

Guidelines for Healthy Boundaries in Ministry with Adults

Standards of Conduct for Ministry with Adults

A **pastoral relationship** is a relationship between a Member and any person to whom he provides pastoral care, which includes counseling, spiritual direction, spiritual guidance, hearing confession or receiving confidential or privileged information.

It is not uncommon for those who seek the church's ministry to feel attracted to a religious or to be flattered by his attention. A layperson's attraction to a missionary or enjoyment in being the object of his sexual interest does not excuse any form of sexual misconduct on his part, however. It is entirely the responsibility of the missionary to maintain appropriate emotional and sexual boundaries with those with whom he works and/or serves. The following are guidelines for maintaining integrity in pastoral relationships with adults.

1. Boundaries in Ministry with Adults

Responsibilities in Ministry – Whenever a Member or Church personnel is involved in ministry they are always the person in authority representing God and the Church. The Member or Church personnel is always the one responsible for maintaining healthy boundaries in the pastoral relationship because the minister is always in a position of power over the other person.

Exploitation in Ministry occurs when a Member or Church personnel take advantage of the pastoral counseling relationship for the benefit of the pastoral counselor.

Examples of Exploitation include:

- Sexual contact between a person providing ministry and the recipient of ministry when the ministry provider initiates the contact.
- Sexual contact between a person providing ministry and the recipient of ministry when the ministry recipient initiates the contact.
- Using the ministry role to further financial or business interests.
- Sharing confidential information gained through ministry with individuals who have no need to know.
- Using a ministry role to degrade another person.

a. For the purpose of this policy, **sexual contact** is defined as vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral intercourse, or the touching of an erogenous zone of another (including but not limited to the thighs, genitals, buttocks, pubic region or chest) for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying either person.

b. **Sexual exploitation** is sexual contact between a Member and a person with whom the Member has a pastoral relationship. The nature of the relationship is exploitation, regardless of who initiates the sexual contact.

c. Members must never engage in sexual contact with any person with whom they have a pastoral relationship. This includes sexually explicit conversation, outside a counseling session.

- d. Members assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all pastoral relationships.
- e. Physical contact in pastoral relationships should be respectful and consistent with the intent to provide a safe and comfortable environment.
- f. Ministry should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times and should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.

2. Supervision

- a. Members who provide pastoral counseling shall be required to have ongoing professional supervision and refer individuals to professional counseling when appropriate.
- b. Members practicing spiritual direction shall submit that ministry to peer or supervisory review with a spiritual advisor.
- c. Members in pastoral relationship are responsible for seeking the counsel and pastoral guidance of a person of spiritual wisdom should they find themselves at risk of acting on sexual or romantic attraction to a parishioner, client, or counselee.
- d. Members who provide counseling shall maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled.

3. Confidentiality

- a. Information disclosed to a Member during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in confidence whenever possible.
- b. A breach of confidentiality occurs when there is a disclosure of confidential or privileged information in the absence of compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
- c. The Member should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.
- d. Information obtained in the course of sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
- If there clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, the counselor is to disclose the information necessary to protect the parties involved and to prevent harm.
 - Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the counselor should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.
- e. A Member providing pastoral counseling services or spiritual direction should keep records of such sessions.
- f. With the exception of knowledge gained in the Sacrament of Penance, knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching or other public presentations. Measures

should be taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosure.

g. If a Member discovers that there is a serious threat to the welfare of a minor and that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian is essential to the child's health and well-being, the pastoral counselor or spiritual director should disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor.

4. Conflicts of Interest

a. Conflicts of interest exist when a Member takes advantage of a pastoral relationship in order to further his own personal, religious, political, or business interests.

b. A Member should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest between a counselor and a person being counseled. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.

c. If a conflict of interest arises, the Member should inform all parties. Resolution of the issues must protect the person being counseled.

d. The Member must establish clear, appropriate boundaries with anyone with whom there is a business, professional, or social interest.

e. Members shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer to other professionals when appropriate.

