



## Policies of the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

### **Policy # 210.2**

#### **Code of Ethical Standards for Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons and Diocesan Officers**

Approved By: Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland

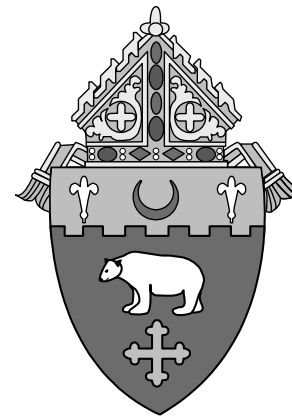
Approved: January 26, 1998

Effective: January 26, 1998

Revised: Most Reverend Robert W. Finn, August 7, 2006

The complete policy follows.

**The Code of  
Ethical Standards  
for Priests,  
Pastoral Administrators,  
Deacons, and  
Diocesan Officers**



**Diocese of  
Kansas City-St. Joseph**

## PREFACE

Dear Leaders in the Diocese of  
Kansas City-St. Joseph,

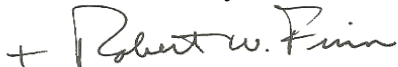
In our service to God's people we are called to represent Jesus Christ in His role as guardian and shepherd. It is an awesome responsibility which we would hardly dare to consider without the help of God's grace.

This *Code of Ethical Standards*, produced some years ago by a representative task force and approved by Bishop Raymond Boland is a helpful and necessary guide to conduct becoming the representatives of Christ's Church. It spells out in concrete terms the philosophy, principles, and specific requirements that must govern our participation in positions of leadership in the Church.

Each of us must study it and incorporate it fully into our work so that the dignity and value of every person may be affirmed and safeguarded, and that our own integrity and reputation, and that of the Catholic Church, may remain above any suspicion or scandal.

It is my hope that these guidelines will be helpful reminders to us all of the greatness of our vocation.

In Christ and Mary,



Most Reverend Robert W. Finn  
Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph

any evidence of previous injuries, abuse, or neglect to the child or his/her siblings; the name, age and address or the person responsible for the injuries, abuse or neglect if known; family composition; the name, address and occupation of the person making the report as well as where he/she can be reached; any other actions taken by the person reporting to document the abuse or neglect or to protect the child.

### **DOES THE MISSOURI STATUTE DEAL WITH CONFIDENTIALITY?**

Yes, the state law requires confidentiality for the source of a report, but there are numerous specific exceptions.

### **ARE THE POLICE INFORMED?**

If the Division of Family Services considers the claimed abuse serious enough to constitute a crime the DFS contacts the police as a matter of practice.

August, 1997

**TO WHOM IS THE REPORT TO BE MADE AND HOW?**

State law requires the report to be made to the Missouri Division of Family Services. The statute contemplates oral reports to a hot line number which currently is **1-800-392-3738**.

Abuse or suspected abuse within a parish should also be reported to the pastor/pastoral administrator at the earliest opportunity.

Diocesan policy requires any accusation or knowledge or suspicion of child abuse or neglect by anyone employed by the Diocese or a parish, including priests and religious, be reported to the Vicar General who is currently Rev. Patrick Rush and to the appropriate diocesan office responsible for the ministry of the alleged abuser. The telephone number is 816-756-1850.

Past abuse allegedly performed by a priest, religious or lay church worker or volunteer on a person in his/her care who at the time was under 18 but who is now 18 or older need not be reported to the Division of Family Services. However, it should be reported to the Vicar General.

**WHAT INFORMATION IS TO BE REPORTED TO THE DIVISION OF FAMILY SERVICES?**

To the extent available, the names and addresses of the child and his/her parents or guardians; the child’s age, sex and race; the nature and extent of the child’s injuries, abuse, or neglect, including

**CODE OF ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR PRIESTS, PASTORAL ADMINISTRATORS, DEACONS AND DIOCESAN OFFICERS**

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**1. PREAMBLE**

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As leaders in the Church founded by Christ, priests, pastoral administrators, and deacons within our parishes and institutions as well as diocesan officers must always seek to uphold Christian values and conduct. In addition to following the Gospel and its mandates, they should 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. These standards will help to delineate parameters by which ethical questions can be evaluated.

This Code is intended to set a standard of professional accountability for church leaders presently ministering in our diocese as well as an aid in the training and education of new diocesan Church leaders. In addition, we hope this code will also serve to stimulate discussion within the Church community in order to build consensus on these and other ethical issues.

This Code is written for priests, pastoral administrators, and deacons, who are serving in the dio-

cese, as well as diocesan officers. These positions will be referred to throughout this Code as Church leaders. These Church leaders are generally either ordained or appointed to their positions by the Bishop and uniquely accountable to him. While not specifically written for other Church ministers, all who work for the Church will benefit from a knowledge of and application of these standards.

