

The Priest as Servant Leader

Developing Values for Priestly Ministry



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Developing Values for Priestly Ministry



Canadian Federation of Presbyterian
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From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” (Luke 12:48)

Preface

Praised be to Our Lord Jesus Christ! In our continuing effort to assist priests in Canada to reflect on our lives, our work and the uniqueness of our call, we are pleased to present *The Priest as Servant Leader*. This document represents many hours of work and discussion over the past four years, much of which has evolved from continued reflection and study of *A Practical Guide to Priestly Wellness*. It is our collective understanding that while as priests we can look to other professions for valuable contributions to our understanding of professionalism, it is imperative that we define professionalism from our own perspective. We believe that key to any discussion of the five values identified in *The Priest as Servant Leader* is the need for priests to speak with one another as brothers, sharing our lived experience.

We are indebted to the many people who have helped to bring this document to publication. Many have offered learned opinions and fervent support. We wish to acknowledge in a particular way, the past executive of the NFPC including Rev. Hamish Currie, Glen Dion, Donald Lizottii, and Bill Brennan for guiding the discussions during the initial stages; the resource people at The Southdown Institute, including Rev. Ray Dlugos, CSO and Miriam D. Ukeritis, CSJ; the advice of Bishop Brian Dunn in matters concerning Canon Law; and the invaluable assistance of Mr. Greg Humbert our editor. I would personally wish to thank the members of the present executive for the time and commitment they gave to this project. On behalf of them, I thank all of the representatives from our dioceses and eparchies who participated in this worthwhile task. It is a blessing to reflect on the collective gifts of our priests and the dioceses and eparchies they serve and represent.

It is our desire that you benefit from our deliberations by your own reflections and by sharing this with your brothers in ministry. Together may we grow to know the Lord more fully in our own lives and in the lives of all who share our faith.

Fraternally in Christ,
Theodore O'Connor, (Rev.), President
National Federation of Presbyteral Councils

We are workers, not master builders



It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,

it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime

only a tiny fraction

of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete,

which is a way of saying

that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.



This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted,
 knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.



We cannot do everything,
 and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete,
 but it is a beginning,
 a step along the way,
 an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.



We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference between the master builder
and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders;
ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

A prayer reflection by
Oscar Romero

Introduction

The publication of *A Practical Guide to Priestly Wellness* in 2004 by the Canadian Federation of Presbyteral Councils (CFPC) was meant to provide priests with a tool to help them reflect on their personal commitment to the physical, intellectual, emotional, relational, and spiritual dimensions of their lives as priests. Being responsible for ourselves, both as persons and as priests, demands commitment to a new and vibrant “way of living”. In the midst of a challenging, and sometimes demanding ministry, we pray for the wisdom to make good choices that support our health and well-being.

Wellness does not happen all at once; it is a process with many dimensions to it. Since 2004 the CFPC has continued to reflect on the implications that flow from the wellness for which priests strive. If *A Practical Guide to Priestly Wellness* spoke more specifically to a priest’s personal life, the CFPC asked, “What then is our responsibility to

the communities within which we minister?”

During various conferences and meetings, the Federation made significant efforts to explore what a priest’s responsibilities are in the course of exercising his ministry. Over the course of a few years, five key values clearly emerged: accountability, confidentiality, boundaries, collaboration and transparency. These values respect the unique nature of our vocation, while acknowledging that a priest is also recognized as one of the helping professions within the community at large. As professionals, we are expected to possess a certain level of expertise, maintain our knowledge of current practices, and conduct ourselves in such a manner as to uphold the dignity of our vocation and respect for the persons we serve.

Come follow me.” (Matthew 4:19)

In a manner of speaking this is where it all began. Every priest, in the intimacy of his own heart and soul, has heard and answered God’s call. For us it is very real. It is what inspires us to serve in sometimes an heroic fashion, and motivates us to do the day-to-day tasks involved in our ministry. Our spiritual relationship with Jesus (which takes on new meaning at the time of our call and our response) becomes a “pearl of great value” (Matthew 13:46). This is a sacramental encounter that is lived out in the context of a community and is meant to nourish and sustain us throughout our whole lives. The memory of the moment when we heard God’s call draws us back to the true heart of our ministry time and time again.

May everything we do begin
with your inspiration and
continue with your saving help.
Let our work always find its
origin in you and through you
reach completion.

Liturgy of the Hours
(Monday Week I,
Morning Prayer)

When we observe the ministry of Jesus in the gospels we learn how to be priests. Jesus’ encounters with individuals flow from his love of God, for it is apparent that each encounter is filled with a caring compassion for the person in need. The desire to be a servant of healing brings an intimacy to each of these encounters that transcends the merely clinical. Jesus reaches out to the whole person and is deeply concerned for the person’s physical, spiritual, emotional and social well-being. The love Jesus shows is wrapped in the respect he has for the dignity of each person.

Jesus taught by word and example. Those of us who seek to follow in his path are at once inspired and challenged by this. A priest’s vocation is carried out with knowledge and grace in the hope that each new day will see him deepen his effectiveness, integrity and compassion. Our vocation is not solely a personal matter. The church recognizes our call and ordains us for the service of the People of God. By acting *in persona Christi capitis* (in the person of Christ the Head) we make Jesus present not only in what we say, but in how it is said; not only in what we do, but in how it is done.

Chapter one of the *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* sets forth the challenges that face every priest. Priests, through their ordination and vocation, are “set apart in a certain sense within the midst of God’s people”. This is so, not that they may be separated from the community with prestige or power, but that they might be more totally dedicated to the service of that community in the preaching of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments. As the document continues: “They cannot be ministers of Christ unless they are witnesses and dispensers of a life other than this earthly one. But they cannot be of service to men if they remain strangers to the life and conditions of men”. (Documents of Vatican II, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, #3)

We are all too aware that “we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). As priests we seek, with the grace of God, to be faithful followers of Christ. But we do so in a world that echoes with conflicting cries, sometimes an unbridled individualism and relativism and at other times a communal effort filled with purpose. The challenge before us is to proclaim the reality of faith with our very lives. Somehow we are most effective when, by hearing what we say and seeing what we do, others will desire to follow Christ who

is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

The Canadian Federation of Presbyteral Councils hopes that *The Priest as Servant Leader* can provide a renewed sense of freedom and commitment to all of us who wish to serve in these challenging times. In presenting five key values this document seeks to provide some reflections that can guide us in discussing the manner in which we carry out our priestly ministry.

