

PERSONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A leave of absence from active ministry for personal reasons may be requested by a priest. In such cases the following diocesan policy will be in effect. Any modifications to the policy will be considered by the bishop on an individual basis.

1. A request for a leave of absence with the statement of its specific purpose is to be directed to the bishop personally and in writing.
2. A leave of absence may be granted for a period of one year. After six months and again at the end of the year the priest and bishop will meet to discuss the discernment of the priest. A leave of absence may be renewed with additional time in accord with a mutual agreement between the bishop and the priest. At the end of the extended time period, another meeting with the bishop is to be scheduled.
3. The following terms will be in effect during a leave of absence:
 - A. The diocese will provide the priest's current salary for a period of up to three months. If employment is achieved prior to this time the salary from the diocese will cease at the time of employment. Date of employment is to be reported to the bishop. If employment is not secured after three months, the bishop is to be notified and negotiated support may be continued. An initial stipend and any additional considerations may be requested and negotiated with the bishop to assist in the transition.
 - B. Medical and dental insurance will continue until covered by new employment. Variations may be negotiated.
 - C. Since a leave of absence is most often used as a time for discernment of one's vocation, the priest will be encouraged to participate in spiritual direction throughout the leave and to make a retreat prior to meeting with the bishop at the end of the first year. With approval of the bishop the diocese will financially assist the priest for any reasonable expenses incurred for spiritual direction and the retreat. If counseling is desired, this must be done in accord with the individual's medical insurance. Any additional expenses on this line must be presented and pre-approved by the bishop.
 - D. Since this is a leave of absence from *active ministry*, all faculties for the active ministry of a priest will be withdrawn by the bishop as of the day the leave begins. This is done to assist the priest in his discernment and to prevent confusion among the faithful. In an exceptional circumstance the priest may request of the bishop the reinstatement of a faculty. Canon 976, however, grants the priest the faculty to hear confessions for those in danger of death. The following faculties will be withdrawn:

- the faculties given by the bishop
- to preach (canon 764);
- to hear confessions (canons 967,  2; 974,  2).

The priest will be asked not to publically celebrate any sacraments including:

- Mass;
- Baptism (canon 862);
- and to assist at Marriages (canon 1111).

- E.** The bishop and the priest requesting a leave will mutually agree on the manner and timing of the publication of the priest's leave. Notification of a leave of absence will be made by the bishop in the same manner as other assignments in the diocese are announced. The priest who will be taking the leave will inform those people at his place of assignment.
 - F.** Throughout the period of the leave of absence the priest will keep the bishop and/or his appointed representative informed of his address and phone number and any change thereof.
 - G.** The terms of the agreement for the leave of absence from active ministry will be put in writing and signed by both the bishop and the priest. Any modifications made by the bishop to the diocesan policy will be included. Extensions to the leave will also be put in writing.
 - H.** Return to active ministry will include the granting of faculties and the reinstatement of diocesan support as found in the Diocesan Policy. The bishop will encourage the priest to obtain a spiritual director and contact a pastor for ongoing support upon his return. In consultation with the bishop and personnel committee an appropriate assignment will be determined. If the bishop determines that additional refresher courses or preparation is needed, a written plan of action will be established with the priest. Appropriate notification will be made to the priests of the diocese.
4. If the priest should no longer abide by the agreement for the leave of absence or if the priest commits a delict found in The Code of Canon Law he will then be on an Unauthorized Leave of Absence incurring the penalties attached to such.

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT FOR
CLERGY PERSONAL LEAVE**

Reverend _____ will be released from service in the Diocese of Owensboro on _____ for a personal leave of absence for one (1) year. During that time, he will receive his current salary until employed but not to exceed three months, unless the Bishop is notified of further need. The Diocese will continue to pay his health and dental insurance until he is covered by his new employer. A stipend of \$ _____ will be given to Reverend _____ to assist in his transition.

While on leave, Reverend _____ voluntarily agrees not to exercise priestly functions except in danger of death situations (c. 976). Reverend _____ will schedule an appointment with the Bishop of Owensboro six months into the leave during the week of _____ and at the end of the leave year in the week of _____ to discuss the discernment he has reached during his leave.

When he leaves his parish, Reverend _____ will tell his people he is taking a personal leave of absence for prayer and discernment. Only this information will be communicated to the presbyterate and to others who inquire.

Failure to fulfill this agreement will place Reverend _____ on an Unauthorized Leave of Absence. Reverend _____ would then be subject to the Diocesan Policy for an Unauthorized Leave of Absence and liable to a canonical penal process.

Reverend

McRaith Catholic Center
Owensboro, Kentucky

Date _____

Most Reverend William F. Medley
Bishop of Owensboro

Chancellor/Ecclesiastical Notary (*note: must be a cleric*)