



GENERAL DECREE

PARTICULAR LAW FOR THE RETIREMENT OF PRIESTS

Grateful for the service of our priests and vigilant for their continued care, I hereby decree the following norms as particular law for the Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee.

Article 1. General Norm

The following norms apply to all priests incardinated in the Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee.

Article 2. Age of Retirement

- §1. At the age of 65, a priest may request retirement for grave reasons, such as grave illness. Permission to retire must be granted by the diocesan bishop.
- §2. Priests who were 65 years of age on or before June 1, 2022, may request retirement at age 70.
- §3. At the age of 75, a priest is requested to resign from his parish (canon 538, §3) and request retirement.

Article 3. Sustenance for Retired Priests

- §1. Upon being granted retirement, the priest shall meet with the Director of Human Resources to review available benefits and review the provisions of particular law relevant to his new status.
- §2. When the grant of permission to retire from the diocesan bishop has become effective, the priest no longer receives remuneration from the Diocese or the parish, without prejudice to Article 5, §2.

Article 4. Sources of Sustenance for Retired Priests

- §1. Mindful of the obligation of the diocesan bishop to see to the proper sustenance of a retired priest, there are four major sources of income for the retired priest: 1) Social Security, 2) the Priest Pension Plan, 3) 403(b) Savings Plan, and 4) individual savings accounts.
- §2. All priests are forbidden to opt out of Social Security unless they have the prior written permission of the local ordinary.
- §3. All incardinated priests are automatically enrolled in the Priests' Pension Plan.
- §4. All newly ordained priests are to be enrolled in the 403(b) savings plan. The Diocese will match half of the first 2% of a priest's pay.
- §5. Priests are urged to contribute to individual savings accounts to prepare for the possible ups and downs that can be experienced during retirement.

Article 5. Senior Priest Status

- §1. A retired priest who is in good health and wishes to continue to serve in a parish, albeit at reduced working hours and pastoral duties, may request senior priest status.
- §2. A priest who wishes to serve as a senior priest should meet with the pastor of the parish where he would like to assist. If the pastor is open to the possibility, he and the retired priest shall establish a mutual agreement on duties, stipends, and, if needed, housing. The stipend is provided by the parish.
- §3. The diocesan bishop must approve the arrangement and give the senior priest a letter of appointment.

Article 6. Secular Employment and Conduct of Business Forbidden

- §1. In accordance with c. 286, retired priests are forbidden to conduct business or trade personally or through others, for their own advantage or the advantage of others, except with the written permission of the local ordinary.
- §2. An offense against the obligation of c. 286 is a canonical delict (canon 1393, §1).

Article 7. Senior Parochial Vicars

- §1. A pastor who has reached the age of 70 may ask to resign his pastorate and request assignment as a parochial vicar at another parish. If the diocesan bishop

accepts this request, the priest is to receive the normal salary for an active priest (unless he has income from other employment), reside in the parish rectory, and perform full-time priestly ministry in the parish (unless he has a dispensation from the diocesan bishop).

§2. Dispensations from this rule are reserved to the diocesan bishop.

Article 8. Housing for Retired Diocesan Priests

§1. A priest who has already obtained a residence to live in after retirement is free to do so. If so, the diocese is not responsible for his housing expenses.

§2. If an incardinated diocesan priest wishes to live in a diocesan or parochial residence when he retires, he is to alert the director of the Office of Human Resources at least one year in advance of retirement so that arrangements can be made.

§3. A retired incardinated priest may request to live at Villa Vianney, the diocesan residence for retired priests, if a suite is available. The priest is expected to pay a monthly service fee to cover the cost of utilities, internet, some meals, and other necessary services. Priests are to pay the fee to the Diocese by auto-draft each month from their own account.

§4. If Villa Vianney is full or the priest prefers, he will be offered the option of living at a local rectory. The priest will pay a fee to the parish, which is responsible for providing the required services. If the parish cannot provide the retired priest with the services offered at Villa Vianney, then the monthly service fee will be reduced accordingly.

§5. To live at Villa Vianney or a local rectory, the priest must be capable of independent living. If he eventually requires assisted living, he must relocate to an assisted living facility.

Article 9. Medical Benefits

§1. The medical benefits that provide part of the sustenance owed to a retired priest include: 1) Medicare, 2) prescription coverage, 3) dental coverage, 4) a pre-loaded card, and 5) Medicaid.