This document will explore these five key values from both the perspective of our vocations and that of the gospels. By providing questions directed to you as an individual priest, and also group questions which can be used when you gather with other priests, this document hopes to stimulate personal reflection as well as provide opportunities for discussion as a presbyterate.

The Value of Accountability

A priest is accountable when, like Jesus, he seeks to know the will of God and accomplish it in his own life.

There is a scene in Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* in which an ambitious young man by the name of Richard Rich seeks to acquire a position in the court of Henry VIII through the influence of Thomas More. Richard is looking for a shortcut to success; Thomas More will have nothing of it, noting that Richard has a natural ability to teach. More refuses Rich's request in this way:

Sir Thomas More: "Why not be a teacher? You'd be a fine teacher; perhaps a great one." Richard Rich: "If I was, who would know it?" Sir Thomas More: "You; your pupils; your friends; God. Not a bad public, that."

This scene demonstrates that accountability is not about esteem or "measuring up" or even being "checked up on". On the contrary, accountability is a positive and creative value for a professional and priestly life that provides us with a benchmark

for growth and improvement. In light of the servant leadership of Jesus, a priest is accountable when, like Jesus, he seeks to know the will of God and accomplish it in his own life. (cf. Matthew 7:21)

Accountability goes beyond mere obligation. The root of the word “obligation” combines the concept of duty with a desire to respond. It comes from the word “oblige” that also means to “provide a service or favour for someone”. By becoming committed to my baptismal and priestly vocation, confident in my gifts and willing to serve, I grow to respond from a place of inner peace. As I nurture my life of prayer and my relationship with Jesus, I grow in knowledge of myself and what I am called to be and do.

By performing my daily responsibilities as a priest I can do so with a true sense of service and compassion. Progressively I become a servant leader, one who leads by example with energy and creativity. I willingly work alongside those with whom I serve because I believe that such collaboration builds up the community in a most positive and productive manner.

In all these ways a priest grows in confidence and integrity. In short, we become accountable. Accountability is not viewed as the test at the end of the term that we must pass; on the contrary, accountability is our way of living and interacting with others in a pastoral and prophetic way.



From the perspective of our call to be servants, what might accountability look like in the life of priests?

We seek to be men who:

- Come to know God the Father, who take steps to grow in a relationship with Jesus, and who pray to incorporate the gifts of the Spirit into our lives.
- Reflect on the words of the bishop at our ordination: “Meditate on the law of God, believe what you read, teach what you believe, and put into practice what you teach”. (Rite of Ordination)
- Take responsibility for what we need to do and do not leave it to others to initiate or complete.
- Welcome on-going evaluation of our ministry.



- Possess a preferential option for the poor in whatever form the poor might present themselves: monetarily poor, poor in spirit, the disenfranchised, sinners, those who suffer emotional and mental illness, those who are divorced and remarried, and other groups who feel estranged from the church.
- Are true to ourselves by developing a healthy conscience.
- Find ways to give prophetic witness, for example, by changing our hearts and changing our ways.
- Take our baptismal call seriously, one which unites us to other members of the church community in a shared mission and vision for the world.
- Respect the dignity of all those we serve.
- Collaborate with the people in the parish.
- Actively come to know and love the people we serve.
- Incorporate the other values of priestly ministry (confidentiality, boundaries, collaboration and transparency) into our lives and ministry.

How does a priest foster accountability on a daily basis?

In 1987 Pope John Paul II spoke of the priest's accountability in the loftiest of terms.

People expect us to be men of faith and prayer. People look to us for Christ's truth and the teaching of his Church. They ask to see Christ's love incarnate in our lives. All this reminds us of a very basic truth, that the priest is "another Christ". In a sense, we priests are Christ to all those to whom we minister. This is true of all aspects of our priestly work.

*Address of Pope John Paul II Church of
Saint Martha, Miami*

Thursday, September 10, 1987

A priest might accomplish this personally by:

- Visiting a spiritual director on a regular basis and being honest with the spiritual director.

1. Many of the thoughts included in this section are outlined in the Code of Canon Law, canon 276 §1 and 276 §2.

- Cultivating the habit of daily prayer (the Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, meditation on the scriptures, and other devotions).
- Learning to discern issues rather than reacting to them.
- Seeking out the company of those who inspire and support.
- Developing a piety including a devotion to Mary and the saints (the ancient and modern men and women of courage and justice).
- Growing in obedience to the church (the *magisterium* and the people of God).
- Regularly reflecting on the promises made to the bishop at the time of ordination.
- Developing a healthy response to criticism. The ability to receive criticism and to ask myself how it might be true or valid, and how it might call me to be more authentic and genuine in the exercise of my ministry, can be a healthy and humble way to grow as an individual.

Learning the art of dialogue and discussion when I have a difference

of opinion with someone.

- Doing my “homework”, that is, planning well and coming prepared, especially when teaching or preaching.
- Daring to speak the truth of the Gospel even when it is uncomfortable or inconvenient.
- Tackling difficult issues with grace, courage and respect for others
- Being faithful to my time for wellness (exercise, healthy eating habits, rest and recreation).



What are the challenges to a life lived with accountability?

- Living and working with others in a spirit of collaboration and interaction. Priests can be tempted to work alone. Developing a healthy sense of collaboration with brother priests and parishioners is worth the effort².
- Incorporating some method of *performance appraisals* into the structures of the diocese or deanery³. Such evaluations can be—

2. Confer: Canon 275 §1.

3. Confer: Canon 555 §1.

conducted in a professional and sensitive manner so that they become a positive experience for everyone involved. Performance appraisals can confirm our strengths and help us become aware of areas for growth and development.

