

Current Issues Regarding Our Clergy Circular 2008-09

To: All Parish Priests in the Parishes, Diocesan or Religious:

As your bishop, it is my responsibility to remind you every now and then on how we ought to conduct ourselves as men called by God to a particular way of life. To be a pastor is to live a way of life reflective of God's self-giving love through caring for a portion of his flock with utmost devotion and undivided attention. This would require:

1. Presence in the parish.
 - a. Meaning: more than visibility, active leading, availability (cf. c. 283 § 1; 515-552).
 - b. Things that draw our presence away:
 - i. Necessary, not to be sacrificed: Need for rest: day off and one month leave a year (cf. c. 283 § 2), three weeks renewal/retreat/R & R, executive check-ups, individual retreat-recollections (cf. c. 276 § 1 & 2), attendance in seminars/workshops/updating, diocesan assignments (cf. c. 274 § 2).
 - ii. Laudable, encouraged, but not necessary: Ministry outside the parish – being a pilgrimage tour guide, giving seminars and retreats to non-parishioners, non-diocesan ministry related activities, i.e., masses in government and private offices.
 - iii. Laudable but to be pursued with proper discernment to ensure that it does not deprive our parishioners of their right for our attention: Pursuit of interests not related to ministry but develop one's potentials and talents. e.g. teaching or farming.
2. Attitude towards material/financial matters
 - a. Engagement in improving financial capability: acceptable reasons
 - i. Need of family of origin
 - ii. Supplement/augment what diocese can give in terms of security
 - b. Engagement in business ventures for one's personal gain is a NO (cf. c. 286)
 - i. Deprives time for ministry
 - ii. Affects the general direction of life as service
 - iii. Tendency to take advantage of the priesthood
 - iv. Incompatible with the simplicity of life demanded by our being Christ's representatives (of his values, attitudes)

3. Long Standing Tradition in Manila

- a. Transparency in financial stewardship expressed by a complete and prompt submission of financial reports and remittances (cf. c. 1284 § 1 & 2 7° & 8°; c. 1286 § 3).
- b. Absolutely no family member staying in the Parish Convent except sick parents who otherwise have no one to take care.

As your Bishop I will call attention of those individuals who are at odds with the three points discussed above according to these guiding principles;

- a. Minister more important than the ministry
- b. Balanced life thru planning ahead;
- c. Discernment through sensitivity to one's needs and the flock's needs—what love urges to be pursued, or to be let go.

Those concerned I hope will not mind my calling their attention for my only wish is to make you all – to borrow the words of the late Cardinal Sin – “the best Clergy in the world.”

Given in the Chancery in Fairview, Quezon City, this 19th day of June in the Year of Our Lord, 2008.

Most Rev. Antonio R. Tobias, DD
Bishop

Attested by:

Rev. Fr. Jaime Z. Lara
Chancellor