

## 2.0

### Pastoral Counseling, Spiritual Direction, or Guidance

*Those providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction or guidance must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person.*

- 2.1 Those who are licensed pastoral counselors or certified spiritual directors shall perform duties within the scope of their professional certification and/or licensure.
- 2.2 Those providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction or guidance shall not act beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall advise clients to seek other professional assistance when appropriate.
- 2.3 Those providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, or guidance assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.
- 2.4 Those providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction or guidance should evaluate the appropriateness of entering into an ongoing counseling/direction/guidance relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e. employee, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship). Dual relationships (interactions with another person in more than one capacity) call for particular vigilance and prudence.
- 2.5 Physical contact should be respectful and consistent with the intent to provide a safe, appropriate and comfortable counseling environment.
- 2.6 Those providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction or guidance must never engage in sexual intimacies with persons they counsel. This includes consensual and non-consensual sexualized contact, unwelcome physical contact, and suggestive or offensive sexual comments or gestures.
- 2.7 Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times respecting the vulnerabilities of parties concerned, and the perceptions of others.
- 2.8 Information obtained in the course of sessions with adults shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
  - 2.8.1 If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, those providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction or guidance shall disclose the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
  - 2.8.2 Suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to civil authorities in accordance with Maryland law.

- 2.9** Those providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, or guidance to minors must:
- 2.9.1** Inform parent, guardian, or appropriate authority when the minor's health or safety is involved or when the minor poses a threat to the safety or well-being of self or another.
  - 2.9.2** Report suspected child abuse or neglect to civil authorities in accordance with Maryland law.
- 2.10** Those providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction or guidance shall clearly explain as soon as possible the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person.
- 2.11** Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, homilies or other public presentations only when effective measures are taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.
- 2.12** Absolute confidentiality is required with regard to information acquired in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. "The Sacramental Seal is inviolable; therefore it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in anyway a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason."<sup>1</sup>
- 2.13** Church personnel should report to a supervisor or the appropriate Archdiocesan authority any violation of this section of the *Code*.

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<sup>1</sup>Code of Canon Law, Canon 983