- Growing in honesty and openness can make us feel vulnerable at times. However the feeling of vulnerability can also invite a spirit of collaboration. As part of a community we really do need one another.
- Accepting questions and questioning with an open mind and heart. A question is not an attack. We need not take questions personally. A question often constitutes a desire to learn and to discuss. A question is often a compliment. The person would never have asked the question in the first place had they not felt comfortable enough to ask us.
- Accepting our failures graciously and learning from them. A few years ago the *Globe & Mail* newspaper printed “A Morning Smile” that went like this: *If you are all wrong and you know you are all wrong, you’re all right.*
- Knowing to whom we are accountable. It is important to clarify and develop lines of authority within the diocese and parish or wherever we minister.
- Being aware of conflicting demands on our time and talents. We are not the only ones who have to balance competing demands. Married couples have to give time to one another, to their children, their careers and community involvements, let alone make time for personal interests. Prioritize and balance our time for prayer, recreation, study, exercise, work, etc. Trust that people understand.
- Growing in patience with other people’s lack of accountability.
- Learning to let go. Realizing that all those who are baptized have a role to play in the spread of the gospel. It is “God’s work” not “my” work. The story is told that each evening on his way to bed, Pope John XXIII stopped by the chapel to pray. His prayers completed, he walked out of the chapel saying to God on the way out (with a warm smile on his face), “The church is yours: I’m going to bed.”

- To learn to say “yes” and “no” with humility and courage.



What are the benefits to a life lived with accountability?

- Shared responsibility and collaboration in priestly life brings a synergy to work making it more creative, more productive and more fun.
- Growth in self-esteem and confidence. We feel better about ourselves, about our lives, our relationships and work. We possess a greater sense of joy and peace about our lives in general, which counteracts the possibility of depression and desperation (panic).
- Greater freedom to minister and to live life to the full. Bernard Haring’s first treatise on moral theology was titled *The Law of Christ*. It carried with it the burden of our response to the gospel in daily life. When he revised this work after Vatican II he renamed the book *Free and Faithful in Christ* suggesting a movement of spirit and tone.

Freedom “from” to freedom “to”. True spiritual freedom allows us to see life and ministry, not as a burden, but as an opportunity.

- A clear conscience. We can walk with our heads held high and look people in the eye honestly and with warmth. The great spiritual masters and psychologists in more modern times cannot overestimate the value of a clear conscience for mental health and self-esteem.
- A far more effective, creative and fruitful ministry.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. In what practical ways have I incorporated accountability into my daily ministry?
2. Is there any area of my ministry where I resist being accountable?

Open fillable responses

The Value of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a value that ensures that each encounter with a person in a priest's daily ministry is guided by discretion and prudence. Confidentiality ensures that the privacy of people's lives is protected and the dignity and respect owed to each person remains inviolable.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night; some translations even say “in secret”. He had reasons. The gospel of John relates that he was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council, a very public figure with a respected position in the community. He wanted to talk to Jesus and to ask him questions. He seemed much more open to what Jesus had to say. “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God” (John 3: 2). We know that others were more skeptical or even threatened by the teaching and ministry of Jesus, yet Nicodemus took the risk and came to him discreetly.

Since this encounter between Nicodemus and Jesus in the New Testament there has always been a need to provide a safe space for an individual to unburden the doubts and questions of his or her mind and the aches of his or her heart. From the very beginning discretion, prudence and confidentiality have been incorporated into the ministry of Jesus' disciples.

Confidentiality is nothing new for a priest. It is at the heart of the “seal of confession,” and in the popular mind of people, a hallmark of priestly ministry. But it goes far beyond this somewhat “romantic” notion. It is important to underline the importance of the seal. Canon 983 §1 states: “The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason.” The seal of confession provides an absolute guarantee to the penitent of total and absolute silence in both word and deed.

In light of the servant leadership of Jesus, confidentiality has become a sacred component of ministry when a priest translates this same sacramental grace for discretion and prudence into all his daily encounters. By maintaining a standard of confidentiality, the privacy of people’s lives is protected, and the dignity and respect owed to each person remains inviolable. When a priest reaches out to someone who is vulnerable, or when someone approaches a priest for help, the assurance and expectation of confidentiality creates a place of safety and understanding. During such an encounter the person can express his or her pain, fears, or sinfulness, and find acceptance.

While the seal of confession is reserved for the Sacrament of Penance, confidentiality is a value that permeates all aspects of priestly ministry and counseling. However, this is a distinction that may not be apparent to someone who seeks counsel from a priest. It is the responsibility of the priest to help the person understand when a matter is guarded by the seal of confession and when it is not.

Confidentiality is fundamental to trust. Priests live in a society with a kind of “tabloid” mentality where gossip is glamorized. This presents a special challenge to any person who wishes to protect the privacy of others and to uphold a person’s good name and reputation in the community. Learning to be discrete is an art that requires prudence, wisdom and constant vigilance.



From the perspective of our call to be servants, what might confidentiality look like in the life of priests?

We would be men who:

- Believe that confidentiality provides a place where healing can occur and forgiveness can begin. People need time to recognize their wrongs and to make them right. They might know that something needs to change in their lives but they need time to emotionally make those changes.
- Understand that confidentiality is for the protection of the parishioner and the priest. This often places us in a vulnerable position, but it is the risk we take to guard the confidence of others.
- Clarify in counseling situations when we are bound by the seal of confession and when we are bound by professional confidentiality.
- Learn the gift of silence. Often we might know more than we are able to share and so we learn the art of when to speak and when not to speak, especially when responding to the inquisitiveness of others. Discretion is not only needed in encounters with individuals but often around meeting tables where sensitive information might need to

be shared.

- Pray for and develop a trusting and approachable character that engenders trust and confidence. People come for help because they “feel safe” and they feel “they will be understood and listened to” by the priest.
- Guard the reputation of others.
- Are familiar with the laws of our society governing confidentiality and disclosure, especially in cases of abuse.
- Incorporate the other values of priestly ministry (accountability, boundaries, collaboration and transparency) into our lives and ministry.



How does a priest foster confidentiality on a daily basis?

