



DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

Diocesan policy on the WELFARE OF PRIESTS

1. Introduction

The priests of the diocese are a single *presbyterium* gathered around the bishop and united with him as co-workers in priestly, prophetic and pastoral ministry. This deep communion between the bishop and his priests is essential to our Catholic understanding of ordained ministry, and is why 'bishops should regard priests as brothers and friends, and be concerned as far as they are able for their material and especially for their spiritual well-being' (Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 7).

Although this policy document is primarily a set of practical measures on the welfare of priests, including reference to other established policies found in this folder, all should be seen in the light of the intimate unity of the priestly family - the communion of priests with the bishop and among themselves.

With the declining number and increasing age of our priests, and the growing demands made on them by changing circumstances, it is even more vital today than before that they be provided with the best possible support and care, whether they be office holders (e.g. parish and assistant priests), or continuing their priestly ministry after resignation from such an office, or unable to give much time to ministry because of sickness or other reasons. Such support should include spiritual, human, pastoral, intellectual and material care. Particular problems facing some priests today include fatigue and exhaustion, isolation and loneliness, and a range of issues challenging the priesthood today which can affect morale, and yet so very many priests continue to be graced with contentment, fulfilment and joy in their vocation.

2. The Bishop, with his Vicar General and Deans

The Bishop is father of the priestly family and through him the Lord Jesus Christ is present among believers. For this reason, just as Jesus manifested his love for the Apostles, so too the Bishop knows that it is his duty to show particular love and solicitude for priests and candidates for the sacred ministry.

(*Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*; Congregation for Bishops, 2004; n. 75)

Assisted by his regional vicars, the Bishop should seek to anticipate and to resolve any human or spiritual difficulties that priests might experience. He should come lovingly to the help of any priest who finds himself in a difficult situation, especially the sick, the elderly, and the poor, so that they all sense the joy of their vocation, with gratitude towards their Shepherd. (*Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*; Congregation for Bishops, 2004; n. 81)

As 'a father and a friend' (*ibid.*, n. 76), the Bishop has the primary responsibility for the welfare of the priests of the diocese, in close collaboration with the Vicar General, and assisted in a special way by those appointed locally as Dean. Although some issues will need to be referred to other people in the diocese duly delegated to act in the Bishop's name (e.g. finance, religious, schools, vocations, diaconate, safeguarding, youth), all priests of the diocese have open access to the Bishop, who is always ready to meet and communicate with them.

Insofar as his commitments allow, the Bishop wishes to be available for social time with priests. He is happy to be invited to deanery clergy social events, as well as taking further initiatives of his own. The annual priests retreat/study week, meals after regular clergy gatherings (Council of Priests, Consultors, etc), annual events such as those for Jubilarians and for 'Retired' Priests, and the gathering of priests at the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes, are already established occasions of this nature. The Bishop regards his pastoral visitation of parishes as an especially valuable opportunity for spending time with his priests.

The Diocese of East Anglia does not have a designated 'Vicar for Clergy', but the Vicar General's role includes availability for the priests of the diocese, and each Dean exercises a particular care for priests at a local level in the name of the Bishop. In an informal sense, each Dean can be seen as the local vicar for clergy. The Bishop, Vicar General and Deans seek to work closely together for the welfare of the clergy.

3. The Dean & Deanery

The Deanery should be a key setting for the mutual care and support of clergy. The ***Diocesan Policy on the Dean and the Deanery*** (see pages 7-10) lists the Dean's special responsibilities. He has a central role in the pastoral care of the clergy, and particularly in reaching out to and seeking to include those priests who seem isolated from the priestly fraternity of the diocese. Each Dean, however, has to balance his pastoral care for his own parish with these wider responsibilities. Neighbouring deans and deaneries should work together when appropriate.

