



Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Protocol for International Priests

**This document outlines the process that the
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston follows
to welcome International Priests to minister here.**

Rationale for the Program

The universal nature of the Catholic Church continues to be reflected ever more deeply in the experience of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Just as our people come from many nations, languages, ethnicities and cultures, our presbyterate also always has reflected this same catholicity. In welcoming international priests (IPs), we continue to be faithful to our own identity and to insure our excellence as a sacramental Church for succeeding generations. God calls; God sends; God receives.

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PROTOCOL FOR INTERNATIONAL PRIESTS

THE ARCHBISHOP

The Archbishop is part of the entire process, from pre-acceptance to acceptance and evaluation, through the Chancery and the Personnel Board.

Sometimes, candidates are already in the archdiocese, perhaps visiting relatives. In such cases, it is advisable that the Archbishop meet the candidate only after the Personnel Board has offered its recommendations. Consequently, candidates should know that casually meeting the Archbishop prior to approval and receiving words of welcome from him does not indicate nor secure final acceptance to the archdiocese.

QUALIFICATIONS (See [Appendix 2](#))

- 1) Physically healthy and active; psychologically and spiritually mature. Open to medical and psychological evaluation
- 2) Minimum of two years' experience in pastoral ministry as priest or minimum of five years in a religious institute
- 3) Freedom from demanding family obligations
- 4) A three-year commitment minimum, if accepted to minister in Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (canon 276, §2. 1)
- 5) Willingness to find and utilize the services of a spiritual director. A list of approved spiritual directors will be provided upon arrival
- 6) Willingness to be trained (canon 279)
- 7) Familiarity with the Latin Rites in English
- 8) Readiness and willingness to minister in new cultural environments
- 9) Ability to live and work with people of diverse ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- 10) Ability to work in a collaborative manner, especially with and for laity in general, and women, in particular (canons 545; 548)
- 11) Availability to arrive in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston by June 15 of a given year
- 12) Facility in the use of English language or willingness to learn it, since this is the common language of the archdiocese. Also, openness to learn Spanish, which is the second spoken language in the archdiocese
 - a) Candidates should fill out a self-evaluation form prior to arriving (See [Appendix 2,5](#))
 - b) If needed, candidates who have limited knowledge of English may have to arrive in January to take English as Second Language (ESL) classes for six months, and then start the International Priests Acculturation Program (IPAP) ([Appendix 4](#)) in July
- 13) Computer literacy or willingness to learn it
- 14) Suitability to minister in the archdiocese. Nothing in his background that disqualifies him from working with minors and vulnerable adults. Willingness to undergo and/or produce a criminal background check (canon 547)

PRE-ACCEPTANCE

- 1) **First contact.** It may be initiated either by the Archbishop's Office or Dioceses and Religious Orders. We expect to speak personally by phone interview with the priest candidate.
- 2) **Information Packet.** The Archbishop's Office will send an Information Packet to Bishops or Religious Superiors from whom we are seeking assistance.
 - a) The packet will contain:
 - i) The list of IP's required qualifications as indicated above.

- ii) A web link (www.archgh.org/internationalpriests/index.htm) (*Appendix 1*), which connects to other websites providing basic information about the Historical, Cultural, Political, Social and Religious reality of our local Church.
 - iii) A questionnaire (*Appendix 2*), which asks IPs to indicate their intentions for coming here (why they want to come, what they can offer to Galveston-Houston, etc.) and what they have learned from the websites about the diocese.
 - iv) Instructions and documentation needed by the prospective candidate about medical, legal and immigration issues.
 - v) Information about the VIRTUS training program, the acculturation program (IPAP), the 8-9 month “discernment period” or “provisional status” and the mentoring program (*Appendix 3*).
 - vi) A statement that acceptance is for ministry in accordance with canon 271, §2 and is not for incardination as provided in canon 268.
 - vii) The provision for remuneration (canon 281, §1) which is found in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Manual, Section O, II A, B, C.
- 3) **Application, Endorsement and Documentation.** Candidate’s response will include:
- a) Written endorsement by his Bishop or Religious Superior.
 - b) A resume, an autobiographical essay and the responses to the questionnaire, listing the priest’s personal reasons for seeking pastoral ministry in this archdiocese, his hopes, expectations and potential missionary contributions to our local Church.
 - c) Candidate’s self-evaluation using an objective evaluation tool to assess the level of English knowledge. (e.g.: Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL], or International English Language Testing Systems [IELTS]).
 - d) Physical health report form.
 - e) Criminal background check as defined by our legal counsel.
- 4) **Verification.** The Chancery will verify the authenticity of the documents received and maintain contact with the candidate’s Bishop or Religious Superior. All correspondence with the candidates is sent both to him and his Bishop or Religious Superior.
- 5) **Applications review.** The Personnel Board will assist the Office of the Archbishop in reviewing the applications submitted and will make recommendations on acceptance and assignment.
- 6) **Acceptance.** The Archbishop accepts and assigns the IP to minister in the archdiocese. (canon 547)
- 7) **Faculties** will be given upon completion of the July IPAP.