This Code will be revised as needed under the direction of the Bishop.

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## 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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### **Integrity**

Church leaders must be persons of integrity and conduct themselves in an honest and open manner, free from deception or corruption. They must handle the responsibilities of their office in a conscientious fashion. As leaders in a Church that sets high moral standards for its members, they have a responsibility to lead by example.

### **Competence**

Church leaders should 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. They must not provide services in those areas in which they lack competence. Competence includes knowing one's limitations.

must notify the principal, program director, supervisor or "person in charge of the facility". This satisfies the reporting obligation of the teacher or other staff person or volunteer. However, that teacher or other staff person or volunteer may also report directly to the Missouri Division of Family Services (DFS).

The principal, program director, supervisor or "person in charge of the facility" must within 24 hours make a report, or cause a report to be made to the Division of Family Services (DFS) of actual or suspected child abuse or neglect reported to him or her by someone under his or her supervision. In addition, if the principal, program director, supervisor or "person in charge of the facility" personally becomes aware of, or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, he or she has an obligation to make or cause a report to be made to DFS.

A priest has an obligation to report actual or suspected child abuse or neglect only if he is acting as a teacher or person with other responsibility for the care of children or if he is in a direct supervisory role for another staff member or volunteer who is acting as a person with responsibility for the care of children on behalf of the parish or other church institution. Obviously the confidentiality of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is respected in all situations.

## *ADDENDUM*

### **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI AND THE DIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY-ST. JOSEPH FOR PRIESTS, PARISH ADMINISTRATORS, PARISH MINISTERS, SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, YOUTH MINISTERS, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DIRECTORS, ALL OTHER CHILD CARE GIVERS AND THEIR STAFFS**

#### **WHAT MUST BE REPORTED?**

Actual or suspected abuse or neglect of a child under 18. Abuse means any physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional abuse other than by accidental means. Discipline including spanking, so long as administered in a reasonable manner, is not abuse. Neglect is generally failure to give necessary and proper care to a child. You must report if you observe actual abuse or neglect; also, you must report if you have “reasonable cause to suspect” that a child has been abused or neglected by any person.

#### **WHO MUST REPORT AND TO WHOM?**

A teacher, child care giver, youth minister or other person with responsibility for the care of children who has direct knowledge of child abuse or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse

Church leaders should be professional in their words, dress and the company they keep. They must conduct their ministry in keeping with the values, policies and practices of the Diocese and the universal Church.

Continuing formation and education are essential for Church leaders, and time must be found for both. Church leaders must also ensure that their own faith life is strong and should seek continued spiritual growth.

#### **Respect for Other’s Rights and Dignity**

Church leaders shall respect the rights, dignity and worth of each member of the Church community without regard to their economic status or degree of participation in parish life.

Church leaders strive to be sensitive to cultural differences among people and appreciate the opportunities that diversity brings. They should take the time to understand the unique history of their particular parish or office.

Church leaders must be 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.

#### **Commitment to the Spirit of the Gospel, to the Church and to the Community**

Church leaders embrace the teachings of Jesus and

work to promote the Gospel. They shall have an intimate knowledge of the gospels and be able to relate them to day-to-day situations encountered in the parish and community.

Church leaders will exhibit a deep commitment to the Church. The loyalty of its leaders to the traditions of yesterday and the challenges of the future should be evident.

Church leaders in parish ministry must show not only a commitment to the parish family, but also to the larger community in which the parish is located. Church leaders should address community social concerns by active reflection on Catholic social teachings. Church leaders should share the spirit of ecumenism in their interactions with other community religious groups.

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### 3. ETHICAL STANDARDS

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#### 1. CONDUCT IN COUNSELING

*Church leaders who conduct counseling for families, individuals, or groups, must respect their rights and advance the welfare of each person.*

1.1 Church leaders must not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and should refer to other professionals.

annual retreat and days of reflection.

10.5 Church leaders should regularly participate in seminars and workshops relevant to current ministries. They should stay current through reading of both religious and secular sources.

10.6 Church leaders should seek opportunities to actively participate in peer support groups.

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### 4. ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Church leaders are personally responsible for adherence to this Code of Ethical Standards. However, the significant disregard of this Code by Church leaders will be dealt with by the appropriate office ( e.g. the Bishop or the Religious Superior). Remedial action may take various forms from advice to required counseling to removal from office.