- ❖ The Dean should seek to promote fraternity and friendship among the clergy of the deanery, and to develop a real sense of mutual concern, support and cooperation among them. This should include informal social events. The Dean's own personal knowledge of and care for each priest and deacon is a central and essential dimension of his pastoral role.
- ❖ The Dean should make a point of getting to know newly-appointed parish priests and assistant priests, as well as other priests and deacons who join the deanery. He is a servant of welcome and hospitality as they settle into their new appointments and accommodation.
- ❖ As a colleague and friend of all the clergy, secular and religious, the Dean should be available to them in times of need or dispute, without prejudice to their right of direct access to the Bishop and Vicar General.
- ❖ The Dean should have a special interest in the 'retired' priests and deacons living in the deanery, and should, where appropriate, arrange for their involvement in the life of the deanery.
- ❖ The Dean's care extends to sick priests and deacons, helping to ensure that proper medical treatment and spiritual care is received, in liaison with the Bishop and the Diocesan Financial Administrator. The Dean will help to organise immediate 'supply' for the parish and chaplaincies involved, ideally from within the deanery. He should ensure that the Bishop is informed of the sickness and details of the medical care (e.g. hospital, ward, etc). The Dean should visit sick clergy and ensure their continued contact with the deanery.
- ❖ In the case of the death of a priest or deacon, the Dean should ensure that the Bishop has been informed, that supplies are organised, and that personal and parish property is safeguarded.
- ❖ Special care should be given by the Dean to the wife and family of a married priest or deacon who dies or is seriously sick. The ongoing care of widowed clergy and clergy widows needs particular consideration.

4. Belonging to the Diocese

All priests in East Anglia belong to the single *presbyterium* of the diocese. The intimate sacramental brotherhood and mutual support of priests is expressed most tangibly when they gather together with the bishop at the Eucharist. All priests are warmly invited and strongly encouraged to come above all to the Chrism Mass each year, as well as to other diocesan celebrations such as the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham, the annual Clergy Jubilees Mass, an Ordination and the Funeral of a brother priest. For parish priests, the annual Synod of Parish Priests is a particular occasion on which to express the unity of the diocese and its priests. Even something as simple as wearing the diocesan chasuble is a sign of belonging to the diocesan *presbyterium*.

5. Priestly Fraternity

In virtue of their common sacred ordination and mission, all priests are bound together in an intimate brotherhood, which should naturally and freely manifest itself in mutual aid, spiritual as well as material, pastoral as well as personal, in meetings and in a community of life, of work, of charity. (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* n. 28)

Pastoral charity requires that priests avoid operating in a vacuum, and that they work in a strong bond of union with their bishop and brother priests. (Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 14)

All ordained ministry is by nature collegial. Friendship and fraternity among priests is perhaps the most important and fruitful way to support one another through the 'the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties' (*Gaudium et Spes*) of priestly life and ministry. A priest alone in a parish, perhaps many miles from the nearest neighbouring parish, can all too easily become faithfully absorbed in the care of his increasingly busy parish, without any tangible sense of the 'intimate sacramental brotherhood' that lies at the heart of priestly ministry and life.

The theological and spiritual foundations for priestly fraternity are summarised in the document which accompanies this policy, ***'Priesthood – an intimate sacramental brotherhood'*** (see pages 38 a & b), which comprises extracts from the Second Vatican Council, the Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests, and the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops.

Practical expressions of priestly fraternity, shared hospitality and mutual support are strongly encouraged.

Neighbouring priests will hopefully visit each other and meet for recreation or a meal occasionally: priests are warmly encouraged to take the initiative on this. Both the deanery and the 'cluster' should provide a good setting for the care of sick and retired priests. Deanery meetings are an important expression of local fraternity. Friendship and fraternity among priests beyond local boundaries are also essential.

Some priests may wish to organise support groups, perhaps focused on a shared interest. Several such groups already exist in the diocese, and it would be good to develop this further.