§2. When a priest becomes eligible for Medicare, he shall contact the Office of Human Resources for assistance in enrolling.

§3. Prescription coverage shall be provided without charge by the Diocese.

§4. Dental coverage shall be provided without charge by the Diocese.

§5. A pre-loaded card shall be provided to retired priests for payment of approved medical expenses that are not covered by other sources. The amount of coverage and covered expenses will be determined by the local ordinary, in accordance with the requirements of civil law.

§6. Those who qualify for Medicaid shall enroll in the program. The Office of Human Resources shall assist qualifying priests with enrollment in Medicaid.

Article 10. Independent Evaluation

§1. If the local ordinary suspects that a priest is no longer capable of living independently, the priest may be directed to undergo an evaluation by medical personnel selected by the local ordinary.

§2. The evaluator must be a medical professional, e.g., a nurse practitioner, who shall evaluate the priest for medical and emotional needs.

§3. Respecting the priest's right to defend his own privacy, the priest may refuse the independent evaluation; however, in such a case, the local ordinary will require the priest to vacate his residence, since the ordinary cannot be certain that the priest can safely live independently.

§4. The evaluator will make a recommendation for care or additional medical review, as appropriate.

§5. The evaluator shall also give his/her professional opinion on the ability of the priest to live independently.

§6. If the evaluator determines that the priest is no longer capable of independent living, the local ordinary will instruct the priest to relocate to a facility that can provide adequate care for the priest. The Office of Human Resources shall assist the priest in making his decision concerning the best facility.

§7. The evaluator shall also make a recommendation about whether or not the priest is still capable of driving without the danger of harm to himself or others.

§8. If the evaluator considers the priest to be incapable of driving without harm to himself or others, the local ordinary will instruct the priest in writing to refrain from driving.

Article 11. Insurance

§1. The Diocese shall provide health insurance without charge to priests up to the age of 65.

§2. Other types of insurance, such as disability, accidental death, etc., may be provided at no charge or at minimal cost. The priest should contact the Office of Human Resources to inquire about available coverage.

Article 12. Assisted Living or Skilled Nursing Care

§1. If a priest must relocate to an assisted living facility or a facility that provides skilled nursing care, he will be expected to pay the facility's fees from his own resources, e.g., retirement income, assets, long-term care insurance, etc. If he is no longer able to pay, he is to seek coverage from Medicaid.

§2. The local ordinary shall be vigilant to make sure that the essential needs of the priest are being provided.

Article 13. End of Life Planning

§1. At appropriate times, retired priests may choose to draw up living wills, do-not-resuscitate orders, living trusts, financial power of attorney, organ and tissue donation, or instructions concerning his obituary.

§2. If a priest has chosen to draw up any of these documents, he is requested to provide a copy to the Office of the Chancellor to be kept in his personnel file.

Article 14. Burial

§1. If an incardinated priest wishes to be buried at Calvary Cemetery or All Saints Cemetery, the Diocese will assume responsibility for the cost of burial and a modest headstone.

§2. If the priest chooses to be buried elsewhere, he is responsible for his own burial expenses.

Article 15. Priests' Retirement Plan

§1. The Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee maintains a retirement plan for incardinated priests.

§2. The specific features of the retirement plan, including eligibility, allowance amounts, vesting rights, etc. are determined by the members of the Retirement Allowance Committee.

Article 16. Retirement Allowance Committee

- §1. The general administration of the Priests' Retirement Plan and the carrying out of its provisions are the duty of the Retirement Allowance Committee. The members are to administer the provisions of the Plan fairly and impartially and to make decisions on any question which may arise or on any claim submitted to it under the Plan.
- §2. The Committee will make recommendations to the local ordinary on all matters pertaining to the care and support of retired priests, including recommendations on adjustments to the retirement allowance in light of cost-of-living increases.

These norms are to be published on the diocesan website and become effective on April 1, 2026. Any prior norms, policies, or customs regarding priestly retirement and benefits are hereby revoked.

Given at the Chancery in Memphis on 5th of March 2026

+ David P. Talley

Most Rev. David P. Talley, M.S.W., J.C.D.
Bishop of Memphis in Tennessee



James M. Clark

Very Rev. James M. Clark, J.C.D., Ph.D., J.V.
Chancellor