

Diocese of Tucson

Code of Conduct

For All Who Minister in the Diocese of Tucson

Our Common Commitment

The Diocese of Tucson, in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church, expects all persons who minister in association with the Diocese to live moral lives.

As leaders in the Church, all who minister in the Diocese of Tucson -- priests, deacons, consecrated religious, ministry candidates, and lay persons in their varied roles -- are committed to conduct their personal and public lives in a manner that is consistent with the highest standards of our faith. In all things, they must seek to be guided by the desire to live the Truth, in Love.

All who minister within the entities of the Diocese of Tucson are called by God to build up the body of Christ in holiness and love. Their words, acts, and demeanor toward each other and toward those for whom and with whom they work should reflect the Gospel message of dignity, respect, and obedience to the commandments of the Church.

Thus, in their ministerial relationships and in their personal lives, all personnel of the Diocese, whether in pastoral or administrative roles, are committed to work with integrity and compassion, honoring the purposes and boundaries inherent in their contacts with those they serve.

Definition of Ministerial Relationship

Broadly defined, a ministerial relationship exists in any situation in which the priest, deacon, religious, seminarian, employee, or volunteer is known primarily in his or her ministerial role. In that role, he or she is freely given a position of authority by the people of the Church and by society in general. That position of authority is characterized in part by an imbalance of power, which makes impossible a completely free, mutual relationship.

In a ministerial relationship, the responsibility for keeping boundaries rests ultimately and always with the person who holds the greater authority or power. This ethical responsibility is not reduced or limited by the behavior of the person with lesser authority or power.

Misconduct in a Ministerial Relationship

In a strict sense, any exercise of authority that does not respect the dignity of the other person or does not acknowledge his or her rights constitutes misconduct in that it constitutes an improper manner of exercising one's authority.

There are obvious breaches of trust, such as intimidation of others by using actual or threatened emotional or physical violence or improper use or actual theft of diocesan assets. However, the minister must go beyond the minimal standard and seek to recognize and respond in an inclusive way to differences in culture, gender, race, socio-economic status, education, and the like.

In that spirit, the Diocese of Tucson expects its members to respect in all ways the sanctity of every human being. This respect is expressed in refraining from uncharitable speech about other persons and, with other persons, courtesy in discourse. Courtesy is especially important in the face of anger, resentment, mistrust, and like emotions we might receive from others.

Diocesan personnel are called to respect in particular the gift of sexuality. Sexual misconduct abuses both the gift of sexuality and the authority of the pastoral or educational role of those who work for the people of God and serve them. Sexual misconduct is contrary to Christian morals and the morals of many other religious belief systems and societal standards, and often violates civil law.

The Diocese of Tucson will not tolerate sexual misconduct or the failure to respond appropriately and decisively when sexual misconduct is observed, suspected, or alleged.

All priests, deacons, religious, seminarians, and all diocesan employees and volunteers must comply with all civil laws that require prompt reporting of suspected child abuse to law enforcement agencies. All personnel are expected to

know and comply with the Guidelines for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct promulgated by the Diocese.

The Guidelines embody the commitment of the Diocese of Tucson to the moral values of the Catholic Church, to the prevention of child abuse, and to the decisive response by all its personnel to allegations of sexual misconduct.

All personnel of the Diocese must recognize that violation of sexual boundaries is a particularly damaging type of misconduct. Each person is expected to become educated about the various types of sexual misconduct and put forth the greatest effort to prevent their occurrence in the community.

The most common types of interpersonal sexual misconduct are:

-- Sexual abuse of minors involves any type of sexual behavior between an adult and a child or adolescent. Adults vulnerable by virtue of mental or physical disability may also be the objects of sexual abuse. Sexual behavior that constitutes sexual abuse of minors is very broadly defined in the Diocese of Tucson Guidelines and in the laws of the State of Arizona.

-- Sexual exploitation is sexual misconduct with an adult that violates the trust implicit in a ministerial relationship. Strictly defined, exploitation occurs when there is sexual behavior or romantic overtures between a minister and an adult who has come for pastoral care of any type. More broadly, exploitation might be construed in any case of sexual behavior that occurs between a minister and an adult who is not clearly a peer of the minister.

-- Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advances or sexualized actions or language between co-workers. It is especially problematic when the behavior occurs in a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power by virtue of supervisory authority, status, rank, age, or seniority.

Other types of sexual misconduct that violate the law are listed in detail in the Guidelines. In addition, any behavior that is not consistent with public commitments and Christian principles is a violation of this Code.

Preventing Sexual Misconduct

Prevention is the most effective approach to sexual misconduct. In ministry situations, and especially with minors or adults who seek pastoral assistance, diocesan personnel are expected to keep clear boundaries, to engage collaborators who can be physically present in ministry situations, and to seek consultation in difficult circumstances. These expectations are particularly important in ministry with minors.

Interpretation of one's action is an important element in many cases of alleged harassment, abuse or exploitation that does not involve explicitly sexual contact. It follows, therefore, that sensitivity to the reactions of others is another and universally important aspect of preventing problems. All personnel must be constantly aware of the effect their particular actions have on a person seeking pastoral assistance, or even on seemingly uninterested observers.

The Diocese of Tucson is committed to a thorough program through which new employees will be screened and oriented as part of this process of prevention. Those who present themselves as candidates for ordained or lay ministry in the Church are asked to undergo even more thorough scrutiny and formation. Ongoing education/formation is part of the life of both ordained and lay ministers.

Finally, the Diocese is committed to healthy, relational parishes and workplaces. Ministry must not become a draining or isolating experience, which becomes in itself a factor increasing the likelihood of sexual misconduct. Alcohol or other disinhibiting substances must not be used in the workplace or when personnel are involved in activities that include minors. It is illegal to provide alcohol to persons less than 21 years of age.

Recognizing Sexual Misconduct

All diocesan personnel will be involved in recurring educational experiences to enhance their ability to recognize the elements of sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment. In this training, personnel will learn effective protocols for responding to observed or suspected misconduct.

Sexual misconduct or allegations of sexual misconduct do not occur without some

warning. Therefore, training also will focus on recognizing and responding to early warning signs, particularly those warning signs that suggest vulnerability to abuse or enhanced risk of abuse to another. It is the responsibility of all diocesan personnel to respond to such warning signs by using appropriate channels of inquiry and reporting. Addressing problems early and persistently often averts tragedy.

Improper use of the Internet has become an increasingly pervasive problem in all organizations. Diocesan personnel are expected never to use parish or school equipment to visit pornographic sites or to participate in chat rooms for the purpose of initiating sexual contacts, live or virtual. It is illegal to possess or view child pornography in any form.

Responding to Sexual Misconduct

It is the responsibility of all diocesan personnel to follow all the laws of the State of Arizona with regard to mandatory reporting. To honor this commitment, all new personnel will be oriented to the relevant law and instructed in practical steps to follow the law that requires reporting of suspected child abuse.

All persons who serve in the Diocese of Tucson are required to report suspected child abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency (by calling 9-1-1) and to the Office of Child, Adolescent and Adult Protection (520-792-3410, ext. 1013). It is recommended that all such persons make an additional report to Child Protective Services, consistent with the dual reporting protocol recommended in Pima County. Cooperating with law enforcement, diocesan personnel help to insure that the minor is immediately protected from harm and appropriately assisted.

When sexual abuse as a minor is reported by a person who is now an adult, it is the policy of the Diocese to encourage the person making the complaint to report immediately to law enforcement. In addition, in cooperation with any investigation by law enforcement, the person should be referred to the Office of Child, Adolescent and Adult Protection.

All personnel are required to attend periodic updates on mandatory reporting as

scheduled by their supervisors.

Conclusion

There is no way to form the perfect minister. But we can make every effort to select persons who see their faults, commit to growth, and remain open to new information. We can develop systems that effectively train our personnel and respond to problems persistently as they arise.

True Christians recognize their imperfections and understand that these imperfections make it difficult to live the Gospel in every day life. True and loyal Catholics adhere to the Mission for which the Church is formed and do not fear to recognize and respond to the imperfections of the Church and her leaders.

We are committed to the Truth. We pursue that Truth with hatred for none and compassion for all. We will seek justice for those aggrieved and those accused, embracing whole-heartedly the Common Commitment -- to protect our children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults. That is the Spirit that stands behind this Code and our Guidelines. We ask you to live it.

Revised March 25, 2004