A priest might accomplish this personally by:

- Giving value to the Sacrament of Penance by becoming both a good penitent and a wise confessor.
- Being vigilant to protect the sacramental seal at all costs.
- Recognizing that the bishop is also often bound by confidentiality. Learning to develop a sense of mutual trust and collaboration with the bishop that is earned on both sides.
- Personally striving to be a man of integrity. Say what I mean and mean what I say, and when there is a “disconnect” between what I say and what I do, admit that I am in need of growth.
- Seeking wise counsel from a spiritual director or other wise person when I have personal or pastoral dilemmas that need to be talked out. Making sure that these discussions are also expressly held in confidence. In either case, I bring my issues to prayer.
- Praying for the grace to hear confessions and not carry them into everyday relationships with the penitent, especially if I might know him or her.
- Being explicit. When it is necessary (in conversations outside the

confessional) begin by saying, “This is confidential”.

- Developing the gift of discretion. Every question need not be answered; information need not be shared just because someone asks.



What are the challenges to guarding confidentiality?

- Accepting to live with the tension that exists when we respect the rights of an individual and value the wider community.
- Recognizing that information carries “power”. No one is exempt from the temptation to reveal information as a means of enhancing his position or self esteem. Information is never used to impress others.
- Recognizing when information about the moral character of a person (not learned in confession) conflicts with a pastoral decision. For example, you know that a parishioner has been known to steal and another parishioner suggests he count the collection. Making decisions based on information that

others are not privy to is difficult and can be misunderstood.

- Remaining compassionate and non-judgmental of others because of what we hear from them or know about them.
- Discerning when to reveal information and when not to reveal. It is better to err on the side of discretion by putting the other person's needs first.
- Learning how to divert inappropriate questions.
- Finding the balance between collaborating and sharing in priestly ministry while at the same time maintaining confidentiality.
- Making a commitment to stay updated and educated on issues and laws concerning confidentiality. Familiarizing ourselves with the practices of other professions in this regard.



What are the benefits to guarding confidentiality?

- We are people who can be trusted. Those we serve sense that they can address the reality of their lives openly and honestly, and are confident their reputation is safe with us.
- Respecting confidentiality promotes the concept of the dignity of the human person, and reaffirms the dignity of the person who comes to see us.
- Providing us with clear consciences because we know we have treated others with respect. It always feels good when we do the right thing. “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).
- Developing a practice of confidentiality strengthens trust among priest colleagues and helps us build solid and lasting friendships with others.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. In what situations do I find it most difficult to keep the confidence of others?
2. What might I do to guard against this?

[Open fillable responses](#)

The Value of Boundaries

Boundaries help to establish clear roles and expectations; they also serve to protect and preserve the integrity of relationships.

The purpose of establishing boundaries is to promote the well-being of the priest and that of the people to whom he ministers, in the hope of creating a safe and predictable environment. Boundaries help to establish clear roles and expectations; they also serve to protect and preserve the integrity of relationships.

A boundary need not be seen as a constraint or fence. Establishing boundaries can actually be quite liberating and is often a catalyst for creative action. For example, Shakespeare wrote all of his 154 sonnets using exactly the same rhyming pattern and rhythm, yet in reading them each of the sonnets exhibits a uniqueness and freshness. Beethoven's nine symphonies all contain the same thematic structure, yet we have no difficulty listening to them over and over again.

In the gospels, even the parents of Jesus lived within the context of their time. "Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for

him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God..." (Luke 2:27-28)

Jesus himself operated within many boundaries. He was a Jew of first century Palestine with a vision of God that drove him to respect the boundaries of his time but also transcend them. "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them" (Matthew 5:17). He healed the sick but often sent them to show themselves to the authorities. He clearly worshiped in the Temple, worked within a community regulated by the Law of Moses and yet ate with sinners, was a friend of tax collectors, and conversed with non-believers.

Jesus created space for himself. "And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray" (Matthew 14:23). He made sure that he and his disciples had time alone. "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them" (Matthew 28:16).

Priests today are called to follow Jesus and to be spirited as well as spiritual leaders. We best serve the people to whom we minister when we are clear in our role within the church and within the community. We are effective and holy priests when we are confident in our abilities and knowledgeable of

our limitations.



From the perspective of our call to be servants, what might an awareness of boundaries look like in the life of priests?

We would be men who:

- Possess clarity around our role as a priest, and know what is expected of us. We come to this by:
 - Communicating with the bishop, our colleagues, the deanery and parishioners regarding our responsibilities;
 - Assessing our own talents, limitations and interests;
 - Prioritizing our most important duties;
 - Consulting with others (bishop, colleagues, deanery and parishioners) to create a ministry work plan. Sometimes the ministry plan includes things that are not our particular talent or interest. In that case, we do the best we can.

- Undertake our duties as a priest with professionalism and discretion.
 - Meets people in a professional setting, like a comfortable office or counseling room.
 - In his role as an effective counselor or spiritual director, the priest understands whose needs are being met and retains his objectivity. Such relationships have the power to heal and the power to harm. If we try to maintain a relationship begun as ministry out of a desire for affection, attention, esteem, or power, there is a distinct possibility that such a relationship will become exploitative and abusive.
 - Maintains healthy boundaries in professional relationships. This is a balancing act that requires prudence and wisdom. The priest guards against under-involvement, but doesn't become over-involved either.
 - Act out of the knowledge that the good of the person being directed or counseled comes first. Both counseling and spiritual direction are for the benefit of the person seeking them. The spiritual director or counselor ministers to the extent of his expertise and competence.
 - Respect the expertise of others and know when to seek it.
 - Recognize that the setting of boundaries goes two ways. Although a priest can establish his own boundaries in order to facilitate effective ministry, so also can those with whom he works or ministers. Learn to respect another person's sense of space.
 - Respect the office of priest by dressing appropriately and acting in an appropriate manner when performing duties⁴.
 - Take responsibility for who we are and what we represent.
 - Develop healthy personal relationships with both men and women that are based on mutual respect and not on need. Understands the difference between a right for "personal privacy" and something "done in secret".
-
4. Canon 284: "Clerics are to wear suitable ecclesiastical garb according to the norms issued by the conference of bishops and according to legitimate local customs."

