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ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

CODE OF ETHICS FOR CLERGY

Preamble

Bishops, Priests and Deacons are aware of their sacred calling as servants of God, and accept pastoral responsibility and accountability for the people entrusted to their care.

Because responsible clergy are "cooperators in carrying out God's saving plan" [Presbyterorum Ordinis para.22], they are agents of healing and redemption. It is expected they will exercise their public ministry in accord with a professional code of ethics intended to free them for apostolic service. Acting in such a way will enable the public to have faith and confidence in their vocation and in the ministry of the Church.

1. Responsible clergy maintain prayer, sacramental life, spiritual direction, retreats, adequate support, peer supervision, healthy friendships, study, recreation, and appropriate behaviours and boundaries, which foster spiritual growth and psychosexual health.
2. Responsible clergy use some form of regular supervision, like a support or review group, pastoral team, competent colleague, spiritual guide, or paid professional, in order to maintain objectivity and accountability in their pastoral practice.
3. Responsible clergy accept responsibility for acquiring the competence necessary for effective pastoral practice, and maintain their ongoing personal development and spiritual growth.
4. Responsible clergy are aware of their obligation to adhere to the Seal in confessional matters.
5. Responsible clergy are aware that the sexual exploitation of family, colleagues, directees, parishioners, employees, or counselees abuses the trust, and authority of their pastoral position.
6. Responsible clergy are aware of the long-term effects of all forms of manipulation, sexual exploitation or emotional domination. They also seek to help victims cope with such damage through every available means.
7. Responsible clergy are aware that repeated comments, gestures, or physical contacts of an overt/covert sexual nature are culpable under state and church law, and that they themselves always bear final responsibility for their actions.
8. Responsible clergy are aware of and willing to abide by the disciplines and policies outlined in the Interim Procedures to be Followed When a Priest is Accused of Sexual Abuse.

9. **Responsible clergy who receive allegations of the sexually exploiting behaviour of another priest or person in a position of pastoral leadership have an ethical responsibility to report their knowledge of this behaviour to the appropriate church authorities. Such allegations should be specific and received from people prepared to reveal their identity to the appropriate authority.**
10. **Responsible clergy when approached by a colleague expressing concerns about his ethical behaviour will ensure he seeks appropriate professional help.**
11. **Responsible clergy seek the advice and counsel of other professionals [such as the Vicar General, a canon lawyer, therapist or counsellor] when issues of sexual ethics arise in their own ministry.**
12. **Responsible clergy subscribe to Archdiocesan policies, canonical norms, professional standards, and State Government legislation regarding "Mandatory Reporting".**
13. **Responsible clergy are prudent, alert to potential risks and ambiguous physical contact, and observe appropriate policies regarding the supervision of the disabled, children and youth, etc.**
14. **Responsible clergy accept and implement this code in their recruitment and selection of those employed by the Church (e.g. youth/pastoral ministers and volunteers) in positions of pastoral leadership as they also are expected to abide by this code.**

In preparing this code we have referred to the current professional statements of ethical principles and the following publications:

**A Code of Ethics for Spiritual Directors
 American Association of Pastoral Counselors
 Clergy Sexual Ethics [JPCP: United Methodists, USA, 1993]
 American Psychiatric Association
 Australian Nursing Incorporated Draft Code of Conduct for Nurses
 The International Code of Ethics for Medical Practitioners
 "From Pain to Hope" [Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops]**

(Draft August 1995)