



## **Our Mission Statement:**

The National Federation of Priests' Councils serves the communion, brotherhood and solidarity of bishops, presbyterates and priests.

## **Our Vision Statement:**

Flowing from our mission statement we can discern these vision statements:

- We gather bishops, presbyterates and priests for communion, brotherhood and solidarity.
- We build bridges.
- We provide models for communion, brotherhood and solidarity.
- We affirm each other in the shared priesthood of Jesus Christ.
- We are solution-focused.

## **A Little History:**

NFPC was established in 1968 as the first national organization dealing with the lives and ministry of priests. A group of priests who were active in their arch/diocesan priests' councils sought a way to strengthen the U.S. Catholic presbyterate and be a unified voice for priests to the Bishops Conference. They proposed and developed the National Federation of Priests' Councils. All U.S. arch/diocesan priests' councils are members, with the ultimate goal of supporting all U.S. priests.

The Vatican II document *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1568, state, "All priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Order, are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood, but in a special way they form one priestly body in the diocese to which they are attached under their own bishop..."

NFPC works through priests' councils to promote and ensure the intimate sacramental brotherhood of priests throughout the entire U.S. presbyterate, supporting bishops and priests to serve in communion, brotherhood and solidarity.

NFPC has been at work making a positive difference since its establishment. Many of the services in place today that affect bishops and priests in their lives and work are present because of the prompting, sharing of resources, and advocacy of NFPC, including: due process, priest personnel assignment, a code of professional ministerial accountability, research on priestly life and ministry, multicultural issues, collaboration with lay ministry, continuing education, salary compensation, leadership training, morale issues, tax and retirement information, publications for the recently ordained, and spiritual renewal of the priesthood, plus much more.

Several organizations have come into being as off-shoots of the National Federation of Priests' Councils, the two most prominent being the National Association for Church Personnel Administrators (NACPA) and the National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC).

### **NFPC as it is today:**

Through the years, NFPC has evolved and grown in service to priests' councils. Our current emphasis is on a re-commitment to our original mission: communion, brotherhood, and solidarity among all the presbyterate.

In June 2009, Cardinal O'Malley spoke at Boston's Presbyteral Convocation about the importance of a *"return to the ancient theology of a presbyterate – an intimate sacramental brotherhood, which has been replaced by a strong notion of individual ministry."* He stated: *"We must develop a corporate sense of priestly identity and mission. We must become men of communion."* Today, NFPC works to support that sense of brotherhood and communion across the entire U.S. presbyterate.

The late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin continued this thought:

*"While the priests of a local church relate in a special way to their bishop, it is good for them to have a broader forum in which they can exchange ideas. Such an exchange helps to enrich their experience and broaden their perspective. The NFPC provides such a forum. Over the years, NFPC has been instrumental in assisting and motivating priests to face the challenges of priestly ministry in today's church in a creative and effective way."*

Today priests often face pastoring multiple parishes and a priest shortage resulting in a sense of isolation especially from brother priests. NFPC works to break that isolation. Our research, communications, publications, and programs are all just a means to an end – to connect priests to each other and to bishops in the shared priesthood of Jesus Christ.

NFPC is a collector and distributor of pastoral resources, and an advocate on both the national and local levels on behalf of priests. NFPC promotes communication between brother priests, priests and bishops, and between councils. We partner with many national Catholic organizations, and offer advocacy for priests with the USCCB as a contributing organization to the Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations Committee.

In addition, NFPC works to encourage and support strong priests' councils who can truly serve the priests of their dioceses. We especially reach out to those councils that struggle with a lack of enthusiasm for meeting and addressing problems or issues, mainly because of a feeling that there is nothing they can do about them. NFPC programs and publications offer research and best practices, giving priests avenues and resources so they can make a positive difference in the life of the church.

NFPC is on a Mission: the communion, brotherhood and solidarity of bishops and priests as they serve the U.S. Catholic Church. Whether through our historical assistance or current support, our entire goal is to promote a strong presbyterate that unites and serves each other, and can celebrate and more fully live their shared priesthood.

## How The Finances (Assessments) Work:

According to the NFPC Constitution, all arch/diocesan priests' councils representing the priests of the local church are members of NFPC. A council which submits to the NFPC its intent to participate along with a copy of its statutes (Canon 496) and pays the assessment fee is considered an *active* member council. A council which does not submit a letter of intent to participate or pay the assessment fee is considered an *inactive* member council.

NFPC serves **all** arch/diocesan priests' councils. Active members support all priests' councils and therefore the entire U.S. presbyterate. Choosing to be an active member of NFPC is a choice to support all U.S. priests.