***their own spiritual, physical, mental and emotional health.***

- 10.1 Church leaders should be sensitive to warning signs in their behavior and moods which indicate conditions that can be detrimental to their mental, physical and spiritual health. Inappropriate use of alcohol or misuse of prescription drugs are examples. Church leaders should immediately seek help when they identify such warning signs in their professional or personal lives.
- 10.2 Church leaders active in ministry or full time Church employment are expected to work a minimum of forty hours per week. Church leaders should make use of allotted time for vacation and days away from the work environment. They should determine healthy limits and boundaries in the work environment and live within those as much as possible.
- 10.3 Church leaders should be supportive of one another, both in terms of affirmation and holding one another accountable for physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.
- 10.4 Church leaders must maintain and nurture an ongoing prayer life. Use of a spiritual director is also highly recommended. Church leaders should take advantage of an

- 1.2 When conducting family counseling or similar group interactions, Church leaders must ensure that no individual is subject to needless trauma or abuse within these interactions.
- 1.3 Church leaders must not disclose information learned from counseling sessions. In beginning what is clearly a counseling relationship, the Church leader must inform the counselee that confidentiality is limited when there is clear and is imminent danger to the client or to others. In such cases, the Church leader will contact the necessary authorities or other professionals.
- 1.4 In cases where the counselee is already in a counseling relationship with a counseling professional, Church leaders should make it clear what role they can provide to the counselee. Generally this should be focused on spiritual assistance.
- 1.5 Church leaders who move to another parish or office while conducting counseling with parishioners should help make appropriate arrangements for continued care.
- 1.6 Church leaders must never engage in sexual intimacies with those whom they counsel.
- 1.7 Physical contact with the counselee can be

misconstrued. Great care should be taken in any physical contact beyond a handshake.

- 1.8 It should always be clear to both the Church leader and the counselee that a counseling relationship is in process. This is best done when the counseling, especially if extended, is conducted in an appropriate setting and at appropriate times. Counseling should not be done in private living quarters or at places or times that would cause ambiguity in the mind of the counselee. It would be wise for the Church leader to keep a log of the times and places of counseling, especially if it involves frequent meetings with the same person.

## **2. CONDUCT WITH YOUTH**

*Church leaders working with youth should use appropriate judgment to insure an open and trustworthy relationship.*

- 2.1 Church leaders must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth and should have a team approach to youth activities.
- 2.2 Physical contact with youth beyond a handshake can often be misconstrued by both youth and older adults, and should only occur under appropriate public circumstances.

illegal actions by a Church leader, diocesan authorities must be notified immediately.

- 9.2 When Church leaders are uncertain whether a particular situation or course of conduct would violate this Code or other ethical principles, they should consult with peers, others knowledgeable about ethical issues, or diocesan authorities in order to determine the proper response.
- 9.3 When Church leaders believe that one of their colleagues may have violated this Code or other ethical principles, they should attempt to resolve the issue, if possible, by bringing it to the attention of the individual. If an apparent ethical violation is inappropriate for direct confrontation, or is not resolved satisfactorily through such confrontation, the Church leader shall notify the diocesan authorities.
- 9.4 The obligation of Church leaders to report misconduct is subject to the obligation of confidentiality. In extreme circumstances, even such confidentiality obligation must yield to the need to report misconduct (cf. #5.7).

## **10. THE WELL BEING OF THE CHURCH LEADER**

*Church leaders have the duty to be attuned to*

est in their handling of Church finances and of Church financial records. They are responsible to see that all who work with Church finances and financial records are competent and above reproach. They must manage the parish finances in cooperation with the parish finance council as required by canon law. They should carefully follow all policies and procedures outlined in the “Parish Financial Administration Handbook”.

- 8.3 Church leaders must avoid even the appearance of any impropriety in their dealings with employees and volunteers. They should carefully follow all policies and procedures outlined in the “Personnel Procedures Handbook”.
- 8.4 The actions of Church leaders must reflect concern for the interests and well-being of individuals affected by those actions. Church leaders must not exploit any relationship to the benefit of themselves.

### 9. REPORTING MISCONDUCT

***Church leaders have a duty to report ethical or professional misconduct on the part of other church leaders.***

- 9.1 In cases where there are clear indications of

- 2.3 Church leaders should refrain from the use of alcohol and tobacco when working with youth.
- 2.4 Providing overnight accommodation in the rectory for parish youth should never be done.
- 2.5 Church leaders should not go on vacations or overnights alone with minors other than their own children. They should not share beds with minors or sleeping quarters with minors other than their own children.

### 3. SEXUAL CONDUCT

***Church leaders do not exploit the trust of the parish community for sexual gain or intimacy.***

- 3.1 Church leaders must not exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 3.2 Church leaders are to witness in all relationships the chastity appropriate to their state in life.
- 3.3 Church leaders should use discretion in developing intimate relationships, and always avoid sexual relationships with employees, parishioners, counselees and minors.
- 3.4 Any allegations of sexual misconduct must be taken seriously and reported to the Vicar

General of the Diocese. Diocesan procedures as outlined in “The Policy Regarding Sexual Misconduct” will be followed to insure the rights of all involved.