- Guard against using boundaries as a way to be isolated from others.
- Find opportunities for recreation that renew physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.
- Take pride in our cultural and religious heritage (the church and its rituals) but are equally sensitive to and respectful of the cultural and religious diversity of others.
- Incorporate the other values of priestly ministry (accountability, confidentiality, collaboration and transparency) into our lives and ministry.
- Taking advantage of professional development in spiritual direction, leadership, and counseling.
- Knowing that the obligation to maintain boundaries in a professional relationship is mine and is not that of the person seeking help.
- Cultivating sound, professional interpersonal skills.
- Promoting the other person's participation, choice and control in meeting his or her spiritual needs.
- Identifying one's own strengths and limitations through self-evaluation.



How does a priest establish and maintain healthy boundaries on a daily basis?

A priest might accomplish this personally by:

- Praying daily for the wisdom to be a good and effective priest, and for all those with whom I interact that day.



What are the challenges to establishing and maintaining boundaries?

- Learning the signs that might indicate when boundaries have been crossed. An honest mistake can happen, but address it immediately. Be open about this and seek advice.

For example, a priest might know that a person finds a hug comforting

and so he demonstrates compassion and support in this way. However, for another person a hug may not be welcomed. Similarly, sharing a personal story that is relevant to a specific need of the person seeking help or to the context of the situation can be helpful, but discussing one's personal life at the expense of the other person's concerns is not.

boundaries that do not isolate us from colleagues and parishioners.



What are the benefits of establishing sound professional and personal boundaries?

- Clarifying immediately when actions or words have been misinterpreted.
- Growing in sensitivity to the cultural and religious diversity of our society.
- Becoming aware of appropriate or inappropriate teasing or humour.
- Becoming firm and clear about boundaries when that is necessary. This is both for the priest and the person seeking help. Sometimes a person seeking help wants (or imagines) the relationship to be more than it is.
- Setting aside time for prayer and recreation. Our vocation is unique in that we often live where we minister. It is important to be explicit with parish staff and parishioners that there are certain times and places that are reserved for us alone.
- Setting healthy and professional
- Enhancing pastoral and professional skill and ensuring effective ministry.
- Providing a greater sense of ease and comfort about our ministry by providing a sound knowledge about what our role is in the church and within the laws of society.
- Making for a better working relationship within the parish or wherever we might minister.
- Making us aware of the needs of others and how we can genuinely help others grow.
- Providing more positive energy and freedom for creativity in our priestly and personal life.
- Augmenting the integrity needed to reflect on and preach the truth of the Gospel.

- Allowing us to take more joy in our priestly life.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. How do I create personal space and establish appropriate boundaries?
What is reasonable “personal space”?
2. How do I come to know and respect the personal space and needs of others?

Open fillable responses

The Value of Collaboration

The Value of Collaboration
Collaboration helps a priest
become the servant leader
he desires to be and, within
the church community, a true
leader and pastor.

God is revealed to us as a Trinity of persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Trinity live in a relationship forming a divine community each with a unique role. Sharing gifts and working together seems to be the way of God. One of the first things that Jesus does as he begins his public ministry is to call together his disciples. “Follow me and I will make you fish for people” (Mark 1:17). Time and again he instructs them to work together in pairs. “After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go” (Luke 10:1).

The call of God that exhorts a priest to live and work in relationship with him and with others is as important today as ever. We seek to recognize each other’s unique gifts as we work together in the church. We support one another in our apostolic endeavors in order to build up the faith community.

The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests states that “Priests are defenders of the common good... At the same time, they are strenuous defenders of truth.” (#9) “The office of pastor is not confined to the care of the faithful as individuals, but also properly extended to the formation of a genuine Christian community.” (#6)

The decree is clear in emphasizing that this is not the responsibility solely of the priest. It encourages priests “to foster among them some kind or other of community life.” (#8) They are to work in concert with their bishop, and recognize that their charge is also to engage the laity in a collaborative way. The decree goes far beyond the concept that parishioners are there to “help Father”, but that they have a distinct and vibrant role in the ministry “with Father”

Priests must sincerely acknowledge and promote the dignity of the laity and the role which is proper to them in the mission of the Church... They should listen to the laity willingly, consider their wishes in a fraternal spirit, and recognize their experience and competence in the different areas of human activity, so that together with them they will be able to read the signs of the times.

This statement underlines one of the main themes that emerged from the Second Vatican Council, namely, that together with those who we serve, we are all the people of God. Over fifteen centuries ago, St. Augustine shared a similar insight about the importance and need of being and working together within a community. “What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a title of duty; the latter, one of grace. The former is a danger; the latter, salvation” (Sermon #340).

Engaging in collaboration helps a priest become the servant leader he desires to be, and within the church community, a true leader and pastor.



Documents of Vatican II Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (#9)

From the perspective of our call to be servants, what might collaboration look like in the life of priests?

We would be men who:

Are grounded in the gospel and the church's teaching, and seek to carry on the collaborative way of Jesus. We develop a practical theology of servant leadership. To accept this model of working together in collaboration there must be an acceptance of living with the reality that a final decision may be different from one's personal preference or idea.

- Grow in a style of leadership that moves from an authoritarian, inflexible style to one that leads by example, is participative, and learns to delegate.

- Recognize the gifts and talents of others, and learn to facilitate and coordinate those gifts for the good of the community.

- Seek consensus wherever possible.

- When celebrating the sacraments, find ways to engage those assembled.

- Make difficult or unpopular decisions only after much prayer, consultation, and with a heavy heart. We express our decisions not as ultimatums, but

as what we discern to be best for the community.

- Incorporate the other values of priestly ministry (accountability, confidentiality, boundaries, and transparency) into our lives and ministry.



How does a priest foster collaboration into his ministry on a daily basis?

A priest might accomplish this personally by:

- Becoming welcoming, warm persons who listen attentively and are genuinely interested in the lives of others

- Recognizing the fundamental baptismal call of others and the authenticity of their vocation. "They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the church and the world." (Documents of Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, #31)

- Creating a culture that encourages teamwork, cooperation and

collaboration. Setting guidelines and principles for how collaboration might work in a particular pastoral setting by developing a mission statement.

