon is one not functioning in an assigned ministry for at least six months and who has not requested leave of absence nor sought laicization.
- B. Inactive deacons will be contacted by the Director of Deacons to review their reasons for inactivity.
- C. The Director of Deacons may recommend to the bishop that a leave of absence be granted, that a formal termination of the parish assignment and parish agreement be made, or that faculties be temporarily removed.

X. Suspension (Loss of Faculties)

- A. Clerics may also be suspended (Canon 1333). A suspension involves the formal actions by the bishop.

XI. Loss of Clerical State (Laicization)

- A. After it has validly been conferred, sacred ordination never becomes invalid. A cleric, however, can lose the clerical state by laicization or penalty (Canons 290-293).

XII. Reinstatement of Deacons to Ministry

- A. A deacon may seek reinstatement and assignment by writing to the bishop to request a meeting to formalize the process for reentry into diaconal ministry. The bishop may consult with the Director of Deacons, the Deacons' Council and the Director of Clergy Personnel for a specific recommendation.

XIII. Retirement

- A. A deacon who wishes to retire from active ministry may request retirement from the bishop. Issues of faculties and other matters will be addressed at that time. The bishop may consult with the Director of Deacons, the Deacons' Council and the Director of Clergy Personnel for a specific recommendation.

XIV. Grievance Process

- A. In the event that a grievance arises, the deacon will follow the diocesan grievance procedures located in the diocesan Pastoral Manual.

XV. Amendments

- A. Amendments or changes to these guidelines may be proposed in writing by members of the Deacons' Community through the Deacons' Council. The council, after consultation with the membership, then makes a recommendation to the bishop.