



Diocese of Hamilton in Bermuda

Office of the Bishop

CODE OF MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

1. DEFINITION



1.1 In this document the term Ecclesial Minister includes all bishops, priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, catechists, teachers, administrators, staff, employees and volunteers in our parishes, religious communities, institutes, and organizations. All Ecclesial Ministers must uphold Christian values and conduct. The following Code of Pastoral Conduct provides a set of standards for conduct in pastoral situations.

1.2 This Code of Ministerial Conduct states the standard required by the Catholic Church in the territories of the Antilles Episcopal Conference. In addition, each territory has its own civil legislation that must also be carefully and completely observed.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

2.1 The public and private conduct of Ecclesial Ministers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine people's faith. Ecclesial Ministers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace support them in their ministry.

2.2 We have a responsibility to witness, in all relationships, the chastity appropriate to our state of life, whether celibate, married or single. We must be particularly careful to avoid any covert or overt sexual behavior with those for whom we have a professional or pastoral responsibility. This includes seductive speech or gestures as well as physical contact that sexually abuses, exploits or harasses another person. We are to provide safe environments in parishes, schools and institutions where children and others can be assured that their boundaries will not be violated.

2.3 We should be aware of our own and other persons' vulnerability, especially when working alone with another and be particularly aware that we bear the greater responsibility for maintaining sexual boundaries in a pastoral relationship, for we hold the greater power. We must not initiate sexual behavior, and must refuse it when another invites or consents to it. We must be mindful of the perspective and judgement of those who are vulnerable and dependent upon us. Likewise, we must be conscious of the impression that our words or actions may make on others. Awareness of these matters of perspective, judgement and impression should guide us in determining whether touching would be an appropriate expression of pastoral care.

- 2.4 We must show prudent discretion before touching another person, since we cannot control how physical touch will be received. We strive for greater self-awareness in order to recognize the sexual dynamics at work for us in pastoral relationships and to heed the warning signs in our lives that indicate when we are approaching boundary violations. We assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all our relationships with others.
- 2.5 We should satisfy our needs for affection, intimacy, attraction, and affirmation outside the pastoral relationship. We should seek supervision, spiritual direction or other professional help to remain focused on our professional responsibilities and to hold firm to the sexual boundaries of the pastoral relationship.

3. CODE OF PASTORAL CONDUCT FOR PRIESTS, DEACONS, PASTORAL MINISTERS, ADMINISTRATORS, STAFF, EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

3.1 Conduct with Children and Youth

- 3.1.1 Ecclesial Ministers working with children and youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship with their adult supervisors. All must be aware of their own and other's vulnerability when working with children, especially when alone with a child.
- 3.1.2 Physical contact with children can be misconstrued and should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate. This is especially important in private. One-on-one meetings with a young person are best held in a public area or in an office with the door open. It is a prudent practice to have another adult present when driving children home.
- 3.1.3 Young people should be allowed to stay overnight in the residence of a priest ONLY if there is another adult supervisor of the youngster(s). In no instance may a young person share the priest's private quarters.
- 3.1.4 Ecclesial Ministers should not provide shared, private, or overnight accommodation for individual young people including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place where there is no other adult supervision present.

3.2 Sexual Conduct

- 3.2.1 Those who provide pastoral counsel or spiritual direction services must avoid developing inappropriate relationships with minors, other staff, or parishioners. Ecclesial Ministers must behave in a professionally supportive manner at all times.

3.3 Harassment

- 3.3.1 Ecclesial Ministers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from all forms of harassment. Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, psychological, written or verbal behaviour including, but not limited to physical or mental abuse, racial insults, derogatory ethnic slurs, unwelcome sexual advances or touching, sexual comments or sexual jokes, requests for sexual favours used as a condition of

employment, or to affect other personal decisions, such as promotion or compensation, and the display of offensive material. Harassment can be a single severe incident or persistent pattern of behaviour where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.

3.4 Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

- 3.4.1 The Arch/Dioceses of the Antilles Episcopal Conference require that Ecclesial Ministers contact the appropriate church official when they have knowledge or reasonable cause to suspect that a minor is being or has been abused. Failure to report such knowledge or reasonable suspicion is sufficient to consider the Ecclesial Minister as sharing in the guilt and punishment of the offender. Christian charity further urges the reporting of knowledge or reasonable cause of suspicion regarding any sexual misconduct on the part of an Ecclesial Minister.

3.5 Clergy, Staff or Volunteer Well-being

- 3.5.1 Ecclesial Ministers have the duty to be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental and emotional health. They should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health, and seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioural or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives. Ecclesial Ministers must address their own spiritual needs. Support from a Spiritual Director is highly recommended.

Most Rev. Robert J. Kurtz, C. R.
Bishop of Hamilton in Bermuda

(Approved at the Annual Plenary Meeting of the Antilles Episcopal Conference on April 20, 2004.)