Prayer together is a vital dimension of priestly fraternity and collegiality. Priests are invited to gather together locally when possible to celebrate parts of the Prayer of the Church, for times of Eucharistic Adoration, and for times of recollection which might include study, reflection and prayer on the Scripture readings for the following Sunday. Established groups such as *Jesus Caritas* are strongly encouraged. Times of prayer together could well be linked with opportunities for shared hospitality and recreation.

The priestly ministry is increasingly busy and demanding, in a way which may seem to leave less time simply for spending time with brother priests. And yet in such circumstances, with the growing pressures and the danger of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual fatigue, the company and support of brother priests becomes even more important. The priest receives loving support and care from people in the parish community he serves, and his healthy relationships with lay people lie at the heart of his human and priestly needs; this should not be seen as a substitute, however, for priestly fraternity and the distinctive mutual support which this can provide.

Such priestly fraternity extends beyond the diocese, for example to the bonds between priests who were formed in the same seminary and in the same ordination year.

Priestly fraternity within each presbytery is especially important. Such fraternity calls for a genuinely common life in a house which each resident priest has an equal right to call his home, balancing living together with respect for each priest's need for his personal space.

6. Diocesan Clergy Welfare Group

The Diocesan Clergy Welfare Group was originally established to monitor aspects of practical care for clergy currently unable to work, of those in financial need, and those no longer holding an office, in liaison with the East Anglia Sick and Retired Priests' Fund. It has now taken on a more general remit of advising the Bishop regarding clergy welfare.

Membership of the Clergy Welfare Group is comprised of the priest with special responsibility for 'retired' priests, the Diocesan Financial Administrator, and lay members with appropriate expertise (e.g. Human Resources, Personnel).

7. Diocesan Personnel Board

The Bishop appoints a small group of experienced priests to advise him regarding appointments and other personnel issues. It is always the Bishop, however, who makes the appointments.

8. Pastoral Appointments

The Bishop makes appointments to parishes and other ministries only after personal discussion with the priests involved. Ideally, at least three months notice is given once a new appointment is decided, but this is not always possible given the declining number of priests in the diocese. There are situations when much longer notice is desirable, for example when parishes are to be merged.

9. Days off & Holidays

(Clerics) may ... take a rightful and sufficient holiday every year, for the length of time determined by general or by particular law." (*Code of Canon Law*, 283.2)

Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, the parish priest may each year be absent on holiday from his parish for a period not exceeding one month, continuous or otherwise. The days which the parish priest spends on the annual spiritual retreat are not reckoned in this period of vacation. For an absence from the parish of more than a week, however, the parish priest is bound to advise the local Ordinary. (*Canon 533 # 2*)

For their spiritual, mental and physical well-being, it is important that priests take appropriate time away from the parish each year, including an annual holiday.

Priests are entitled and are expected to take a weekly 'day off'. Ideally this should be arranged in liaison with neighbouring parishes so that a nearby priest can be available in emergency: the name and phone number of the priest or priests who are 'covering' should be included in any answer-phone message. Such liaison is also important when arranging holidays, particularly when no full-time 'supply' has been arranged. A priest's entitlement to time away from the parish is clearly stipulated in the Code of Canon Law; the same applies for assistant priests as for parish priests (cf. *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* p. 56).

'Supplies' should be planned long ahead. Holidays should be arranged so that Masses on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation are covered. It is important that neighbouring parish priests in a Deanery liaise with the Dean and with one another before finalising dates for being away: it can be difficult if several priests are away at the same time, particularly if a local priest is being expected to cover emergency calls, etc, for a number of other parishes. Parish communities may need to be flexible about the number and times of weekday Masses while their priest is away, and to understand that he needs time for refreshment in order to serve them during the rest of the year. The Bishop's Secretary can give advice and support in arranging supplies if necessary, but only with enough notice is given.

The ***Diocesan Policies on Supply Priests*** (both from outside and from within England and Wales) must always be fully observed (see pages 46-54).

