

## Policy and procedure - The Temporary Ministry of Priests within England and Wales

This policy and procedure applies to all Roman Catholic Clergy who are, or will be engaging on a temporary basis in any form of public Active Ministry (including the public celebration of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation or other religious services) while within the territory of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

### Policy statement

The Church has upheld that the “eucharistic celebration is the action of Christ himself and the Church.” (CIC§899.1). The minister of the Eucharist is a validly ordained priest (CIC§900.1) and provided he is not impeded by canon law, and celebrates according to the rites of the Church and the law pertaining to the Eucharist, the celebration is licit (CIC§900.2).

CIC§903 states:

*A priest is to be permitted to celebrate even if the rector of the church does not know him, provided that either he presents a letter of introduction from his ordinary or superior, issued at least within the year, or it can be judged prudently that he is not impeded from celebrating.*

### Diocesan Clergy from outside of the territory of England and Wales

Diocesan Clergy, who will be engaging in active ministry in any diocese within the territory of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, having come from outside that territory, will require the prior permission of the Diocesan Bishop to undertake that ministry. Permission will only be granted if the Diocesan Bishop obtains satisfactory written confirmation from the individual's own Bishop that he is a Cleric in good standing and that there are no concerns, allegations or criminal convictions relating to any maltreatment of and /or sexual misconduct with children or adults.

This permission can only be given for the specified period of ministry in the receiving Diocese, not exceeding a period of 12 months.

A specimen document (Testimonial of Suitability for Ministry - Diocesan Clergy) is in the Forms Library.

### Ordained Clergy from within the territory of England and Wales

The tradition of the church is that each diocesan bishop (or his delegate) and each major superior of religious congregations, issues clergy in good standing with a *celebret* (a “letter” of good standing) so that the priest may exercise his ministry in a temporary way outside of the place where he normally conducts that ministry. The *celebret* is the normal canonical means by which a priest can be identified as such, and by which he is to be recognised to be in good standing with his bishop.

In order to facilitate the increasing need for vigilance in safeguarding in the church in England and Wales, the *celebret* should contain the following (or similar) words:

#### **Catholic Diocese of X**

**Rev. Fr N.N is a priest of the Diocese of X in good standing and has the faculty to hear confessions. I ask that he be permitted to celebrate Holy Mass and perform other priestly duties. He has a current Enhanced DBS Disclosure and has undertaken safeguarding training for ministry.**

**Signed Bishop xxxx**

**Expiry date: dd/mm/yyyy**

The *celebret* for religious priests would be amended to show the religious institute to which they are members, and would be signed by the major superior (Provincial or other similar office holder).

The diocese (or religious congregation) will apply the following principles:

1. the issuing of a *celebret* for each priest will be for no more than 12 calendar months as per CIC§903.
2. the diocese (or religious order) will keep a register of those *celebrets* that had been issued, along with the date of issue and the date of expiry and the date and number of the most recent DBS disclosure certificate.
3. should a priest, for whatever reason, be removed from active pastoral ministry, then the bishop (or his delegate, or the religious superior) will remove the *celebret* physically from the priest until his situation was regularised.

4. the *celebret* will either have a photograph of the priest on it, or be linked to some photographic identification by means of a reference number e.g. a passport or driving license photo card number written on the *celebret*.
5. each *celebret* when issued will be accompanied by a letter from the diocesan bishop (or religious superior) explaining the terms upon which the *celebret* is issued, and the necessity to surrender it if the priest is removed from active pastoral ministry.
6. The *celebret* will be the means by which priests who normally minister within one of the dioceses or other ecclesiastical entities of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales can minister temporarily in other areas of the Conference on single and extraordinary occasions e.g. at an ordination, at a celebration Mass, at marriages and baptisms, at a pilgrimage or any other form of occasional ministry.
7. The *celebret* will also be the means whereby priests who have an ecclesiastical appointment within one of the dioceses of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales can supply for holiday cover of another priest outside of their normal diocese of work.

The host church will agree:

- Before any period or occasion of ministry commences, to ensure that the *celebret* of any visitor is seen.
- To ensure that visiting clergy observe all the prudent safeguarding practices, including not being alone with children or with adults at risk.
- That the local priest will check with the Diocese of issue (via the Bishop's Office) or the Major Superior before any ministry takes place if there is any doubt about the presented documentation,
- To the checking of the *celebret* in advance (by scan/email) and that the proper safeguarding provisions are in place in the parish if the priest is coming on supply where the parish priest is absent.

Ecclesiastical appointments by bishops or major superiors are, *de facto*, expressions of trust in those appointed to carry out the ministry delegated to them (CIC§519). The bishop, as the local ordinary, grants faculties for the exercise of this ministry within the parish (and diocese) to which the appointment has been made. The acceptance of the *celebret* across the dioceses and ecclesiastical entities of the Bishops' Conference is an extension of that fundamental exercise of ecclesiastical appointment and trust between the Bishop and his priest extended through the "collegiality of the Bishops' Conference" (*Directory on the Ministry and Life of the Bishop*, §28). Diligence is required on

the Diocesan Bishop (and the Major Superior of Religious Institutes) to ensure that all priests are schooled in safeguarding procedures and protocols according to the guidelines set down by the national offices.

*Celebrets* for bishops and major superiors should be validated by the Chancellor of the Diocese; for the case of bishops, that is the Chancellor of the Diocese in which they work; for the major superiors of religious congregations, it is the Chancellor of the diocese in which they are domiciled.

Long-term (more than 12 months) or permanent assignments of clergy will require a testimonial of suitability and may the granting of habitual diocesan faculties. Permanent assignments involving diocesan clergy will also require the observance of the canonical requirements regarding incardination.