POST-ACCEPTANCE

- 1) **Invitation.** Upon acceptance, the new IP is invited to come to the archdiocese in time to begin the annual July IPAP sessions. The IP will have to be in Houston by June 15 (that is, about two weeks before IPAP starts).
- 2) **Discernment period** (or *provisional status*) of six to eight months upon arrival. This is offered in order to:
 - a) Provide time for medical and psychological evaluation, performed here by professionals conversant with the IP’s culture.
 - b) Provide time for adequate evaluation of IPs’ adaptability to the Church in Galveston-Houston.
 - c) Supply the reasons to the U.S. government in the case that several candidates, who are in possession of a 3 year R-1 visa, may have to leave the archdiocese at the end of such discernment time and
 - d) Give the archdiocese sufficient time to look for replacement the following year.

- 3) **Mentoring Program and general support.** (*Appendix 3*) The mentoring program is a spiritual, pastoral and “practical” accompaniment to help the IP adjust to the new lifestyle. It lasts from the initial welcoming up to 1-2 years.
 - a) Upon acceptance, the Archbishop will appoint a Priest-Mentor and assign him to the IP.
 - i) If possible, the Priest-Mentor should be a priest from the same ethnic/cultural background as the new IP, who has been in the archdiocese for several years.
 - b) The priest-mentor will meet the IP at the site of arrival and bring him to his place of residence. After 1-2 weeks, the IP will go to his assignment; however, his title is as *a priest-in-residence*, until IPAP is over.
 - c) In addition, ethnic vicars, priests’ national/ethnic groups and a group of selected laypeople will provide ongoing support.
- 4) **Acculturation**
 - a) IPAP (*Appendix 4*) The IP will attend the two-week full-time orientation program (IPAP) offered in July each year at St. Mary’s Seminary.
 - i) Examples of classes include statistics of and considerations on the archdiocese; traits of American culture as it relates to the Gospel; ministering with various ethnic and linguistic groups: Hispanics, Vietnamese, of African descent, from India, Philippines and Africa; working with laity and women in the Church; chancery offices and resources; “office culture” of the parish in the US, e.g., office hours and clerical attire; liturgical issues and celebrations; use of money for personal and church use and how to solve conflicts with pastor or parochial vicar.
 - b) Accent modifications. *University of Houston* teachers and tutors. Testing and tutoring will extend from summer through fall. Its purpose is to:
 - i) Identify key differences in sound, stress and intonation patterns, as compared to Standard American English (SAE).
 - ii) Produce and practice the target sounds and patterns to improve American accent.
 - iii) Incorporate new American English sounds and patterns into conversational speech, with attention to liturgical vocabulary and setting.
 - c) Preparation of the Hosting Pastor, (*Appendix 5*) to understand, welcome, dialogue with and clarify customs of the IP, and also, the roles and responsibilities in the ministerial setting, through seminars, workshops, tutoring.
 - d) Preparation of the Local Community, (*Appendix 5*) to learn the general culture of the IP before his arrival to local parish.
- 5) **Faculties and ministry.** The IP will receive faculties and begin ministry upon finishing the intensive July IPAP sessions.
- 6) **Evaluation:** (*Appendix 6*) The Personnel Board will assist the Office of Ministry to Priests in overseeing evaluation, which will be:
 - a) Formal. To dialogue with IPs to assess their own benefit and appreciation of both the acculturation experience and process and to recommend additional procedures.
 - b) Informal. To dialogue with various significant persons who live, work, and/or are in ministry with IP (e.g.: Parish Support Team as indicated in *Appendix 5*), to assess the progress and benefits of the acculturation process, as well as the continuing needs or recommendations for the IPs in their local ministerial setting.