10. Remuneration

Since clerics dedicate themselves to the ecclesiastical ministry, they deserve the remuneration that befits their condition, taking into account both the nature of their office and the conditions of time and place. It is to be such that it provides for the necessities of life and for the just remuneration of those whose services they need. (*Code of Canon Law*, 281.1)

Clerics are to follow a simple way of life and avoid anything which smacks of worldliness. Goods which they receive on the occasion of the exercise of an ecclesiastical office, and which are over and above what is necessary for their worthy upkeep and the fulfilment of the duties of their state, they may well wish to use for the good of the Church and for charitable works. (*Code of Canon Law*, 282)

Priests will obviously wish to take full account of any personal means (e.g. state and other pensions, personal income and assets) when assessing whether or not they require additional support from the parish or diocese.

Priests' Allowance Scheme

In 1997, a diocesan working party was established to gather information on priests' personal incomes. As a consequence, in April 1999, the Diocesan Priests' Allowance Scheme was introduced. The scheme is entirely voluntary. Each priest who opts into the scheme receives a fixed monthly payment from the parish account; all Mass stipends and stole fees are treated as parish income, but the priest retains the Christmas and Easter offerings. If the priest's total income (monthly allowance plus Christmas & Easter) comes to less than the amount published annually by the Diocesan Finance Office, the priest may make it up to that amount from parish sources. If the parish is unable to fund such support, the priest should contact the Diocesan Financial Administrator.

Priests' Support Funds

Various funds are available for small-scale grants to support priests in particular need. Requests should be directed to either the Diocesan Financial Administrator or the Bishop.

Christmas and Easter Offering

A voluntary scheme exists in our diocese whereby those priests who receive a very generous Christmas or Easter Offering may contribute to a special fund for those priests from much poorer parishes. Any contributions can be sent in confidence to the Diocesan Financial Administrator. To avoid priests having to pay tax on such contributions, it is important that such sums be paid directly from the collection into the parish account rather than their own. Priests not on the diocesan allowance scheme who receive a low offertory and are thereby put into a difficult financial position at Christmas and Easter may apply to this fund for a 'top up'. The Diocesan Finance Office will provide periodic guidance as to what constitutes a reasonable sum.

Surplus Mass Intentions and Stipends

Priests who are in the position of having a surplus number of Mass Intentions are asked to consider sending them to the Bishop's Secretary, who will then distribute them to priests who do not have a sufficient number. This will ensure that Masses are celebrated without too much delay, and gives support to priests in poorer parishes. Simply list the intentions and offering for each intention and send this list to the Bishop's Secretary, along with a cheque made out to the '*RC Diocese of East Anglia*'.

11. Care in ill-health

"Suitable provision is likewise to be made for such social welfare as they may need in infirmity, sickness or old age." (*Code of Canon Law*, 281.2)

East Anglia Sick & Retired Priests Fund

As required by Canon 1274.1, there is within the diocese 'The East Anglia Diocesan Sick and Retired Priests' Fund' to ensure social welfare for priests in time of infirmity, sickness or old age. 'The purpose of this Fund is to assist the Bishop of the Diocese in the care of Secular Priests of the Diocese of East Anglia, who are permanently or temporarily incapacitated by old age, infirmity, illness or accident' (*Rules of the Fund, Chapter 1, 1*)

Individual priests may wish to consider joining private health-care and/or dental schemes. Although the diocese does not have the financial resources to fund a corporate scheme, further enquiries will be made as to whether a group scheme can be negotiated for those priests who are interested.

12. Review of Priestly Life and Ministry

The Bishop will meet with each priest as a part of his five-yearly visitation of parishes, and review the priest's life and ministry with him.

Changes of parish appointment and the cycle of visitations may mean that such a review with the Bishop may be appropriate at a time earlier than the next visitation.

A set of questions for review of life and ministry will be sent to each priest before the visitation, to help facilitate the process of review. This will invite each priest to spend time in reflection on each question, and to put in writing his thoughts. It remains the decision of each priest whether or not to share the written notes with the bishop. The priest may wish to discuss the review with another person of his choice.

