

Guidance on Visiting Clergy, Religious and Seminarians Protocols



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The safeguarding policy of the Catholic Church makes it a requirement that all those who engage in public ministry require confirmation that they are fit for that sacred task. Whilst volunteers and lay ministers are subject to safe recruitment procedures, all clergy (secular or religious, Bishop, priest or deacon) who seek to minister in the Catholic Church in Ireland must be incardinated. This means that they must belong to a Diocese (or its equivalent in Canon Law), a personal prelature (such as Opus Dei), an institute of religious life (such as the Franciscans) or a society that has this faculty (such as the Society of African Missions).

Incardination has three main purposes:

- It is pastoral; a cleric is ordained for the service of a particular Church to which he belongs.
- It is an effective structure for maintaining discipline, creating a bond between the cleric and his competent superior.
- It provides an individual cleric with a guarantee that his rights are being respected.

Celebret

A celebret is issued by a Bishop or Religious Superior, authorising a priest to celebrate Mass in a Diocese other than his own. It serves as proof that the priest is in good standing.

To assist with an understanding of these range of protocols the guidance will be explained under the following subheadings.

Visiting clergy from outside the Diocese wishing to minister for a one off event.

If a visiting cleric wishes to minister at a funeral, baptism, wedding or any other unique sacramental event, advance notice should be given to the Parish Priest/Diocese (visiting@downandconnor.org). The visiting cleric ministering at the event to declare his presence on a particular time and date, must sign the sacristy register. Furthermore, he must provide his celebret for inspection by the Parish Priest or delegated person, and this should be noted beside the visitor's signature in the sacristy register.

If this one-off ministry is deemed a "regulated activity", the vetting process under AccessNI should be undertaken. See section on [Safe Recruiting and Vetting](#). (LinkTBC)

Clergy incardinated into the Diocese of Down and Connor

- Those clergy incardinated into the Diocese of Down and Connor do not need to provide their celebret when ministering in any parish or location within the Diocese. In addition, those clergy or religious who have an appointment within the Diocese and are living in the Diocese do not need to provide their celebret when ministering in other locations in the Diocese. The cleric must sign the sacristy register.

Visiting clergy from outside Ireland wishing to minister on a short-term basis

When clergy from outside the Diocese visit with the intention of being involved in short-term ministry, evidence should be provided that confirms they are

priests in good standing and that they are fit for ministry.

Prior to visiting the Diocese where it is the intention to engage in public ministry, all visiting priests must write seeking permission from the Bishop, giving details about:

- The duration of the ministry.
- The type of ministry.
- The location of the ministry being considered.
- The contact details of the Bishop or Religious Superior of the visiting priest must be provided in advance.

On receipt of a request from a visiting priest to carry out ministry, the Bishop must acknowledge the same and then make a request in writing to the visitor for a certificate or confirmation of good standing signed by their Bishop or Religious Superior.

In addition, if the ministry is deemed to be a “regulated activity”, then guidance in relation to **Vetting** ([LinkTBC](#)) must be followed.

Appropriate notice should be given by the visiting priest to allow the vetting process to take place. The ministry cannot commence until vetting has been completed.

Seminarians and pastoral students undertaking pastoral placements as part of their formation.

Prior to the placement visit where there is an intention to engage in public ministry, all seminarians and students must commit to following **“A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland”**

Where the ministry or placement meets the criteria of “regulated activity” the seminarian or student must be vetted by the Diocese.

Any concerns relating to the seminarian or student of a safeguarding nature whilst on placement must be

shared with the rector/president and processed in line with the Church’s **Reporting Procedures**.

([LinkTBC](#))

What is the Role of the Safeguarding Committee?

The local Safeguarding Committee should be aware of this guidance.

They do not have a role in the process of how a visiting priest(s) comes to the Diocese to minister on a short-term basis.

However, in every situation where any cleric incardinated into the Diocese or not, seminarian or pastoral student comes to a parish in Down and Connor to minister for the first time, the local Chairperson of the Safeguarding Committee should be informed, preferably in advance by the existing Parish Priest or priest in charge.

The Safeguarding Committee Chairperson will contact the Northern Diocese Vetting Office and confirm that an Enhanced Vetting Check has been completed.