

§2000 RESIGNED PRIESTS

Although theologically one cannot “resign” from the priesthood, the terms “resignation” and “resigned priest” are commonly used in situations where a priest indicates, either formally or informally, that he no longer wishes to engage in priestly ministry. At the same time, a priest does not simply abandon the commitments made at the time of ordination as if resigning from a job. The decision to resign active priestly ministry usually follows only after a long period of reflection and discussion. While the gifts of resigned priests should be used for the good of the Church as much as possible, there are certain restrictions as to what responsibilities they might assume within the faith community. Per directives by the Holy See and provisions of canon law, the following policies and procedures have been developed regarding the employment or services of resigned priests in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

§2001 RESIGNED PRIESTS

2001.1. Policy A priest incardinated in the Archdiocese of Chicago who desires to resign from active ministry shall discuss the matter first with the Vicar for Priests and then with the Archbishop. Following these discussions and after the expiration of any authorized leave of absence for a specified period of time, if the priest still intends to resign, the priest shall submit a written letter of resignation to the Archbishop, stating his reasons for resigning. If the Archbishop accepts the resignation, such acceptance must be in writing. No resignation is complete until the Archbishop indicates his acceptance in writing. A priest whose resignation has been accepted can no longer function as a priest except in danger of death situations as permitted by canons 911, §2 and 976 and as obliged by canon 986, §2. Such a priest cannot act on behalf of the Archdiocese in any capacity, except as may be separately permitted in accord with policies 2001.2 and 2002.2 in this section. The Archbishop with the assistance of the Vicar for Priests will provide pastoral care appropriate to the individual situation.

Procedures

- a) The resignation from active ministry as a priest inherently and implicitly includes the resignation from any and all ecclesiastical offices held by the priest (cf. canons 189, §1 and 538, §1), a request to be excused from the obligation to undertake and faithfully fulfill a duty entrusted to him by his Ordinary (canon 274, §2), a petition for the withdrawal of his canonical faculties to minister as a priest, his agreement not to present himself as a priest or as a representative of the Archdiocese of Chicago, and renunciation of any right to remuneration and support (canons 281, §§1-2), except as provided for in canon 1350.
- b) The Archbishop’s acceptance of the resignation inherently and implicitly includes the acceptance of the priest’s resignation from any and all

ecclesiastical offices held by the priest (cf. canons 189, §§2-3 and 538, §1), excusing the priest from the obligation to undertake and faithfully fulfill a duty entrusted to him by his Ordinary (canon 274, §2), revocation of canonical faculties to minister as a priest, a prohibition on the resigned priest from presenting himself as a priest or as a representative of the Archdiocese of Chicago, and cessation of the obligation for remuneration and support (canons 281, §§1-2), except as provided for in 1350.

- c) A priest who leaves active ministry without resigning as described above can be removed from any and all ecclesiastical offices only in accord with the norm of law (cf. canons 192-193 and 1740-1747). The Archdiocese will consider a departure by the priest which continues for more than six months a tacit resignation from active ministry. Tacit resignation consequently means the revocation of the absent priest's canonical faculties to minister as a priest, a prohibition on the absent priest from presenting himself as a priest or as a representative of the Archdiocese of Chicago, and the cessation of the obligation to provide remuneration and support (canons 281, §§1-2), except as provided for in canon 1350.
- d) Any priest not incardinated in the Archdiocese of Chicago who desires to resign from active ministry is to discuss the matter with his own proper Ordinary.
- e) In order to change his canonical status from cleric to layperson with permission to marry, a resigned priest must petition the Holy Father for a dispensation (laicization) from the obligations of priesthood (canons 290-293). An ordained priest who attempts even a civil marriage without a dispensation from the obligation of celibacy from the Holy See incurs an automatic suspension (canon 1394, §1) and becomes irregular as regards the exercise of orders (canon 1044, §1, 3°).

2001.2. Policy A resigned priest may not be hired or appointed to serve in the Archdiocese of Chicago without approval from the Archbishop.

Procedures

- a) In determining whether the parish, school or agency may hire or appoint the resigned priest, the Archbishop will consider the actual situation of the man (including his canonical status), the nature of the job, and the possibility of scandal.
- b) Requests for approval from the Archbishop should be directed to the Office of the Chancellor.
- c) If approval is given, a written record of the Archbishop's approval shall be kept on file by the Office of the Chancellor.

§2002 DISPENSED (LAICIZED) RESIGNED PRIESTS

2002.1. Policy The Archdiocese of Chicago shall actively assist resigned priests to apply for a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state (commonly referred to as “laicization”).

Procedures

- a) The application for a dispensation is initiated by contacting the Office for Canonical Services.
- b) The procedures to be followed are established by the Holy See (per canons 290-293).
- c) Since dispensation from the obligations of celibacy is inseparable from the dispensation from the other obligations of the clerical state, all aspects of the rescript of dispensation must be accepted. The acceptance of any portion of the dispensation constitutes an acceptance of the entire dispensation.

2002.2. Policy A resigned priest who has been dispensed from the obligations of the clerical state (laicized) shall abide by the restrictions on public ministry contained in his rescript of dispensation (laicization) issued by the Holy See. In accord with this rescript, he may be hired or appointed for a position of service in the Archdiocese of Chicago if the parish, school or agency receives approval from the Archbishop.

Procedures

- a) In determining whether the parish, school or agency may hire or appoint the person, the Archbishop will consider the actual situation of the man, the terms of the dispensation, the nature of the position, the needs of the Archdiocese, the needs of the parish, school or agency, and the possibility of scandal.
- b) Requests for approval from the Archbishop should be directed to the Office of the Chancellor.
- c) If approval is given, a written record of the Archbishop’s approval shall be kept on file by the Office of the Chancellor.