



ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON  
66 BROOKS DRIVE  
BRAintree, MASSACHUSETTS 02184-3839

September 15, 2015

Dear Rev. Monsignor/Father:

After a significant period of discussion and consultation among the presbyterate of the Archdiocese, I am pleased to publish the official decree of promulgation of the Senior Vicar Policy for the Archdiocese of Boston. The intent of this policy is to create a personnel category for priests, typically age 70 and older, to continue to serve in active ministry in a particular way suited to their age and gifts, if they so choose. It is our hope that this new category will be explored in a creative and thoughtful manner among the presbyterate, allowing priests, as they age with grace, to continue to serve God's holy people in active and meaningful priestly ministry.

On behalf of Cardinal Seán, I am grateful for the leadership of Rev. Robert Connors, Mr. Joe D'Arrigo and their team for assisting in formulating and refining this policy, approved by the Cardinal.

May Christ the Good Shepherd continue to bless us as we share in the gift and grace of ordained priestly ministry.

With best wishes and an assurance of prayer, I am,

Fraternally yours in Christ,

*Bryan K. Parrish*

Very Rev. Bryan K. Parrish, V.E.  
Episcopal Vicar for Clergy  
Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership

# SENIOR VICAR POLICY

## ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

**PROPOSAL:** The establishment of a new Personnel category – Senior Vicar.

**PURPOSE/RATIONALE:** To acknowledge the unique situation of men, typically at age 70+\*, who are facing a change of assignment prior to retirement. Since these men are not likely to be taking another assignment as “Pastor,” this category allows the priest to be treated in a manner that respects his wisdom, age, and experience. This distinction, separate from a Parochial Vicar with all the responsibilities expected of a younger man, addresses the assignment process for an older man with sensitivity and respect.

**GOAL:** There are many reasons why a man at this stage of life would be concerned that his personal needs be balanced with the needs of the Archdiocese. With the Senior Priest category beginning at age 75, the Senior Vicar category is an assignment, not an arrangement. However, having a conversation with a pastor to set reasonable expectations is a key concept of the assignment process. Recognizing the ministry of the priests, and with declining numbers of priests, this proposal hopes to engage as many men as possible to remain in ministry.

**PROCESS:**

1. An Initial Conversation. When a priest is aware of a change in his assignment, the first action is to have a conversation with the personnel office allowing for an honest exchange of ideas and concerns. The conversation should center on mutual needs: the health and well-being of the priest as he moves forward with the needs of the Church. It should lead to a discussion of possibilities and options. The personnel office would also offer resources.
2. Discernment. The conversation could be followed with prayerful discernment, conversation with a spiritual director, human resource person or other sources of affirmation and support.
3. Decision for an assignment. Working together with the personnel office, the priest would be given an assignment.
4. Time away. It is hoped that a priest would take some time before entering the new assignment to rest, relax, and to take a vacation in order to rejuvenate and re-energize; this matter would be discussed with the Clergy Personnel Office.

## **PRACTICALITIES:**

1. The Senior Vicar category is not a “retirement.” Senior Priest status is possible at age 75. Although canon law requires a Pastor to submit his resignation at age 75, it is at the discretion of the Archbishop to accept or postpone the resignation. Each priest at age 75 is asked to seriously consider all the factors in his life that would lead him to continue active ministry.
2. The Senior Vicar category encourages a priest to be creative in his assignment and ministry; for example, it could be an assignment to a parish, a part-time parish/special ministry such as prison or hospital, accepting an assignment as an “administrator” of a parish moving toward collaboration, or a special focused ministry. Also, a Senior Vicar might be of great value by helping single pastors in two parishes. The possibilities of surfacing unique ways to balance personal need with Church need are numerous.
3. A Senior Vicar, assigned to a parish, has the same status as a Parochial Vicar and is not an “added” priest. He would receive a full stipend. However, considering health and other circumstances, prior to the assignment, a priest and pastor would have a conversation about parish ministry and responsibilities. It would not be unexpected that a Senior Vicar would have the possibility of reasonably reduced responsibilities and also more time away, always after a dialogue with the pastor.
4. A Senior Vicar would be expected to live in residence at a rectory (although individual exceptions could be made for a priest to be living in a different rectory). This policy affirms Rectory living for the good of the priest.
5. The Personnel Office would begin to encourage priests who are in their 50s to think about the future. How can the Archdiocese encourage active, full lives of a priest as he ages? Resources and outreach would be most valuable.

\*Exceptions beginning at age 68 can be made by the Archbishop of Boston

## DECREE OF PROMULGATION

### *In Nomine Domini*

Those responsible for implementing the Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese of Boston, *Disciples in Mission*, and those who assist me in the assigning and the care of priests, together, determined that active priests, who are approaching retirement age, require some alternatives, choices, and flexibility in their assignments during latter years. Accordingly, a committee of staff and priests was formed to assist in consulting with the priests of the Archdiocese and to develop the Senior Vicar Policy to meet these needs.

The proposal for a new clergy personnel category and the development of a plan for assigning priests preparing for their retirement was brought to the Presbyteral Council on June 19, 2014. Further consultation with the priests of the Archdiocese and further study into the question occurred between that meeting and the Presbyteral Council meeting on October 16, 2014. The emerging plan for the new policy was brought to the Vicariates of the Archdiocese and feedback was heard and discussed at the November 20, 2014 Presbyteral Council Meeting as well as the December 18, 2014 Presbyteral Council Meeting. On May 21, 2015 the Presbyteral Council discussed and provided advice on the guidelines for the Senior Vicar personnel category. From that consultation and the further work of the committee the Senior Vicar Policy was developed.

Therefore, in accord with canons 8, 29, 381 §1, and 391 I hereby decree and promulgate as particular law for the Archdiocese of Boston, the Senior Vicar Policy.

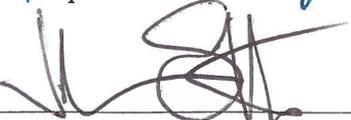
This Decree and the Senior Vicar Policy shall be published and made known to the priests of the Archdiocese of Boston by electronic mail, as well as by posting on the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Curia website and the Clergy section of the Clergy Health and Retirement Trust website.

Any policy or particular law of the Archdiocese that is contrary to the Senior Vicar Policy is hereby repealed and abrogated.

This Decree shall become effective at 12:01 AM on September 16, 2015, the Memorial of Saints Cornelius, pope and martyr and Cyprian, bishop and martyr.

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Boston in Braintree, Massachusetts this 11th day of September, 2015.

  
Archbishop of Boston

  
Chancellor