Just as in our local parishes and dioceses, a proportionately small number of dedicated members contribute financially to the upkeep of the church budget, so does NFPC rely on financial support from its active members to be able to continue to serve the entire U.S. presbyterate. At present, the NFPC national office consists of three full-time and one part-time staff: Priest-President, Managing Director, Financial Director, and Communication Director. Our Board, provincial Consultors, diocesan Delegates and supporting priests are vital to our Mission, as is the financial support of our active members.

Active member arch/dioceses and associations have chosen to support the NFPC with an annual assessment, the amount of which is determined by the NFPC Board of Directors. This assessment covers much of the NFPC annual budget, and is reviewed each year by the Board of Directors, and voted upon by the arch/diocesan active member representatives or delegates (see Organizational Structure below) at the House of Delegates meeting.

Currently, the annual assessment reflects \$35 per priest (diocesan priests, including retired, plus any religious priests serving in a parish) as reported by each arch/diocese to the *Official Catholic Directory*. In the majority of arch/dioceses around the country, the assessment is covered as a professional service by the arch/diocese. Individual memberships are available.

Once again, the assessment is used to promote and continue all the services offered by NFPC for all the priests and bishops in the United States. It does not reflect a 'goods or services' mentality. It allows the vital work of the NFPC to continue for **all**. To understand the extent of the benefits, each active member arch/diocese is encouraged to take full advantage of all that NFPC offers.

To put the assessment into perspective, consider the following. It has been suggested that the complete cost today for college and seminary to educate a priest is approximately \$250,000. The cost of a treatment facility for any priest who is struggling is approximately \$17,000 per month. Yet, for the price per priest of a once a month Starbucks coffee, the body of priests in the United States is afforded a national organization to speak their concerns, to represent their interests in multiple forums, to develop resources for their pastoral use, to link their ministry with other key ministries in the church and to maintain a crosscurrent of communication essential to the life and work of bishops and priests today.

Most importantly, by the deliberate cultivation of the unity of the priests with their brother priests and with their bishop, priests become better priests, brothers with one another in Christ, supported and cherished, and can better model for the people the Kingdom of God in our midst.

## **How the Organizational Structure works:**

All active member councils/associations are called upon to elect one or more delegate(s), depending on the number of priests that the arch/diocese reports to the *Official Catholic Directory*, to participate in the NFPC House of Delegates. Active member councils/associations are entitled to send these priest delegates to the annual meeting, held in conjunction with the NFPC National Convocation of Priests. These delegates have the right to participate fully at the Parliamentary Session of the annual meeting, including all discussion as well as all voting privileges, which includes approving the annual budget.

One delegate from each U.S. Catholic Province is appointed as a consultor for the NFPC Council of Consultors, who are responsible for the ongoing dialogue that gives input and priority for raising issues and concerns to the NFPC Board of Directors. Nine of these consultors are elected to the NFPC Board of Directors, who guide the course of NFPC.

Keeping communication strong among all priests across the nation relies on a strong group of delegates, coming from all active member arch/dioceses. These delegates and those chosen as consultors or board members will have significant influence on the direction of NFPC's work, and therefore on strengthening the priesthood in the United States.

## **Specific Assistance:**

To reach our overall goal of the communion, brotherhood and solidarity of all U.S. bishops and priests, NFPC provides this specific assistance:

1. We provide a weekly e-letter, NFPC *This Week*, distributed via our website (nfpc.org) or email sign up. The e-letter includes the latest Catholic news summaries and links, useful websites, council notes, book reviews, upcoming conventions/workshops/webinars, and more. We do the work, you stay informed, delivered to your inbox weekly.
2. We publish the Touchstone periodical, mailed to every U.S. priest at least twice a year. It contains quality articles written by top Catholic clergy and lay professionals. In this way, we especially attempt to serve priests who do not regularly access the Internet. It also allows us to provide information useful to all the presbyterate on various topics of current interest to priests.
3. We have an active website (nfpc.org) as well as Facebook and Twitter sites. Our website offers: consistently updated Catholic news and events; convocation information and post-convocation summaries, pictures, text and when available video recordings of presentations; online bookstore emphasizing NFPC/CARA research as well as categories covering church management, council development, parish leadership, retirement and tax issues; a home base for the U.S. Catholic Priest-Labor Initiative; and much more. The social media sites include information about NFPC plus news, items of interest and blog posts from across the Catholic social media world.

