

Chapels in Subdivisions and in Government Housing Projects Circular 2013-18

To: All Parish Priests

Lately our Diocese have encountered problems regarding the use of Chapels in subdivisions and gated villages as Parish Churches and/or the conversion or improvements of Chapels into Multi-Purpose Center.

As regard the use of Chapels in Subdivision/gated villages, such use should be covered by MOA between the RCBN and the Homeowners Association. In the creation of Parishes this is one of the requirements. Where there is no MOA now, this was promised either by the PPC or by the Homeowners' Association but was not accomplished. Where that is the case, problems are expected to arise, especially when the Homeowners' Association officers are of different religious persuasions and not sympathetic to the Catholic Church. So the MOA is important! Concerned Parish Priests are kindly requested to work out the MOA, if such has not yet been accomplished as promised when the Parish was created.

It goes without saying that in this category of land use, the Catholic Church does not own the land but is given only the use of the land (usufruct) for a definite number of years, usually 50 years renewable, to be stipulated in the MOA. Hopefully, in the span of so many years the Catholic Church will be able to relocate the Church in a lot of her own more accessible to the people she serves.

Regarding the conversion and improvement of Catholic Chapels into a multi-purpose center with funds coming from LGU or from politicians, the Parish Priests are warned that our Constitution does not allow public funds to be used to favor any religion. Such conversion also prejudices our right to the exclusive use of the property which we intend to purchase in the future.

The same principle holds true for Chapels in subdivision and gated villages, the Chapel that may be Parish Church now, are for the exclusive use of Catholics as they were built by Catholics and these may not be usurped for any other use by the Homeowners' Association. The PPC have roles and functions different from those of the officials of the Homeowners' Association.

Chapel leaders or Catholic faithful has the supreme duty to protect and maintain their Catholic Chapels and report to their Parish Priest or RCBN any attempt of interested parties other than Catholics to take-over the whole or any

part of the property. Parish Priests should be more assertive to the point of being aggressive to safeguard the exclusive use of Catholic Chapels.

Parish Priests should inform the Diocese on the status of their Chapels and report any problem they may encounter. They may coordinate with the Property Custodian of RCBN with regards to the requirements and processes on how to acquire the property in favor of the Diocese in the near future.

This Circular is being written by the RCBN to exercise precautionary measures not to lose our hold to the exclusive use of these churches and chapels in favor of other sects or of the Homeowners' Association. To reduce Parish Churches to mere Chapels, to make such chapels exclusively for the residents only, is foreign to Christianity. If such attempts become successful, we will be forced to prohibit Religious activities there altogether. Please be guided accordingly.

Given in the Chancery in Fairview, Quezon City, 11 September 2013.

Most Rev. Antonio R. Tobias, DD
Bishop

Attested to by:

Rev. Fr. Reynaldo Percival S. Flores
Chancellor