5. Responsibilities in Ministry

a. Members are responsible for recognizing and respecting the power of the ministerial role.

b. Members are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others.

c. Members are responsible for developing resources to meet their own spiritual and emotional needs.

d. Members are responsible for taking care of their own health in order to avoid serious impairment of judgment that is associated with sleep deprivation, nutritional deficiencies, and excessive workloads.

e. Members are to avoid speaking graphically about sexual activities or allowing others to do so.

f. Members are responsible for not becoming romantically involved with those they serve in ministry regardless of who initiates the contact.

g. Members should never show pornographic materials to those they serve in ministry.

h. Members must never use their role in ministry to degrade or humiliate another person.

i. Members are responsible to avoid swearing or using foul language in the presence of those they serve in ministry.

j. Members are responsible for communicating to their local director or Unit Director when they have concerns about their own or others' relationships.

k. Members are responsible for maintaining boundaries with those they serve in ministry at all times.

l. Members are responsible for recognizing warning signs of boundary violations. Some of these warning signs include the following:

- Wearing special clothes when you are going to see a certain person.
- Spending extra time grooming yourself when you know you are going to see a certain person.
- Finding ways or reasons to be alone with a certain person.
- Keeping aspects of your relationship with a person secret from others (such as how often you talk on the phone or see each other alone).
- Giving and receiving special gifts from a certain person.
- Neglecting to spend time with others because you want to spend more time with a certain person.
- Sharing personal information about others with a certain person.
- Sharing personal information or seeking help with personal problems from a certain person.
- Excessively looking forward to seeing a certain person.
- Fantasizing or daydreaming about a certain person

B. Reporting Misconduct with Adults

1. Members are responsible for ensuring the ethics of ministry. Communication regarding misconduct by Members in ministry with adults is essential for continuing the integrity of these ministries

2. Members shall report misconduct with adults. Reports of suspected or known misconduct may be made confidentially (unless otherwise required to be disclosed by Canon Law) to any of the following:

a. The Chairperson of the Review Board

b. The Unit Director

c. The Moderator General

d. If an allegation is made against the Moderator General, recourse goes directly to the Holy See. If a Provincial abuses, the Moderator General intervenes.

Resources:

Vos Estis Lux Mundi, Motu Proprio Apostolic Letter by Pope Francis, May 7, 2019

March 25, 2023 – An updated version of “Vos Estis Lux Mundi” (You are the light of the world), went into effect April 1, 2023, expanded the categories of victims covered by the regulations to include vulnerable adults.

Meeting for The Protection of Minors in the Church, Eucharistic Address of Pope Francis, February 21-24, 2019.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC 2336

Code of Canon Law, #1387, #1395

Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Holy See ratified in 1990, and the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child regarding the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which the Holy See ratified as a party to this international document in 2001.

Norms on delicts reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (11 October 2021)
[English, French, German, Italian, Latin, Polish, Portuguese]

Rescriptum ex Audientia SS.mi: Rescriptum of the Holy Father Francis to approve the Norms on delicts reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (11 October 2021)
[Latin]

Video Message of the Holy Father for the meeting “Our common mission of safeguarding God’s children”, organised by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and the Bishops’ Conferences of Central and Eastern Europe (18 September 2021)
[English, Italian, Polish, Spanish]

Number 160 of the July 16, 2020, Vademecum from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith notes that there can be no penal proceedings against an accused cleric who is deceased. The following two numbers (161-162) take up the topic regarding a cleric who dies after the allegation is being considered or a process is underway. But that's different from your question regarding a cleric who is accused and has been dead a long time. In such a case, CDF has no need or desire to be informed at all. The matter is entirely in the hands of a competent authority (i.e., via the competent Ordinary) with no involvement by CDF. “On certain points of procedure in treating cases of sexual abuse of minors committee by Clerics.”

Verification Members have read the policies. Personnel file to include signed document stating member has read the policy.

**Missionaries of the Precious Blood
VERIFICATION STATEMENT**

PLEASE PRINT

Member's Name:

Last	First	Middle Initial
------	-------	----------------

Ministry Title:	Location
------------------------	-----------------

Verification Statement

I verify that I have read and understand the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and the policies contained within the Guidelines for Healthy Boundaries in Ministry with Adults. I agree to abide by these guidelines and also understand that the Missionaries of the Precious Blood may amend or change these guidelines at their discretion without notice.

Member Signature

Date