



GENERAL DECREE

PARTICULAR LAW FOR PAROCHIAL HUMAN RESOURCES

It is always the responsibility of a diocesan bishop to oversee parochial administration (see canon 515, §1). This takes on even greater significance in the context of civil law, because, though canon law considers each parish to be a separate juridic person, civil law does not always recognize this distinction, and a diocese is often held liable for problematic decisions made at a parish. Therefore, I, the Most Reverend David P. Talley, promulgate the following norms as particular law for the Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee.

Article 1. General Norms

- §1. The following norms apply to every parish (and its mission church) of the Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee.
- §2. Since a parochial school is a part of a parish, the following norms apply to parochial schools, unless a particular norm is contrary to any particular law issued for Catholic schools.
- §3. Failure to abide by these norms may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment or, if applicable, canonical penalties for abuse of ecclesiastical office or harm caused to another through negligent exercise of ecclesiastical power (see canon 1378).

Article 2. Pastors

- §1. The pastor is responsible for the proper administration of a parish under the authority of the diocesan bishop (see canons 519, 532).
- §2. “A parochial administrator is bound by the same duties and possess the same rights as a pastor unless the diocesan bishop establishes otherwise” (canon 540, §1).

Article 3. Other Clergy

- §1. Other priests or deacons assigned to a parish are to work under the authority of the pastor (see canons 519; 545, §1).
- §2. If the pastor is absent from the parish, the parochial vicar has the authority to make decisions in the parish in urgent matters (cf. canon 549). If there is more than one parochial vicar assigned to the parish, the vicar who is senior in appointment is deferred to, unless the local ordinary has decided otherwise.
- §3. If the pastor is likely to be away from the parish for an extended amount of time,

the local ordinary will appoint a parochial administrator to fulfill the pastor's responsibilities or assign a priest or deacon to assist in the administration of the parish.

- §4. No priest or deacon, except the pastor or the parochial administrator, may hire or terminate the employment of any parochial employee.
- §5. A deacon who is assigned to a parish is not considered an employee of the parish and, therefore, does not have any right to compensation for his work, unless he has been hired for a specific position.
- §6. If there is no pastor or parochial administrator, a deacon or a qualified layperson may be assigned to assist in the administration of a parish subject to the authority of a specifically appointed priest (see canon 517, §2). Such a deacon or layperson does not have the authority to hire or terminate the employment of a parochial employee without the prior consent of the appointed priest.
- §7. Additional norms relevant to parochial clergy can be found in the *Particular Law for the Life and Ministry of Priests* and the *Particular Law for Permanent Deacons*.

Article 4. Hiring Parochial Staff

- §1. No one is to be hired as an employee of a parish (or its mission or its parochial school) without prior consultation with the diocesan Office of Human Resources.
- §2. If the director of the Office of Human Resources determines that the hiring of a potential employee would be inadvisable for any reason, the director will notify the local ordinary, who will then make a determination about whether the person may be hired as an employee of the parish.

Article 5. Termination of Parochial Staff

- §1. No parochial employee may be terminated without prior consultation with the diocesan Office of Human Resources.
- §2. If the director of the Office of Human Resources, having consulted diocesan legal counsel, determines that the termination of an employee would be inadvisable, the director will notify the local ordinary, who will then make a determination about whether the person's employment may be terminated.
- §3. The decision not to renew the contract of a parochial schoolteacher is to be treated the same as the termination of an employee.

Article 6. Religious & Lay Employees

- §1. Lay persons or non-clerical members of an Institute of Consecrated Life or Society of Apostolic Life may be hired for various positions in a parish and its related institutions, for example, the parochial school (cf. canons 682 and 738, §2).
- §2. The salary of non-clerical members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life is subject to the regulation of the local ordinary.
- §3. A pastor may appoint a lay employee to assist him in the administration of the parish, such as an office manager or office administrator. Such a person is never to be called a "parish administrator" or "parochial administrator," since this term is reserved to a priest (see canon 539).

Article 7. Diocesan Office of Human Resources

- §1. The diocesan Office of Human Resources shall provide assistance to all pastors (and others who may be entrusted with administration of a parish).
- §2. The Office of Human Resources shall publish a diocesan *Lay Employee Handbook*, which shall be approved by the local ordinary and serve as an instruction (see canon 34) for all diocesan and parochial employment matters.
- §3. Every parish must comply with the diocesan *Lay Employee Handbook*. If a pastor believes that any provision in the *Lay Employee Handbook* cannot be reasonably applied in his parish, he must obtain a written dispensation from the local ordinary. Such dispensations are to be requested through the Office of Human Resources. The director of the Office of Human Resources will submit the request to the local ordinary with his/her recommendation concerning the merits of the request.

Article 8. Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers

- §1. The *Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers* must be given to all parochial employees and volunteers of any kind.
- §2. Every employee and volunteer must acknowledge receipt of the *Code of Conduct*.


Article 9. Required Consultation with the Diocesan Office of Human Resources


- §1. Certain actions or decisions made by a parish or its pastor can have civil legal ramifications for the entire Diocese. Any matters pertaining to the following must be referred to the diocesan Office of Human Resources before action is taken:
 - 1° response to requests from employees for accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act;
 - 2° short-term and long-term disability;
 - 3° *Family and Medical Leave Act*;
 - 4° healthcare benefits; and
 - 5° 403(b) retirement plan.
- §2. All matters pertaining to worker's compensation must be referred to the Office of Facilities and Risk Management.

These norms are to be published on the diocesan website and become effective on the 1st of September 2026.

All contrary diocesan laws and customs are hereby revoked.

Given at the Chancery in Memphis on the 17th of June 2026


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


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