



Parish Life Collaborators: Questions and Answers

Through the Envisioning Ministry process begun in 2004, the parishes and deaneries across the Diocese of Pittsburgh have been actively working to find ways to meet pastoral needs with fewer priests. One option that has been approved for a pilot program is the Parish Life Collaborator. The following is a brief definition of a Parish Life Collaborator.

What is a Parish Life Collaborator?

A Parish Life Collaborator is a deacon or lay ecclesial minister appointed by the diocesan bishop to participate in the pastoral care of the parish. The Code of Canon Law permits such an appointment when a diocesan bishop does not have sufficient priests to provide a pastor or an administrator for every parish. Parish Life Collaborators are a response to an extraordinary and specific need as determined by a diocesan bishop. If that need changes, a diocese will no longer include this ministry.

Are Parish Life Collaborators new in the life of the church?

The 1983 Code of Canon Law provided for the position of Parish Life Collaborator. Parish Life Collaborators have been functioning in the United States and in other countries around the world. It is estimated that there are about 700 Parish Life Collaborators working in parishes in the United States.

Why is the Diocese of Pittsburgh initiating this ministry?

Our local church has been experiencing a steady decline in the number of active priests available for parish ministry. Two dozen priests presently serve as pastors for two or more parishes. Within the next five years the number of active priests will be less than the number of parishes in our diocese. The ministry of the Parish Life Collaborator enables the diocesan bishop to provide pastoral care for all the faithful.

Can anyone be a Parish Life Collaborator?

No, there are particular criteria which must be met. Parish Life Collaborators must be practicing Catholics of high moral repute, who have proven pastoral and administrative skills demonstrated in at least five years of pastoral experience working in the Catholic Church. They must also have a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) or a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in theology, or its equivalent, and be willing to accept the authority of a diocesan

bishop. Parish Life Collaborators must maintain the highest standards in personal, theological and professional competencies required by the Church.

What does a Parish Life Collaborator do?

A Parish Life Collaborator oversees the overall day-to-day pastoral care and administration of the parish. This includes oversight of the implementation of religious education in the parish and ensures that sacramental catechesis and evangelization efforts are appropriately coordinated. The Parish Life Collaborator plans and coordinates liturgical celebrations throughout the church year, and also oversees the administration of the parish, including everything from the buildings and budget, to parish personnel and staffing. The Parish Life Collaborator will carry out all administrative functions in the parish necessary for its effective running.

What is a Priest Director?

A Priest Director is appointed by the diocesan bishop to work with the Parish Life Collaborator. The Priest Director ensures the authentic teaching of the Faith, the pastoral care of souls, and that sacramental ministry reserved only to a priest is provided for the faithful. The Priest Director may be any priest who possesses the faculties of the diocese. While the Parish Life Collaborator is assigned by the bishop to be the administrative leader in the parish, The Parish Life Collaborator must keep the Priest Director fully informed about all activities and concerns in the parish.

Who provides for sacramental ministry in a parish led by a Parish Life Collaborator?

The Parish Life Collaborator will work closely with the Clergy Office and the local cluster to ensure that priests are regularly available for the celebration of Mass and the sacraments. Ordinarily one priest will regularly provide sacramental ministry so as to build fraternal bonds with the people.

Will the Parish Life collaborator only be assigned to minister in a small or rural parish?

The Parish Life Collaborator participates in the pastoral care of souls and can be assigned to any parish, large or small, urban, suburban or rural, depending on the needs of the local church.

Does the Parish Life Collaborator receive a salary?

Yes. The parish to which the Parish Life Collaborator is assigned is responsible for all salary and benefits.