

CLERGY DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENT POLICY

Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande

1. PURPOSE

It is recognized that divorce is a painful reality in our lives as Christians. Though divorce is a tragedy that should be avoided by all Christians, there are circumstances when it is unavoidable, even for those in Holy Orders. Divorce and remarriage by clergy is not prohibited. Be that as it may, divorce and remarriage of clergy can be very painful and disruptive for those in the flock served by said clergy. Traditionally, it is considered inappropriate for unmarried clergy to enter into a romantic relationship with a member of the parish served by said clergy. Given the realities of a rural diocese, such as ours, adherence to such a tradition, though advisable, may not always be possible. Extra-marital sexual relations with a parishioner constitute sexual misconduct under our sexual ethics guidelines. Any questions or any situation in which there is any doubt about this issue should be addressed to the Bishop. Furthermore, engaging in sexual relations outside the bounds of Holy Matrimony is contrary to living a Christ-like life. Clergy having sex outside the bounds of Holy Matrimony can not serve as a fit example to others. It is for these reasons that the following policy is established for clergy in the Diocese of the Rio Grande.

2. SCOPE

Clergy who are canonically resident in or licensed in the Diocese of the Rio Grande.

3. POLICY

Clergy who are canonically resident in or licensed in the Diocese of the Rio Grande shall notify the Bishop if they are named in a divorce action.

Divorced clergy who are canonically resident in or licensed in the Diocese of the Rio Grande shall request in writing and obtain permission from the Bishop to remarry prior to such a marriage being performed, regardless whether the marriage is to be performed by a civil or ecclesiastical authority. Previously unmarried clergy must obtain permission from the Bishop prior to marrying a previously divorced person.

Failure to obtain permission of the Bishop to remarry by either previously divorced clergy or previously unmarried clergy intending to marry a divorced person shall be considered conduct unbecoming a member of the ministry under Title IV, Canon I, Section 1.j.

Clergy serving as a rector or vicar who divorce while serving in that cure may divorce and remain in that cure, with the concurrence of the Bishop. If, however, clergy who divorce while serving in a cure choose to remarry they shall be expected to resign from that cure.

Clergy shall not engage in sexual relations outside Holy Matrimony. Clergy in the Diocese of the Rio Grande who engage in sex outside Holy Matrimony shall be removed from ministry within the diocese.