- Learning to communicate, delegate, facilitate and empower. Taking courses and reading books that help develop these skills. It is not the priest's task to do everything. Rather, it is his responsibility to define team member responsibilities based on a collaborative model.
- Discovering ways to collaborate with the bishop and our colleagues.
- Learning to appreciate the volunteer time given by so many parishioners. Finding ways to show this appreciation.
- Seeking to provide a just wage for lay people who are employed by the parish.
- Being patient with our own and other people's mistakes. When we recognize an error in ourselves, we ask forgiveness, admit we are wrong.



What are the challenges to strengthening or incorporating collaboration into a priest's ministry?

- Being open to the different visions people have about the mission of the church.
- Becoming more at ease with a loss of control over every project. Trying not to fall into the trap of micro-managing.
- Learning to let go. When another person is in charge of a parish activity they will do it in their own way. The rainbow has many colours; appreciate all the colours. Enjoy the richness of ideas and the diversity of approaches to life and work.
- Knowing when I am not being collaborative, and to have friends who will be honest enough to tell me.
- Accepting, at times, that while we strive for the ideal we do not always reach it. Individual parishes do not possess all the gifts. Some parishes have the gift of music, others the gift of reaching out, still others the gift of hospitality. For example, the music ministry in my parish may not be equal to the liturgical resources at the cathedral, but the

local choir and director have been faithful for many years. Find ways to support and augment what is already there.

- Acknowledging (not just in my words, but also in my actions) that parishioners have a greater stake in the parish. The parish has a history of working cooperatively and solving problems. Long after I have moved on, these people remain. The more they do for themselves (with my help) the longer this ministry will remain as part of parish life.
- We learn tasks and skills we might not have learned otherwise.
- We feel less alone in the ministry.
- We have helped to create a vibrant community with parishioners who have become more committed to their vocations and have taken more ownership of their parish and the church.



What are the benefits of strengthening or incorporating collaboration into our priestly ministry?

- We feel a greater sense of accomplishment and cohesion as we work together with parishioners. The parish becomes more unified as it shares successes and failures. When we leave we carry good memories with us.
- We bring together divergent groups in the community, and we become instruments of reconciliation and healing to individuals and groups in conflict.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. As I reflect on my years of priestly ministry what moment of collaboration with others is most memorable? Why do I still remember it?
2. How can I better collaborate with others?

Open fillable responses

The Value of Transparency

Transparency is a value that helps a priest grow in honesty and integrity through appropriate openness and disclosure. It means becoming authentic in every aspect of my life.

Transparency makes our accountability flow more naturally. It allows people to trust that their confidences will be kept safe, creates an atmosphere where boundaries will be respected, and enhances collaboration in a positive and credible way. Living in a transparent way helps a priest grow in honesty and integrity as a servant leader.

Transparency gave power to the ministry of Jesus. “Jesus answered, ‘I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret’” (John 18:20). Paul, too, encouraged the disciples to live a life that is blameless. “Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God’s word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

Transparency does not imply what you see is what you get, nor does it require us to tell all. It is important to be wise in the way we share the details of our lives. At the same time, openness about our limitations should never be an excuse for not making constructive changes to our lives where and when they are needed.

Even Jesus understood that the truth is revealed in stages and that there are different levels of revelation for different people. He often gave special teaching to the disciples because they were ready to accept that teaching. “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matthew 13:10-14).

Furthermore, Jesus proclaimed that, even after his death, the disciples would learn and understand even more. “I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (John 14:25-26).

The transparency that all priests seek to incorporate within their ministry is a virtue that begins within. It emerges gradually. Like revelation concerning the mysteries of God, new truths about ourselves (and what goes on inside our

hearts and minds) are revealed slowly. At first we may find these difficult to accept, but gradually and patiently we grow to see the value of this new truth. By learning to accept it, we will be set free. We begin to become new persons, and in time, more honest and transparent with our friends, family and those with whom we minister.

In some way, transparency is the great leveler. It unites each one of us as a part of a common humanity - a part, yet set apart, but still a part of the human condition. This common humanity with all its frailty, limits and great strengths, provides us with an opportunity to become, as Henri Nouwen stated, “wounded healers” Accepting the suffering in our lives, and the sins that accompany us along the way, provides a priest with the grace to be a bold and prophetic servant of God’s salvation.



From the perspective of our call to be servants, what might transparency look like in the life of priests?

We would be men who:

- Grow in stewardship in all areas concerning due diligence within the parish: governance structures (creating credible parish councils), lines of authority (who reports to whom and when), finances (parish or professional audits), pastoral responsibilities, holidays and time off. When needed, share information openly through the parish council, the bulletin or the pulpit.
- Bring our concerns to the table as part of the agenda so that they can be honestly and openly dealt with.
- Find a means of reporting to the bishop, the deanery and the parish on a regular basis. Becomes more engaged in filling out annual diocesan and parish reports.
- Understand that transparency does not mean being perfect or “putting on a show.” It means becoming authentic in every aspect of our lives. Preaching the truth means preaching the truth of our struggles as well as our insights and spiritual journey. It does not mean doing everything to perfection, but doing

(even what we do not do well) the best way we can.

- Incorporate the other values of priestly ministry (accountability, confidentiality, boundaries and collaboration) into our lives and ministry.



How does a priest foster transparency in his ministry on a daily basis?

A priest might accomplish this personally by:

- Growing in openness and transparency through faithfulness to prayer, reflection and spiritual direction. When I am faithful to prayer and self-reflection, I do not need to tell people; they will know.
- Seeking help to understand his humanity, his limits, passions, fears, motives, strengths and joys.
- Developing a few close and lasting friendships. *A friend is someone who knows who you are and loves you anyway.* (Anonymous) A friend is someone who calls you to be your true self.

- Knowing that love conquers all.



What are the challenges to strengthening or incorporating transparency into a priest's ministry?

- Trying to balance all the demands that present themselves on a daily basis.
- Growing in trust of others. We need the gifts and support of others. Genuine need is the glue that brings communities together. It is also the basis of our relationship with God. One poignant translation of the first beatitude comes from the New English Bible. "Blessed are the poor in Spirit" is rendered as "How blest are those who know their need of God."
- Accepting that (as much as we wish) we cannot be *all things to all people*, especially in a literal sense.
- Learning to live with the tension between transparency and boundaries which, on occasion,

might be in conflict with each other.

