

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC

ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA



ONGOING FORMATION OF PRIESTS - SABBATICALS

INTRODUCTION

Priestly formation is a lifelong process requiring that each priest assume responsibility for his own personal and spiritual growth. Furthermore, the Archdiocese and the community to which a priest is assigned will provide opportunities, resources, and time for this development to take place. The need for ongoing formation arises both from the personal needs of the individual priest and from the needs of the community he serves.

The entire Church community has the right to expect ministerial excellence from their spiritual leaders, and the entire Church community participates in supporting the endeavors that lead to this. In a special way, sabbaticals show the commitment of the priest, the Archdiocese, and the community to which the priest is assigned.

POLICY

The Archdiocese will provide the opportunity and funding for sabbaticals for all eligible priests according to the following procedures and criteria.

PROCEDURES

1. Definition

A sabbatical is an official extended period away from current ministry and responsibility for the purpose of ministerial, personal, spiritual, and theological development and enrichment.

The sabbatical is distinguished from:

1. a **vacation** for which the primary purpose is rest, relaxation, and recreation;
2. a **sick leave** for the primary purpose of regaining one's health;
3. **personal leave** for a specific amount of time requested by the priest and approved by the Archbishop to attend to an individual or family need, e.g. sickness of a parent;
4. **advanced studies** which are normally of greater length and are a preparation for a distinct or specialized ministry. Time away from ministries for advanced studies can only be taken with an appointment from the Archbishop.

The ordinary length of a sabbatical is three to six months.

A request for an exception to the length of the sabbatical can be made to the Archbishop when the special needs of the priest or the purpose of the sabbatical requires a program that extends beyond six months.

2. Eligibility

- a) A priest will be eligible for a sabbatical after each seven years of service in the Archdiocese.
- b) Every reasonable effort will be made to provide a sabbatical for eligible priests who apply. However, circumstances may limit the number of priests who can be offered a sabbatical. Ordinarily, no more than two priests would be away from the Archdiocese on sabbatical at any given time.
- c) Preference will be given to priests with seniority. Preference will also be given to priests who are seeking their first sabbatical.
- d) Religious priests are not covered by this Archdiocesan Sabbatical Policy.

3. Funding

- a) The Archdiocese will pay the cost of room, board, and tuition. Funding is provided from the budget of Ongoing Formation of Priests.
- b) The limit of archdiocesan funding for a sabbatical is not to exceed \$15,000.00. Costs in excess are the responsibility of the priest.
- c) Priests are strongly advised to seek assistance for sabbatical funding from foundations that support such programs. The Committee for Ongoing Formation of Priests will be able to offer suggestions in this area.
- d) The parish/ministry will be responsible for paying the salary, car allowance, and benefits of the priest while he is away on sabbatical. The parish/ministry will also be responsible for costs associated with a replacement priest(s). A priest's placement in a parish/ministry with limited resources does not affect his ability to take a sabbatical. If the parish/ministry is unable to pay the salary for the priest and his replacement, other arrangements may be made.
- e) The priest himself will pay the cost of travel to and from the sabbatical and personal expenses.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- a) A priest planning to request a sabbatical must contact the Director of Ongoing Formation of Priests. The Director and the committee shall serve as a resource for planning such programs.
- b) Application for sabbatical is to be made in writing at least six months in advance.
- c) All costs of the sabbatical are to be submitted at the time of application.
- d) The Committee for the Ongoing Formation of Priests will review the proposed program and make a recommendation to the Archbishop. Final approval is given by the Archbishop.

- e) After the sabbatical has been approved, the priest taking the sabbatical should contact the Clergy Personnel Board regarding his replacement.

EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- a) Upon return from a sabbatical, the priest will meet with the Director of Ongoing Formation of Priests to evaluate the program.
- b) The priest will provide a written summary of the program/experience (no longer than two pages in length) for future reference by others considering sabbaticals.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE FOR ONGOING FORMATION OF PRIESTS

The duties of the Committee for Ongoing Formation of Priests are as follows:

- a) keep current with regards to various sabbatical programs
- b) maintain resources and information on various programs to assist those eligible for sabbatical leave;
- c) oversee the administration of the annual sabbatical funds;
- d) assist sabbatical candidates in preparing a sabbatical plan;
- e) contact the priests on sabbatical leave during the course of their program;
- f) meet with priests upon their return to the Archdiocese to evaluate the sabbatical experience;
- g) maintain an archive of sabbatical reviews and evaluations.