This review could well be used by each priest on a more regular – perhaps even annual – basis, for example on retreat, on his ordination anniversary, or during Lent. A priest may wish to discuss the review with the local Dean at some stage between the five-yearly visitations.

'Follow-up' is essential for such a review of priestly life and ministry, above all by the priest himself, and with appropriate support from the Bishop and any others involved (e.g. the Dean, and anyone with whom the priest chooses to share the review).

13. Ongoing Formation

All ordained ministers need ongoing spiritual renewal and formation throughout their time of service. This is not an optional extra, but a pastoral necessity (cf. Canon 279). (*Diocesan Pastoral Plan* p. 54)

The Bishop should educate his priests of every age and condition to fulfil their duty of ongoing formation, and he should ensure that due provision is made for this, so that their enthusiasm for the ministry does not wane, but grows and matures with the passage of time, making the sublime gift they have received more dynamic and more effective... Older priests need to cultivate the youthfulness of spirit that manifests itself in a lifelong interest in constant growth towards 'the stature of the fullness of Christ'. This should help them overcome any unwillingness to participate in programmes of ongoing formation offered by the diocese, whether as a result of routine, fatigue, an exaggerated work ethic or an excessive reliance on their own abilities. (*Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, n. 83)

Ongoing formation is vital for every priest. The annual retreat and study week organised by the diocese should be regarded as a priority. Priests are strongly encouraged to attend the diocesan clergy ongoing formation days (generally twice each year), as well as days of formation or recollection organised at deanery level. They are also encouraged to attend days of study of their own choice organised by other bodies. See the ***Diocesan Policy on the Ongoing Formation of Clergy*** (page 41).

14. Spiritual Direction

By placing the formation of their soul in the hands of a wise fellow-member, (priests) will enlighten their conscience, from the first steps in the ministry, and realise the importance of not walking alone along the paths of spiritual life and renewal. In making use of this efficacious means of formation, so well-founded in the Church, priests will have full freedom in choosing the person who will guide them. (*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 54)

Every priest is strongly encouraged to have and meet regularly with a personal spiritual director.

15. Retreats

Clerics have a special obligation to seek holiness in their lives, because they are consecrated to God by a new title through the reception of orders, and are stewards of the mysteries of God in the service of his people. (*Code of Canon Law*, 276.1)

The Bishop should consider the annual retreat a primary and essential element in the ongoing formation of his priests. It should be arranged in such a way that each one has time for an authentic and personal encounter with God and for reflection on his personal life and ministry. (*Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, n. 83)

Priests are expected to make an annual retreat. More needs to be provided for the spiritual renewal of our priests, through the provision of the opportunity for a diocesan retreat for priests, as well as occasional days of reflection. The diocese currently organises a study and social week, and a priests' retreat, in alternate years. (cf. *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* p. 55; *Code of Canon Law*, 276.2)

16. Sabbaticals

Among factors that may cause discouragement in the souls of pastors are the danger of routine, physical exhaustion due to overwork, psychological fatigue... Notwithstanding pastoral urgency, and precisely to face up to these problems adequately, priests must be provided with time, as much as reasonably possible, so as to facilitate longer periods spent with the Lord Jesus, thus recovering strength and courage to continue the road to holiness... In some cases, it may be useful to employ this time for study or updating oneself in the sacred sciences, yet the primary goal of strengthening spiritual and apostolic life must not be forgotten. In any case, the danger of considering the sabbatical period as a vacation or claiming it as a right should be avoided. (*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 83 on "Sabbatical Periods")

Priests are positively encouraged to consider the possibility and value of a sabbatical. **The Diocesan Policy on Sabbaticals** (see pp. 39-40) outlines the current position in East Anglia. Although the declining number of priests in the diocese makes cover for sabbaticals more difficult, the increased pressures on priests precisely because of that decline may well make such sabbaticals more important.