- Recognizing that some of my decisions might be questioned or challenged.
- Maintaining a level of energy while knowing that (as much as we give of ourselves to a parish) we will be uprooted and moved to another parish where we will have to start all over again.



What are the benefits of strengthening or incorporating transparency into a priest's ministry?

- Freedom of mind and heart as I go about my ministry.
- A knowledge that what I do and how I minister builds up the local community.
- A sense of satisfaction that flows from a job well done.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. How do I balance my need for privacy with an obligation to be open and transparent?
2. Has a situation ever arisen where I was ashamed to let someone know that I am a priest? Why?

[Open fillable responses](#)

Conclusion

Pope John Paul II vividly described how a priest becomes a servant as he accompanies his brothers and sisters in faith towards the fullness of life in God.

Love for God's glory does not distance the priest from life and all that life entails; on the contrary, his vocation brings him to discover its full meaning... The priest thus becomes a sharer in many different life choices, sufferings and joys, disappointments and hopes. In every situation, his task is to show God to man as the final end of his personal existence. The priest becomes the one to whom people confide the things most dear to them and their secrets, which are sometimes very painful. He becomes the one whom the sick, the elderly and the dying wait for, aware as they are, that only he, a sharer in the priesthood of Christ, can help them in the final journey which is to lead them to God. As a witness to Christ, the priest is the messenger of man's supreme vocation to eternal life in God. And while he accompanies his brothers and sisters, he prepares himself: the exercise of

the ministry enables him to deepen his own vocation to give glory to God in order to have a share in eternal life. He thus moves forward towards the day when Christ will say to him: Well done, good and faithful servant,... enter into the joy of your master. (Matthew 25:21).

John Paul II

*Letter Of His Holiness John Paul II
to Priests for Holy Thursday*

The Priest as Servant Leader: Developing Values for Priestly Ministry has sought to present a vision of how we might respond to the needs of those to whom we minister. It has sought to identify and define five key values that will enhance our ministry, guide our judgment, and strengthen our performance in the course of our duties. Finally, this document is intended to help develop a common language so that we can understand and articulate what it means to be a caring, compassionate priest in the church today.



Group Discussion Guide

For the Facilitator

- The notes for the facilitator are taken from *A Practical Guide for Priestly Wellness*. They are equally applicable to this document and will help to provide a positive and open atmosphere for discussion.
- At any given meeting, it is not necessary to discuss all the aspects contained in *The Priest as Servant Leader: Developing Values for Priestly Ministry*. The facilitator or team can determine which parts of the booklet and what questions might be beneficial to the group.
- One or more of the values can be discussed according to need.

Plan, But With Flexibility

Provide the group with an outline of how the meeting will proceed. This makes participants feel secure. Accepting suggestions for changes in the outline gives participants the sense that their ideas count and sets the stage for productive discussion. Remember: Your job is not to “cover” everything you had planned to discuss, but to make sure that discussions are thorough and interesting. If the group is very large, divide them up into smaller groups (no more than six to a group).

Help Participants Feel Comfortable

Little things like seating and lighting can make a difference. For instance, people often feel safer if they’re seated around a table; lighting that is too bright can make people feel vulnerable. Ask if the setup is comfortable, and make changes if you can.

Start Slowly

Give people a chance to introduce themselves briefly and meaningfully before getting under way. It’s important to ease the group into the conversation.

Listen Well

Active listening is crucial for good facilitation. It means total listening, instead of only partially listening while thinking about what you want to say next. The active listener's main task is to help others express themselves. Becoming an active listener takes a great deal of practice and self-restraint.

Have Fun

A sense of humour is invaluable, especially when you're dealing with delicate and personal topics. Give the group permission to laugh.

Let There Be Quiet

There's nothing wrong with silence. The job of the facilitator is not to fill every instant with talk. One of the best ways to get others to talk is by not talking.

Help With Focus

Restating points participants have made and reminding them of what they hope to accomplish can help keep the group on track. In a gentle way, don't let one or two participants dominate the discussion.

Trust

Participants must trust the facilitator and the facilitator must trust participants to contribute positively to the conversation. Assume that every member of your group is a person of goodwill and is there in good faith.

Be Wary of Judgments

In many discussions there is no "right" or "wrong" answer; the main point is to get ideas on the table for discussion.

Use Their Suggestions

Don't ask for comments and suggestions unless you really want them.

Enjoy!

Relax and have a good time.

Suggested Outline for Discussion Groups

Begin with quiet music playing in the background as the group assembles.

Suggestions:

Light classical music: Pachelbel's Canon in D Major, Albinoni's Adagio in G Minor, Samuel Barber - Adagio for Strings, op.11. Or instrumental spiritual music: Marty Haugen *Instruments of Peace*, John Michael Talbot *The Quiet*.

Opening Prayer

Lord God and Father,

source of my life and vocation;

Sustain and strengthen me as I answer your call

to be a servant of the gospel and the church.

Make my desire to serve you real and powerful once again.

Help me to recover the power of your voice

with clarity and conviction.

Gather me around your light

so that I may know what is right and just.

Reveal the power of your truth as I gather with brother priests

to discover a renewed spirit of priestly ministry.

Help me to use my leadership role

for the good of the faith community.

Give me zeal and hope as I strive to be

a humble and faithful servant.

I ask this through Christ, our Lord,

In union with the Holy Spirit,

One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Alternate Opening Prayer: The Seven Gifts

Spirit of wisdom, grant me good judgment;

Spirit of knowledge, inform me with your truth;
 Spirit of counsel, guide me in your ways;
 Spirit of courage, strengthen me to do your will;
 Spirit of understanding, mold me into a compassionate priest;
 Spirit of piety, lead me to pray with a humble heart;
 Spirit of respect for God, make me always desire to be one with you
 never separated from you,
 one in mind, heart and body.
 May all your gifts inspire and sustain me,
 both when I am strong and when I am weak; when I walk your path with
 clarity and even when I retrace my steps back to your love.

AMEN.

Reading

The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.'

