

POLICY 3.6.2 Vacation, Retreat, and Continuing Education for Priests and Deacons in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

A. Vacation leave

Each calendar year, all priests in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan are accorded 35 days for vacation, exceeding what is provided in Canon 533 §2 and §3. Priests are **expected** to respect that limit when making their plans. All expenses for this vacation are the responsibility of the cleric himself, unless otherwise stipulated by an agreement signed by the Archbishop.

Priests will receive their usual living allowance for vacation leave, up to 35 days. Any additional days over the 35 days, the priest will not be remunerated for.

1. Notification of vacation plans

The cleric is expected to notify the Vicar for Clergy of the Archdiocese and the priest's Parish Council(s) at least two months in advance of his intended vacation, by completing and submitting Form 3.6.1.a.

2. Deanery vacation scheduling

Because, in many instances, the neighbouring clergy in a deanery are called upon to supply for priests who are on vacation, and because the pastoral needs in a deanery call for the presence of a certain number of priests at any given time,

- i. there cannot be more than one priest in a deanery away on vacation at the same time;**
- ii. all the priests of a deanery must be present during the Archbishop's Canonical Visitation in any given year;
- iii. each dean, before December 1 of each year, will discuss with the priests in his deanery the dates that each priest will be away on vacation or other known absences during the following calendar year.
- iv. For priestly coverage in their parish(es) during those dates, a letter of suitability for a replacement visiting priest from outside of the Archdiocese must be provided to the Vicar for Clergy at least **2 months** before vacation and included with the submission of vacation application; and,
- v. If no priest is available to cover for vacations, before the priest leaves, he must make arrangements for lay services
- vi. the dean will complete and submit Form 3.6.2.a to the Vicar for Clergy as soon after December 1 as possible.

3. Blackout periods

Given the importance and significance of certain periods in the Church's annual calendar, priests shall not schedule vacations during:

- Advent

- Christmas (Dec. 25)
- Lent
- Easter (Holy Week, Triduum and Easter Sunday)

B Annual retreat

1. Each cleric is required to make an annual retreat of three full days per year, excluding travel time, non-cumulative from year to year, in accordance with Canon Law (276, §4).
2. The Archdiocese offers an annual clergy retreat in the late summer, to which all priests, deacons, seminarians, pastoral interns and religious workers discerning clerical life in the Archdiocese are invited to attend. All parishes served by a resident priest are assessed \$300.00 to cover the costs of room and board plus the remuneration due to the retreat director, whether or not their priest attends the retreat. Special considerations (e.g. ensuite bath) are the responsibility of the cleric who asks for these. The clerics are responsible for their own transportation to and from the retreat.

Any cleric who seeks to attend a retreat outside of the annual archdiocesan retreat is responsible for his costs. (travel and retreat costs and the cost of pastoral coverage for the parish)

C. Continuing education leave

Each incardinated cleric may also take up to three full days per year for continuing education of the sort recommended by Canon Law (279), in a spiritual and religious field of his choosing. With the permission of the Archbishop, this time may be accumulated for a maximum of 4 years (that is, 12 days excluding travel).

The cost of registration, materials and room & board will be provided by the Archdiocese. Travel costs are the responsibility of the cleric himself, unless otherwise stipulated by an agreement signed by and with the written approval of the program by the Archbishop.

D. Study leave

A study leave is initiated by the Archbishop who asks a priest or deacon to engage in further study in a field of theology that will have a practical application and benefit to the Archdiocese. In such cases, the Archbishop assigns the cleric to a study leave for a prescribed length of time. The cleric will prepare and present a budget of expenses (travel, tuition, room and board, and books) for approval by the Archbishop.

E. Bereavement and compassionate care leave

In recognition of the challenges faced by priests in responding to unexpected illness and/or death of family members, the Archdiocese has created the following provisions for additional leave. **The Archdiocese requests, in turn, that priests respect the intent and purpose of these provisions** and, if they so wish, make use of them as soon as possible after receiving notice of

the illness or death of a family member. The final decision of granting or denying the request for bereavement and/or compassionate care leave belongs to the Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan.

