

**Code of Conduct
For the
Priests of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe
August 1, 2005**

Our Call

Baptized into the Body of Christ, we, the Priests of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, hear Jesus' personal call to the vocation of his ministerial priesthood in his Church. We have answered that call, and by the grace and help of Christ, we strive to live it to the full.

To paraphrase St. Augustine, (Sermo 46, 1-2: CCL 41, 529-530) we are Christians with our people for our sake, and shepherds of our people for their sake. As Christians we have the obligation to give witness by our lives to the holiness of God. Our people have a legitimate expectation to be able to see the Christian life lived personally in us in such a manner that we provide to them an example that they may follow to learn and thus know, love and serve Jesus all the better.

That our lives may be authentic and integral to our Catholic Faith, we strive for full adherence to our Faith and the standard of morality which it demands. We renew our promise of respect and obedience to our Archbishop and our commitment to the Holy Father. Thus, our ministry will be ever more opened to our Lord, and the Holy Spirit, making us true instruments of God's salvific plan for His people.

Care of Self

As St. Charles Borromeo guides us: "...Do not neglect the parish of your own soul, do not give yourself to others so completely that you have nothing left for yourself. You have to be mindful of your people without becoming forgetful of yourself." (Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis, Mediolani 1599, 1177-1178). In our day, we recognize this admonition in terms of caring for our own spiritual, physical, emotional, mental and psychological health. This includes regular physical and dental examinations; healthy friendships and nurturing associations especially among, but not necessarily limited to, fellow priests; appropriate time off for rest and relaxation; personal and communal prayer, annual retreat and other personal interests and activities which we, as individuals, find life giving and satisfying. In attending to these needs, we follow the guidelines set down or recommended by the Archbishop himself or promulgated by his authority.

As priests, our lives are uniquely conformed to Christ. Therefore, the Holy Eucharist must be the center, foundation and focus of our lives. Our prayer life must be directed to and flow from the Mass. It is from the Holy Eucharist and the reverent celebration of the Mass, that we have our union with Christ, from whom comes all our strength. Reverent celebration of the Mass as their shepherds, draws our people to Christ, and profoundly influences them in their spiritual life.

Frequent celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as penitents is necessary for our growth in holiness and freedom from the corruption of sin. As priests, we commit ourselves to celebrating the Sacrament as penitents on a consistent and regular basis.

After devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we place emphasis on faithfulness to diligent praying of the Liturgy of the Hours. We recognize this as essential to our prayer for ourselves, our people and the universal Church. We recognize the value of priest spiritual support groups or their equivalent. We accept that participation in such groups is highly recommended, and can be the source of great spiritual fruit.

Ministry to Fellow Priests

We pledge ourselves to be particularly attentive to and solicitous of our fellow priests. When any priest is in difficulty, we pledge ourselves to prayer and support in every appropriate way. Fraternal correction is important in any situation in which we perceive that a fellow priest is in any danger because of personal habits, relationships or dereliction. Fraternal correction in a direct and uncompromising way can be difficult, yet it is proof of a deep commitment to loving each other in truth and courage. We pledge to undertake such fraternal correction when called for.

Recently ordained priests should seek the guidance of a holy, more experienced priest. Such a relationship with this sort of priest “mentor,” can help the recently ordained become more confident and develop priestly, personal and pastoral skills. This friendship with a priestly mentor can lead to rewarding and shared growth which will benefit everyone affected by the priests.

We may say that ministry to our fellow priests is one of our highest priorities. Awareness of the needs of fellow priests and cultivation of an attitude of true understanding and charity toward each other will be a blessing for the whole presbyterate.

Ministry to Our People

By Holy Orders we share the ministry of the Good Shepherd to His people. Their salvation is our highest goal and the privilege of our lives. Therefore, all that we do must be motivated by this end. We respect all people and seek to serve them as their leaders and their servants, accountable to God for all the souls which have been entrusted to us.

