

TESTIMONIAL LETTERS

It has become normative in dioceses of the United States to require a Testimonial Letter for a priest (or permanent deacon) of another diocese to exercise ministry. Occasions for temporary ministry may include presiding at a wedding or funeral, presenting a retreat or conference, ministerial participation in an ordination, weekend pastoral assistance or other ecclesial events when you are present in a ministerial capacity. The Testimonial Letter is more specific and time sensitive than the *celebret* or “letter of introduction” mentioned in can. 903. The Testimonial Letter indicates the date or dates when the priest will be present in the diocese, where he will be present and the ministry he will provide. A Testimonial Letter from the Bishop of Spokane to the Bishop of the diocese to be visited, attests that the priest:

- a) Is in good standing and of good reputation
- b) Is suited to undertake the specified ministerial activity
- c) Is not precluded from ministry involving minors
- d) Has received safe environment training *and has updated this training*
- e) Has undergone a background check and is not guilty of a crime against persons
- f) Is bound by the Code of Conduct for ministerial personnel of the Diocese of Spokane

There is not a common form for the Testimonial Letter. A diocese may require additional information. Sometimes, you may receive a Testimonial Letter form from the other diocese to be filled in and signed by the proper diocesan authority. This frequently happens on the occasion of a conference attended by priests of several dioceses, and the host diocese seeks to facilitate the process.

In the Diocese of Spokane, the Bishop, the Vicar General and the Vicar for Priests may *ex officio* issue a Testimonial Letter. The Chancellor has delegated authority and is normally the one to process the Letter.

Without a Testimonial letter, do not expect that you will be permitted to celebrate or concelebrate by virtue of the “presumption” allowed in can. 903, even if you are acquainted with the parish priest. Do not allow a priest of another jurisdiction to engage in ministry unless our Chancery has sent you notice of his Testimonial Letter (see)

<https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/6397/documents/2019/4/CLERGYdocs4.18.19.pdf>

There may be an occasion when time constraints make it difficult or even impossible for the transmittal of a Testimonial Letter by regular mail. An email transmittal can usually suffice. Obviously, you are urged to request a Testimonial Letter well in advance of your visit to another diocese, including the information we need:

- Name, address of place you will minister, name of pastor or other person to be notified
- Date of ministry and ministry to be provided
- Name and address of the bishop of the diocese to be visited (or if you know who processes Testimonial Letters in the diocese, that person’s name).

[Click here for the Testimonial Letter request form.](#)

When you are traveling, especially in other countries, but do not have specific times and places for ministerial activity, you may request a *celebret* from the Chancellor.