- 3.5 Church leaders must be knowledgeable of the State of Missouri Child Abuse Regulations and must follow the proper reporting requirements as outlined in “Child Abuse Reporting Requirements of the State of Missouri and the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph” (see appendix).

#### 4. HARASSMENT

***Church leaders must not engage in physical, psychological or verbal harassment of employees, volunteers, or parishioners and should not tolerate such harassment by other church employees or volunteers.***

- 4.1 Church leaders are committed to providing a professional work environment for their employees which is totally free from such harassment. This commitment continues the Diocesan policy of fair and equal employment to every person regardless of race, national origin, gender, age, disability or handicap. Church leaders should provide a work environment that is free from intimidations and harassment based on any of these factors.

employs or engages in transactions with his or her friends or relatives, acts with partiality toward employees or church members, or violates a confidence of another for personal gain.

- 7.2 Disclosure of all relevant factors can in some circumstances lessen the potential for a conflict of interest.
- 7.3 Conflicts of interest may also arise in a counseling context, where a Church leader’s independent judgment is impaired by prior dealings, where he or she becomes personally involved, or where he or she becomes an advocate for one (person) against another. In these circumstances, the Church leader should advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide counseling and refer them to other counselors.

#### 8. ADMINISTRATION

***Church leaders exercise due financial diligence and honesty as well as just treatment of employees and volunteers in accord with the requirements of both civil and Church law.***

- 8.1 Church leaders do not use their positions to exercise unreasonable power and authority.
- 8.2 Church leaders must be meticulously hon-

- 6.3 Parish financial information is to be made available to the Parish Finance Council and in summary form to the Parish on a regular basis. Individual payroll and check information is to be treated sensitively.
- 6.4 The records of individual contributions to the parish shall be regarded as private and therefore shall be used only as necessary.
- 6.5 Parish financial records and the records of individual contributions are to be otherwise held as confidential unless review is required by an appropriate governmental agency or office. The Diocesan Finance Officer should be contacted regarding such release of all financial records.

## 7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

*Church leaders should avoid putting themselves in a position that might present a conflict of interest, since the existence, or even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call into question one's integrity and professional conduct.*

- 7.1 The potential for a conflict of interest exists in many circumstances. Examples include where the Church leader has private business or other dealings with the Church or any of its members, accepts substantial (non-token) gifts for services or favors,

- 4.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical or verbal behavior which can include, but is not limited to:
  - physical or mental abuse;
  - racial insults
  - derogatory ethnic slurs;
  - sexual advances or unwelcome touching;
  - sexual comments or sexual jokes;
  - request for sexual favors used as a condition of employment or affecting any personnel decision such as hiring, promotion, or compensation.
  - display of obscene materials.
- 4.3 Harassment can occur as a result of a single incident or a pattern of behavior where the purpose or effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.

## 5. CONFIDENTIALITY

*Information disclosed to a Church leader during the course of counseling, advising or spiritual direction shall be held in strictest confidence.*

- 5.1 Parishioners and other persons who come to the Church leader for help should feel free to engage in full disclosure of information and should be able to trust that this information is confidential to the greatest degree possible.

- 5.2 The Church leader is also bound to safeguard the confidentiality of any notes, files or computer records pertaining to professional contact with individuals.
- 5.3 Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing and homilies or other public presentations only when effective measures have been taken to absolutely safeguard individual identity and confidentiality.
- 5.4 Confidential information can be disclosed only with the written, informed consent of the individual.
- 5.5 If it should be discovered that there is serious threat to the welfare of a minor or another who is not legally competent such that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian is deemed essential, the Church leader should first attempt to elicit the consent of the minor or legally incompetent person for such disclosure. If such consent is not given, the Church leader must exercise great care and judgment in deciding the extent of any disclosure to a parent or legal guardian.
- 5.6 These obligations are independent of and supplementary to the confidentiality of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any

disclosure, even indirect, of information received through the seal of this Sacrament.

- 5.7 All State of Missouri regulations and all diocesan procedures regarding the reporting of sexual abuse of a minor are to be followed, as outlined in “Child Abuse Reporting Requirements of the State of Missouri and the Diocese of Kansas City- St. Joseph” (see appendix).

## 6. RECORDS AND INFORMATION

*Appropriate confidentiality shall be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of parish or institutional records.*

- 6.1 Specific sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential for other than Church purposes, and as a general rule, will be released only to the individual to whom the record belongs. When, for valid Church reporting or parish statistical purposes, information from these records is made public, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals.
- 6.2 The information contained in sacramental records which are older than 50 years is available to the public, except in instances in which the information pertains to adoption or to legitimacy.