Appendix 1



The Archdiocese of Galveston - Houston

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Keyword Search What department are you looking for?



- Website Menu -

- About Our Diocese
- Secretariats
- Secretariat for Vocations & Chaplains
- International Priests**

The following links are provided for those priests who may apply to serve in the Archdiocese. We hope that these links will help you in gaining information and insight into who we are and what priestly ministry may be like in Galveston-Houston.

- [Diocesan Services Fund Video](#)
- [Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau](#)
- Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Reference:**
 - [History](#)
 - [Statistics](#)
 - [Our Archbishops & Bishops](#)
 - [Secretariats & Departments](#)
 - [Vicariates & Deaneries](#)
 - [Parish Locator](#)
 - [School Locator](#)

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Appendix 2

INFORMATION AND QUESTIONNAIRE

If you are accepted to come to the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, you are expected to be here by June 15 of a given year, in order to attend a two week acculturation program *International Priests Acculturation Program* (IPAP) early in July, which includes the training session on how to safely minister to minors and vulnerable adults (VIRTUS Program).

Upon beginning your ministry, there will be a 6-8 month period to evaluate your adaptability to work in our archdiocese (Discernment period, or provisional status).

Please, make sure that you understand and are able to fulfill the QUALIFICATIONS as outlined at Page 3.

Also, please mail to us the following:

- 1) A letter from your Bishop/Religious Superior, granting permission for you to serve outside your diocese/province and the time for which this permission is valid.
- 2) A detailed *curriculum vitae*, which lists birth date, ordination date, all your assignments since ordination and your health history.
- 3) An autobiographical essay, to include a statement listing your reasons for seeking pastoral ministry in this archdiocese, your hopes, expectations and what your potential contribution to our local Church can be.
- 4) What languages you speak and your proficiency in each one.
- 5) The results of a test establishing your proficiency in the English language. It could either be the Test of English as a Foreign Language, (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). If you live outside the U.S.A., please contact your nearest U.S. consulate for further information on how to take such tests.
- 6) The enclosed physical health report form.
- 7) Criminal background check as defined by our legal counsel.
- 8) The type of assignment, which you desire, as well as your date of availability and the length of time you wish to remain here.
- 9) Your legal status in the United States (if you have a current Religious Worker Visa – R1; please submit a photocopy of the visa and all pages of your passport and I-94 card).
- 10) A recent photograph.

*Appendix 3***MENTORING PROGRAM FOR INTERNATIONAL PRIESTS
- DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS -****1) RATIONALE:**

Many adjustments are required of an International Priest (IP) coming into the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. There is value to identifying an experienced priest to journey with an IP during his initial time in ministry here. Someone who has experienced such a transition and who has been able to do so successfully can assist an IP in having a positive experience of change.

2) A CANDIDATE FOR THE ROLE OF MENTOR:

- a) Serves successfully as a priest.
- b) Can provide some standard of behavior – dealing with conflict, balancing personal life and ministry demands, etc.
- c) Should be a priest from the same ethnic/cultural background as the new IP and has familiarity with the archdiocese.
- d) Should be an experienced priest, but not the Pastor or the Director of the ministry to which the new IP is assigned, nor the Ethnic Vicar for the IP's national grouping.
- e) If possible, should not be a member of the same religious community as the IP.
- f) Must be approved by the Archbishop.

3) FUNCTIONS OF A MENTOR:

- a) Helps the IP to deal with Archdiocesan procedures and the inner workings of both Church and society.
- b) Helps the IP to balance ministry demands and personal lifestyle needs.
- c) Helps the IP to become familiar with informal and unwritten policies and procedures in the local setting.
- d) Provides both support and challenge to the IP.
- e) Helps the IP to make connections with others in ministry.
- f) Recommends occasions for ongoing education.

4) THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP:

Could be broadly divided into two time frames:

- a) For the first 4-5 weeks, an IP may need guidance/direction in practical areas (Social Security card, driver's license, car insurance, barber shop, etc.), as well as to connect to archdiocesan structures and to people who may be of support such as the chancellor, ethnic vicar, the minister to priests, other priests of the same ethnic or national group, etc.
- b) For the remainder of the first year, the IP needs a mentor who accompanies him by:
 - i) Establishing a rapport based on time and trust.

- ii) Refraining from acting in an authoritative role. The IP hopefully will be at ease in speaking freely and having a safe time/space/place to process and explore information and experiences.
- iii) Meeting monthly or more frequently.
- iv) Preparing an appropriate agenda for the scheduled meetings.
- v) Helping the IP integrate one's pastoral style in new settings (using available tools such as the Pastor/Parochial Vicar checklist).

5) MENTEES ARE CALLED UPON TO:

- a) Be open to such a relationship.
- b) Be willing to spend time and energy at its development.
- c) Have an understanding of the mentoring process as a means of learning.
- d) See the process as a commitment to ongoing education and formation.
- e) Recognize that the learning process does not end and that there are always areas in which to grow.
- f) See the mentor as a companion.
- g) Be honest and willing to share dreams, expectations, goals and experiences with the mentor.
- h) Challenge the mentor to provide a valuable experience of the mentoring process.
- i) Evaluate one's experiences and personal goals and grow as a priest in ministry.

6) IMPLEMENTATION

- a) A mentor for an IP needs to be available before an IP arrives in the archdiocese, and be at the site of the IP's arrival to welcome him to the archdiocese.
- b) The Office of Ministry to Priests will coordinate all arrangements for the mentoring relationship.
- c) The Office of Ministry to Priests will be available to meet with the mentor and the IP to outline in more detail the concept of the mentoring relationship and to provide ongoing support.
- d) The mentoring relationship will last for a minimum of one year. Upon mutual agreement, the time frame could be extended. The Office of Ministry to Priests would help in this decision.
- e) The relationship should be seen as professional and fraternal in nature – thus, the context and content of the session is important.
- f) Accountability: The priest mentor is accountable to the Director of the Ministry to Priests.

Appendix 4

International Priests Acculturation Program – IPAP

Typical Calendar

Speakers to be invited according to availability

Classes are held at St. Mary's Seminary

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

JULY TWO-WEEK SESSION

FIRST WEEK

- Monday** *Welcoming* (Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Chancery officials, Ethnic Vicars, Mentors, etc.)
- Tuesday** *Cross-Cultural Training* (Logistical Solutions, International)
- Wednesday** *Culture and Acculturation* (Rev. Don Nesti, C.S.Sp.)
- Thursday** *Overview of the Galveston-Houston cultural and pastoral make-up* (Mr. Jorge Delgado)
- Friday** *Presentation of the English Accent Modification Program* (University of Houston Department of Communication Speech & Disorders)

SECOND WEEK

- Monday** *VIRTUS Training Program* (Safe Environment Staff)
- Tuesday** *Ministry with Women, Laity and Permanent Deacons in Local Parishes* (Sr. Carol Mayes, O.P., Fr. Brendan Cahill and Fr. Skip Negley, M.S.)
- Wednesday** *Marriage Cases in America: Annulments, Re-Marriages and Marriage Preparation* (Archdiocesan Tribunal Staff)
- Thursday** *Introduction to local civic institutions and participation in the political process* (Mrs. Renee Wizing-Barríos of TMO and Fr. Italo Dell'Oro, C.R.S.)
- Friday** *Pastoral Manual* (Msgr. Frank Rossi, V.G.)
 *Evening Social (MTP, Seminary) after all-day class

FALL-WINTER SESSION

MONTHLY MEETINGS

- October** *Pastoral resources* (St. Dominic's Chancery)
- November** *Faith Formation across the Life Cycle: the different generations of the American Family* (Family and Life Ministry staff)
- December** *Hispanic Ministry* (Arturo and Esperanza Monterrubio)
- January** *African and African-American Ministry* (Ethnic Vicar)
- February** *Asian Ministry* (Ethnic Vicar)