We seek God’s grace in being patient, understanding and encouraging, even when we have to discipline. We strive to treat all people and groups without prejudice and with equal openness. Keeping in mind Jesus’ warning about those who would be a source of scandal, we avoid any behavior or language which is improper or gives the impression of impropriety. Given the gravity of recent infractions which have caused harm and scandal, we will strive to live chastity and celibacy to the full, guarding against any word, deed or suggestion which would be a source of scandal. We recognize the many ways we, or anyone, can become ensnared by the temptations

which abound in our environment. Though every person needs to be on guard against these many temptations and moral pitfalls, we priests need to be particularly on guard against the dangers posed by pornography and especially internet and televised pornography. We will avoid places which are likely to foster immoral connections with others or immoral activities of any kind.

We are committed to strive never to engage in behavior that might be considered harassment of any one, especially as might be deemed sexual harassment. We will strive never to misuse our authority or position to engage in behavior that is in any way verbally, emotionally, sexually or physically abusive. We will strive never to behave in a way that conveys sexual advances, unwelcome touching, sexual comments, displaying of lewd or sexually explicit or suggestive materials. We shall strive at all times and on all occasions, to respect the physical and emotional boundaries appropriate to our pastoral relationships with adults and minors as stated in the Policy of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Relating to Sexual Misconduct including Sexual Harassment.

Stated positively, we will respect ourselves, our vocations, and all other persons as children of God for whom we will do only what is good. The Catholic Faith and its beautiful moral law are our guide in all things we do and in every relationship we have. The people have a right to expect the highest degree of moral behavior from their priests.

We will strive to be honest with ourselves concerning our humanity and its weaknesses. To remain focused and faithful, we will make use of spiritual direction from those who will help us be faithful. A good spiritual director or guide will be honest, and fearlessly reflect back to us any danger to holiness of life and vocation. When necessary, we will accept professional help for ourselves in the way of counseling or therapy.

Ministry to the Young

Ministry to children and youth is often part of priestly ministry. We will carefully ensure that we give good example to children and youth. We will be sure never to transgress appropriate boundaries or limits of behavior or speech with the young. Such prudent precautions would include but not be limited to avoiding being alone with children and youth, except for situations of ministry in which this is necessary, and then, having a responsible adult nearby, if it is not possible to have that person physically present with us. We may never have activities alone with children or youth, and should always have appropriate adult chaperones or assistants present.

We will never offer alcohol or drugs to minors. We will never invite or allow overnight stays of minors in our rectories or other domiciles of ours, unless the minor is a family relation and is staying with permission of or in the company of a parent or guardian.

Competence in Ministry

We shall seek to develop ourselves in appropriate areas of ministry by every reasonable effort. We seek to provide spiritual and pastoral counseling to people. We will not provide formal, therapeutic counseling to individuals, couples or families, unless we are qualified and licensed to

do so. We may suggest to people that they seek such therapy, or we may make a referral, if requested.

Matters revealed in spiritual or pastoral counseling will be kept confidential, unless revelation is morally required to protect an innocent third person, or unless the counseled person gives explicit permission to reveal them. The seal of Confession is inviolable. In all other questionable matters, appropriate civil or criminal law applies. We will seek guidance from the Archdiocese in such cases.

Sacramental and Administrative Ministry

In all matters pertaining to liturgy and sacraments, we will faithfully follow the norms of Church law and liturgical books, as well as all directives of the Archbishop of Santa Fe. This also applies to administrative norms and laws of the Church and the Archdiocese. In all matters involving our personal financial and administrative affairs, as well as those of the church institutions or organizations for which we have responsibility, we must and will faithfully comply with all aspects of civil and criminal law without exception.

Justice and respect for employees and clergy, as well as strict honesty, and prudent stewardship of all resources entrusted to our care will be the rule of our actions and decisions. We will consult as prescribed with Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils.

Conclusion

With the grace of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, and the intercession of the Virgin Mary, our Mother, we priests will seek to live by this code of conduct.

Code of Conduct for the Priests of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe

Faithful to the call of Jesus Christ to ministerial priesthood, I certify that I have read and that I understand the Code of Conduct for the Priests of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. I will abide by the principles embodied in the Code in my personal, public and ministerial life.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return signed and dated copy to the Chancellor’s Office.