4. We offer four quality programs for growth in personal and pastoral ministry (full details on our website, or by telephone):

*Programs for Group Development*

1. Priests and Bishops in Council (Customized, interactive, best practices and model development for your council)
2. Priest Personnel Board Review (Customized, interactive, best practices and policies to match the gifts and talents of priests with parish requirements for optimal assignments)

*Programs for Individual Development*

3. Catholic Leadership 360° (Comprehensive, individualized, in-depth research and assessment for priests and/or lay leadership teams to identify and develop pastoral leadership competencies)
  4. Tax and Retirement (Practical one-day workshop in tax reporting and retirement planning)
5. NFPC is an invaluable national clearinghouse for arch/dioceses and priests. Our staff is available for research assistance, personalized for your situation, covering any topic, including excellent speaker recommendations. We are a clearinghouse for questions on what is being done and where help can be found across the United States. NFPC has a significant list of contacts throughout arch/dioceses, the USCCB, and in many other U.S. Catholic organizations (listed as resources on our website); we are a trusted source for dioceses exploring and pursuing new avenues of growth.
  6. NFPC connects priests' councils and dioceses across the nation by collecting priests' councils' minutes from all participating arch/dioceses. The minutes are edited and condensed into our Council Notes, removing all personal or private information. The Council Notes are made available to all other councils via our weekly e-letter and our website, allowing all dioceses to connect for ideas, resources, and solutions to common concerns. Significantly, after more than 18 years of publishing these Council Notes, there has never been a complaint about content from those who share their minutes. It is a vital part of the function and purpose of NFPC, allowing bishops and priests nationwide to bring collective wisdom to bear on the collective challenges they face, contributing to the continued communication and growth of all councils, an invaluable resource for all.
  7. NFPC offers advocacy for priests' issues and needs to the USCCB as the only national organization for priests with a voice on the Committee for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Because our organizational structure allows active member diocesan delegates to contribute and thus have a significant influence on the direction and scope of the NFPC, active member dioceses can make a positive difference for the entire U.S. presbyterate.

8. Since 1970, we have provided self-published research *on* the presbyterate *for* the presbyterate:
  - a. *Same Call, Different Men:*  
featuring longitudinal research by CARA, covering the lives and ministries of priests, completed every 7-9 years
  - b. *The Laborer is Worthy of His Hire:*  
offering a profile of priests' compensation statistics including retirement benefits, most recently based on figures collected in 2012-2013, completed every 5 years
  - c. *Income Tax Guide for Clergy:*  
updated IRS guidelines, tips for completing forms, and tax planning advice, completed yearly with most recent tax year information
9. Our most powerful way of implementing our Mission to connect the U.S. presbyterate is realized through our annual national convocation, open to ***all*** bishops, priests, and seminarians from all arch/dioceses of the United States. At this gathering, we provide top level speakers and opportunities for Eucharist, prayer, learning, idea exchange, networking, and fraternity. Excellent food, local area tours and open relaxation time for rejuvenation, plus the opportunity for interactions with priests from across the U.S., all make this time invaluable for all who attend. Our House of Delegates and Council of Consultors meet during this Convocation which allows input and guidance from active member diocesan priests as to the governance and activities of the NFPC. Active member dioceses receive reduced rates for registration, and some scholarships are available for priests who wish to attend but are financially unable. This is truly a time when, through the Holy Spirit, the 'intimate sacramental brotherhood' is strengthened.
10. The Priest-Labor Initiative is an association of bishops, priests, scholars and supporters committed to standing with and advocating for workers, especially immigrant workers, who often are the most vulnerable. NFPC assists with the formation and training, and coordinates and encourages this online community of priests from across the United States, who minister according to the principles of Catholic social teaching.

### **Active Member Priests' Councils/Associations**

As previously stated, NFPC active membership is not a 'goods or services for financial reimbursement' approach. Active membership in NFPC supports the overall mission of the organization: the communion, brotherhood and solidarity of bishops, priests, and presbyterates.

A key benefit for active members lies in their ability to affect the direction of NFPC. As stated, active member councils/associations are invited to send priest delegates to the annual House of Delegates' meeting coinciding with the national convocation, with the right to vote at the Parliamentary Session. In addition, each province with active members appoints a consultor to the NFPC Council of Consultors, and these may be further elected to the NFPC Board of

Directors. These positions of leadership allow the delegates and consultants to have a significant influence on the direction and scope of NFPC and its impact on the priesthood in the United States. This collaboration is mutually beneficial as the delegates and consultants provide the NFPC with input on the activities and state of the priesthood in their dioceses and provinces, and provide personal and invaluable input as to the future direction of the NFPC as we seek to serve all priests.

In a sign of appreciation to all active member dioceses for their participation, NFPC offers reduced rates on all programs, as well as a discount on rates for the annual national convocation for any priest from the active member diocese.

Most importantly, active members stand as invaluable contributors to keeping all services offered by NFPC alive and effective, thereby sharing in service to all brother priests and bishops throughout the United States in affirmation of their shared priesthood in Jesus Christ. Active membership in NFPC is an investment in the strengthening of the Catholic priesthood in the United States. Financially and spiritually, it is a wise investment.

### **The National Federation of Priests' Councils**

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