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do

you read there?’ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’

Luke 10: 17-28

Alternate Readings

Exodus 18:18-23 “You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.”

Isaiah 11:1-3 “The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.”

Matthew 12:15-21 “He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick until he brings justice to victory.”

Luke 24:13-35 “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

John 7:4 “...for no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.”

Romans 8:26-39 “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 “Who is sufficient for these things?”

Group Discussions: (60 minutes)

- Use the “Group Discussion” questions in this booklet.
- Break up into dyads (groups of two) and discuss these questions together for 20 minutes. Write down one or two insights from your discussion, trying to get beyond what each of you said individually, to the kernel or wisdom that rose to the surface.

- Gather into groups of six and share this wisdom. Simply share the insights that each dyad has come up with. What is new from one dyad to another? Discuss what you have learned from the other dyads that might be different from the one you participated in? Choose one person in the group of six to provide a summary for the whole group. (20 minutes)
- Allow for general discussion and questions. (20 minutes)

End the evening by reading the prayer reflection by Archbishop Oscar Romero.

Provide coffee, tea or juices and a healthy snack for a social afterwards.

Group Questions

Introduction

1. The Introduction puts forth an expanded notion of priestly ministry, describing a priest, not only in his office in the church, but also as having a professional role in the community. How do these two roles complement one another?
2. To what extent can tension arise in performing the functions of each role? Is this tension always a negative thing?
3. In what ways is a priest's life unique from that of other professionals, and in what ways are they similar?

Accountability

1. How do you define the value of accountability?
2. As a priest, to whom do you feel accountable?
3. Are there any statements in this section that cause a strong reaction in you? Why?
4. In what ways (other than those which have been presented in this booklet) can a priest foster accountability?

[Open group response pages >](#)

5. Share the challenges and benefits to accountability that you have discovered in living out your priestly ministry?

Confidentiality

1. What is your understanding of the seal of confession?
2. What value do you place in confidentiality as a priest in your own personal ministry and in and around the place where you minister?
3. Outside of the Sacrament of Penance are there any circumstances where you might warrant the need to break a confidence. If so, how would you go about it?

Boundaries

1. How do you define the value of boundaries in your personal life and in your priestly ministry? Do you see a difference between the two?
2. How are boundaries best determined and best kept?
3. Often a priest lives where he works. What particular challenges arise out of this unique situation?
4. Is it better to have some diocesan guidelines concerning boundaries, or are these for each individual to determine?

Collaboration

1. Share a story of collaboration that enriched your priestly ministry?
2. What should be kept in mind in order to make collaboration a positive experience for you and those with whom you collaborate?
3. When is it important to collaborate with your brother priests?
4. How can you foster collaboration with other churches and with other community groups?

Transparency

1. When do I have a right to maintain a private and personal part of my life?
2. In what ways can a priest develop a life of integrity and honesty in his dealings with others?
3. How do you develop a spirit of transparency (a) where you minister; (b) among your brother priests; (c) within the diocese?

Open transparency responses

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Accountability

Original book: page 18

1. In what practical ways have I incorporated accountability into my daily ministry?

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2. Is there any area of my ministry where I resist being accountable?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Confidentiality

Original book: page 24

1. In what situations do I find it most difficult to keep the confidence of others?

2. What might I do to guard against this?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Boundaries

Original book: page 30

1. How do I create personal space and establish appropriate boundaries? What is reasonable “personal space”?

2. How do I come to know and respect the personal space and needs of others?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Collaboration

Original book: page 36

1. As I reflect on my years of priestly ministry what moment of collaboration with others is most memorable? Why do I still remember it?

2. How can I better collaborate with others?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Transparency

Original book: page 41

1. How do I balance my need for privacy with an obligation to be open and transparent?

2. Has a situation ever arisen where I was ashamed to let someone know that I am a priest? Why?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Introduction

Original book: page 49

1. The Introduction puts forth an expanded notion of priestly ministry, describing a priest, not only in his office in the church, but also as having a professional role in the community. How do these two roles complement one another?

2. To what extent can tension arise in performing the functions of each role? Is this tension always a negative thing?

3. In what ways is a priest's life unique from that of other professionals, and in what ways are they similar?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Accountability

Original book: page 49 | Part 1 of 2

1. How do you define the value of accountability?

2. As a priest, to whom do you feel accountable?

3. Are there any statements in this section that cause a strong reaction in you? Why?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Accountability

Original book: pages 49, 50 | Part 2 of 2

4. In what ways (other than those which have been presented in this booklet) can a priest foster accountability?

5. Share the challenges and benefits to accountability that you have discovered in living out your priestly ministry?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Confidentiality

Original book: page 50

1. What is your understanding of the seal of confession?

2. What value do you place in confidentiality as a priest in your own personal ministry and in and around the place where you minister?

3. Outside of the Sacrament of Penance are there any circumstances where you might warrant the need to break a confidence. If so, how would you go about it?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Boundaries

Original book: page 50 | Part 1 of 2

1. How do you define the value of boundaries in your personal life and in your priestly ministry? Do you see a difference between the two?

2. How are boundaries best determined and best kept?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Boundaries

Original book: page 50 | Part 2 of 2

3. Often a priest lives where he works. What particular challenges arise out of this unique situation?

4. Is it better to have some diocesan guidelines concerning boundaries, or are these for each individual to determine?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Collaboration

Original book: page 50 | Part 1 of 2

1. Share a story of collaboration that enriched your priestly ministry?

2. What should be kept in mind in order to make collaboration a positive experience for you and those with whom you collaborate?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Collaboration

Original book: page 50 | Part 2 of 2

3. When is it important to collaborate with your brother priests?

4. How can you foster collaboration with other churches and with other community groups?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Transparency

Original book: page 51

1. When do I have a right to maintain a private and personal part of my life?

2. In what ways can a priest develop a life of integrity and honesty in his dealings with others?

3. How do you develop a spirit of transparency (a) where you minister; (b) among your brother priests; (c) within the diocese?

DISCUSSION NOTES

Shared insights

Original book: pages 48, 49

1. First insight from your discussion in pairs.

2. Second insight from your discussion in pairs.

3. Summary of insights to share with the whole group.