17. Professional Support (resources)

A list is to be provided of professional care resource-people to whom priests can turn for particular needs (e.g. counselling). In responding to individual requests, the Diocese seeks as far as possible to preserve total confidentiality while assessing the need and taking account of the resource implications. A panel of three priests, (the chairman of the Clergy Welfare Group, a representative of the Sick & Retired Priests' Fund and one other) will assess each individual application, preserving full confidentiality in all correspondence and invoices thereafter. Details of funding and the process of application will be provided.

18. Newly-ordained up to five years ordained

It will be the task of the Bishop to see to it, through prudently-chosen help, that in the year following ... ordination, a so-called pastoral year be established, which will ease the passage from the seminary life to the exercise of the sacred ministry, proceeding gradually and facilitating a progressive and harmonious human and specifically priestly growth in maturity. (*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 82)

During the first years after Ordination, priests must be eager to find those conditions of life and ministry which permit them to put into practice those ideals learned during their formation period in the seminary. These first years of priesthood, which make up a necessary confirmation of the initial formation following the first difficult contact with reality, are the most decisive for the future... For this reason, the young priests must benefit from a personal relationship with their own Bishop and with a wise spiritual father, and from times of rest, of meditation and monthly recollection. (*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 93)

Special care and support needs to be given to newly-ordained clergy, especially during the first five years of ministry. The Bishop will meet regularly with newly-ordained priests. (*Diocesan Pastoral Plan* p. 56)

The first year after priestly ordination is to be regarded as a transitional year. Although the newly-ordained priest will be appointed to a parish as an assistant priest, his engagement with parish life should be gradual, and he should spend time each week with the parish priest for a time of review.

First appointments will be made only after careful discussion with the potential parish priests, who may themselves require preparation for this role. Regular periods of review should be seen as an essential part of the first year of priestly ministry, and should continue in some form during subsequent years.

During the first two years after ordination, newly-ordained priests are expected to attend the annual retreat and study week organised by the diocese. Attendance is strongly encouraged from thereon.

During those first two years, priests are expected to participate in an overnight stay at the White House nearly every month (ideally 9 or 10 each year). Each stay will commence with tea at 4 p.m. and end with lunch the following day. Each will involve a time of biblical reflection; the Divine Office and Mass together; individual time with the Bishop; a main topic, perhaps led by appropriate priests and other office-holders in the diocese; social time together.

In the third to fifth years after ordination, priests will participate in the above overnight stays every two months (probably 5 each year).

The Dean should also see it as part of his role to accompany and encourage the newly-ordained in their first years of priestly ministry.

19. Married Priests – support of wives/widows

Care of clergy includes care for their wives and families. Consideration should be given to when the wives and widows of married priests might be invited to diocesan and deanery events for clergy.

20. Disputes

In the event of a dispute between clergy, they should first do all they can to resolve the matter informally between themselves. If this fails, they should then take the matter to the Dean (unless the Dean himself is the priest in question) and take action as seems appropriate to move things forward. If continued efforts are unsuccessful, the Dean will take the matter to the Bishop or Vicar General. None of the process outlined above restricts direct access by a priest to the Bishop or Vicar General, but the Bishop or Vicar General will usually require that the stages above be followed.

21. Provision for life after resignation from office, including Accommodation, Financial Support, etc

A parish priest who has completed his 75th year of age is requested to offer his resignation from office to the diocesan Bishop who, after considering all the circumstances of the person and place, is to decide whether to accept or defer it. Having taken account of the norms laid down by the Episcopal Conference, the diocesan Bishop must make provision for the appropriate maintenance and residence of the priest who has resigned. (*Code of Canon Law*, 538.3; cf. *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, n. 212)

A priest holding an office of any kind in the diocese is to offer his resignation from any office or appointment on reaching his 75th birthday. This should be done in writing. If it is agreed by the Bishop and priest that the latter may remain in office, the position will be reviewed annually thereafter.