1. Death of a parent

In the event of the death of a parent of a priest, a two-week paid bereavement leave shall be granted to the priest. If air travel is required for his attendance at the funeral, the Archdiocese, at the written request of the priest, may provide interim funding to cover his travel expenses. This funding shall be repaid to the Archdiocese on a pre-determined term. The Archdiocese will pay for pastoral assistance in the parishes of the priest during the two-week leave period.

2. Death of a sibling

In the event of the death of a sibling of a priest, a two-week paid bereavement leave shall be granted to the priest. If air travel is required for his attendance at the funeral, the Archdiocese, **at the written request of the priest**, may provide interim funding to cover his travel expenses. This funding shall be repaid to the Archdiocese on a pre-determined term. The Archdiocese will pay for pastoral assistance in the parish(es) of the priest during the two-week leave period.

3. Illness of a parent or sibling

During a period of the severe illness of a parent or sibling, a priest, **upon written request**, may be granted paid compassionate care leave, for a maximum of two weeks. The Archdiocese, at the written request of the priest, may provide a loan to cover his travel expenses. This funding shall be repaid to the Archdiocese on a pre-determined term. The Archdiocese will pay for pastoral assistance in the parishes of the priest for the approved leave period. The determination of the granting of the leave and the length of the leave will be made by the Archbishop or the Vicar General. Please note that leave during a period of severe illness is not meant to and should not be used to extend vacation leave.

4. Death of a family member, not a parent or sibling

In the event of the death of a family member, who is not a parent or sibling, a priest may, **upon written request**, be granted paid bereavement leave for a maximum of six days, and unpaid bereavement leave for an additional eight days. The Archdiocese will pay for pastoral assistance in the parishes of the priest for the approved leave period. The determination of the granting of the leave and the length of the leave will be made by the Archbishop or the Vicar General.

5. When bereavement leave is combined with vacation or other authorized leave

The Archdiocese recognizes that there may be occasions when a member of clergy is on authorized leave when the death occurs or when a member of clergy learns of the death of a parent or sibling and decides to combine bereavement leave with vacation leave. In these circumstances, the policy above will not apply. Rather, the Archbishop will determine the amount to be paid for pastoral assistance.

For the purposes of bereavement leave and compassionate care leave, “parent” means the mother or father of the priest requesting the leave.

For the purposes of bereavement leave and compassionate care leave, “sibling” means a child of the parents of the priest requesting leave.

For the purposes of compassionate care leave, “severe illness” means an illness where there is a significant risk of death within six months.

6) Personal sabbatical leave

An incardinated priest of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan may request a personal sabbatical of two full months **after ten years** of ministry in the Archdiocese. See Policy 3.6.5. for a full description and requirements to apply for sabbatical leave.

7) Other leave

Occasionally, other conferences and workshops become available to the clergy of the Archdiocese, such as a Eucharistic Congress or a gathering of the National Federation of Councils of Priests. On these occasions, the Archbishop will determine the number of our clerics, incardinated or unincardinated, who may attend. From those who indicate interest in attending, priority will be given to those who have not attended such an event previously. The costs of registration and room and board will be covered by the Archdiocese. The cleric is responsible for travel and associated costs.

The days of the meeting and travel days will not be considered vacation leave time, which will remain unaffected. Approved participation in a conference or workshop will be treated as a paid leave of absence by the cleric.

Amended by the College of Consultors on 16 February 2011
Amended by the College of Consultors on 11 May 2011
Amended by the College of Consultors on 28 September 2011
Amended by the College of Consultors on 02 May 2012
Amended by the College of Consultors on 11 March 2015
Amended by the College of Consultors on 23 January 2018
Amended by the College of Consultors on 12 June 2018
Amended by the Curia on 27 November 2025
Reviewed by the College of Consultors 29 January 2026
Approved by the Curia on 19 February 2026