Although a resignation may be accepted, a priest remains a priest of the diocese and still shares in the unity and mission of the *presbyterium* of the diocese and part of the diocesan family. The provision for each individual will try to ensure that he will not be isolated from this mission, from other priests and from the celebration of the sacraments.

Preparing for Life after Resignation from Office

It is recommended that each priest meet the Bishop at the latest at the beginning of his 75th year so as to begin to look towards the future. If for some reason it has been agreed that the priest will leave office earlier than 75, a similar meeting should be arranged a year before the intended date of resignation. Ongoing discussion will follow, involving the Diocesan Financial Administrator and the Priest with special responsibility for 'retired' priests.

Some priests look forward to resigning from office, and may have their own houses, pension-schemes and other means of support. Others very much fear the prospect of 'retirement'. Discussions will include consideration of where the priest hopes to reside; his particular needs regarding accommodation, medical care, financial support, etc; hopes and concerns regarding future life and ministry.

The Diocese will develop Guidelines for Life and Ministry after Resignation from Office.

Accommodation

The Diocese is not in a position to buy houses, but is committed to ensuring suitable accommodation for all priests once they are no longer a parish priest or assistant priest. The main options are:

- (a) Some priests are able to acquire and maintain their own houses.
- (b) Some priests have their own houses, but require assistance with cost of maintenance, etc.
- (c) Some priests may wish to live in a presbytery with another priest, as an 'also-resident'.
- (d) Currently unused presbyteries may be available for use by one or more 'retired' priests.
- (e) The Diocese may be able to rent suitable accommodation.

Suitable arrangements will be made in each case between the individual priest and Diocesan Finance Office, and when appropriate The East Anglia Sick and Retired Priests' Fund.

It is very strongly recommended that a priest does not seek to live within the same parish of which he was immediately previously the parish or assistant priest.

State Benefits

Priests who have paid National Insurance contributions should be in receipt of the state pension from the statutory age. Either in 'retirement' or sickness, all available benefits should be sought from the statutory authorities.

Private Means

Some priests have their own private means which they will wish to take into account when considering provision when they no longer hold office. It is reasonable that a priest who enjoys the benefit of a private income should make use of it to help finance his living costs when no longer in office. The welfare provision of priests will therefore vary depending on individual circumstances. Should a priest's personal income reduce over time, or vary to such an extent that he can no longer support himself without additional help, the diocese will gladly work with him in raising such extra financial support as may be necessary.

Pension and Retirement Grants

There are two superannuation schemes available for priests to join. For those over 50 years of age, the Diocese provides an annual maintenance grant scheme funded by levies on parishes and based on a minimum period of 20 years ministry. Priests under 50 are eligible to join the Norwich Union Group Personal Pension Plan to which both the Diocese and the priest make contributions. Details of both schemes are available from the Diocesan Finance Office.

Priest with special responsibility for 'Retired' Priests

The Bishop appoints a priest to have special responsibility for the support of priests who have resigned from office through sickness or age, and to inform and advise the Bishop about their needs.

Annual Mass for 'Retired' Priests

There is an annual Mass and lunch at Poringland for the 'retired' priests of the diocese.

22. Priests who are out of active ministry

The Bishop should also treat with a paternal spirit those who leave the active ministry, making every effort to bring about their interior conversion and helping them to overcome whatever difficulty led them away, so that they can return to their priestly life or at least regularise their situation in the Church. (*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Bishops*, n. 81d)

The Bishop will seek to keep in contact with priests who are no longer in active ministry for whatever reason, whether of their own volition or under penalty. A sense of the sacramental brotherhood of priests should encourage priests of the diocese to maintain prayerful and practical care and support for them.

23. Priests' Funerals

When priests die, their funerals should be celebrated by the Bishop himself, if at all possible, or else by his representative. (*Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, n. 81)

The Bishop (or his delegate) will normally preside at the Funeral Mass of a priest of the diocese.

All priests are very strongly encouraged to attend the funeral of a fellow priest, whether they are well known to them or not. This expresses strongly the intimate sacramental brotherhood of priests.