Appendix 5

A. PREPARATION OF PASTORS

1. The pastor needs to know in advance (2-3 months) available information of IP, such as age, years of ordinations, etc.
2. The pastor should welcome the challenge to help the IP explore resources of the archdiocese and the community in general, encouraging him and being available to him.
3. The correspondent Ethnic Vicar will assist the pastor and IP to maintain positive communication, especially when suggestions for change or improvement need to be offered to the IP. The Vicar's role should be clearly indicated by the Archbishop.
 - a. If conflicts arise between the IP and his pastor/supervisor, procedures indicated in the Pastoral Manual should be followed.
4. The relevant canons in the Cod of Canon Law are canons 545-552.

The Pastor Should Become Cognizant Of the Following Areas:

1) Communications

- a) IP's communication patterns with authority figures, with laity, women, etc.
- b) IP's ways to exchange communication at meetings
- c) IP's patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication
- d) That lay people of the same ethnic group as the IP, may assist the pastor in bridging the cultural differences between pastor and IP

2) Ministry

- a) IP's ministerial expectations such as participation in meetings, sacramental preparation, etc.
- b) IP's understanding of role of lay volunteers (e.g. turning off lights, locking doors when activities end, etc.)
- c) IP's need to attend his national/ethnic priests' support group
- d) IP's understanding of boundaries in pastoral and personal activities, especially with women and minors
- e) That faithful of same ethnicity or nationality as new IP may start gathering around him, asking for special devotional and religious celebrations, etc.
- f) IP's background on devotion and religious practices, especially about Mary
- g) IP's pastoral approaches and priorities including sharing his own as well
- h) Whether "private" sacramental celebrations (mass, baptism, etc.) may be typical in IP's background
- i) Pastor will be using the "PASTOR-PAROCHIAL VICAR CHECKLIST"

3) Living situations

- a) IP's lifestyle
- b) Rectory/Office boundaries
- c) Food issues, e.g., self service in rectory
- d) Typical IP's food:
 - i) Involve IP in preparing menus
 - ii) Leave IP's food in refrigerator
 - iii) Different foods have different odors

4) Social mores

- a) IP's ways to celebrate:
 - i) Birthdays
 - ii) Anniversaries
 - iii) National celebrations
- b) IP's sports
- c) IP's typical dressing codes, e.g., office, Chancery, casual
- d) IP's appreciation of visiting:
 - i) Families
 - ii) Parishioners
 - iii) Friends
 - iv) Youth
- e) IP's cultural understanding of physical touch

5) Work Ethics

IP's understanding of:

- a) Office hours
- b) Priestly tasks and duties
- c) Immediacy vs. planning
- d) Staff (different duties)
- e) How to relate to Chancery offices, Tribunal and Ordinary

6) Tools and Time line

- a) July 1 – IP's Appointment
- b) 2nd or 3rd week in June:
 - i) Ethnic Vicar to arrange a meeting with pastor(s) and offer a brief introduction about the cultural background of new IP coming to the parish
 - ii) Printed material, prepared by the ethnic vicars, may be supplied to the pastor at the time of the meeting
- c) 2nd and 3rd week in July:
 - i) IPAP (new IP attends IPAP)
 - ii) Ethnic Vicars and mentors visit IPs during IPAP

B. PREPARATION OF THE PARISH COMMUNITY

- 1) A welcoming Sunday will be planned within two-three months of the arrival of the new IP.
 - a) One of the Masses will highlight the newly-arrived IP's cultural background.
 - b) A festival celebrating the ethnic, national and cultural background of the IP is observed. Pictures of the new IP and of his country may be shown.
- 2) The IP will be invited to contribute to the preparations of parish festivals.
- 3) Pastors are strongly encouraged to establish a Parish Support Team (of up to 5 people) that will meet with the IP on a monthly basis to review his progress. Members are appointed by the pastor and include a cross section representation of the parish: laity, staff, youth, adults...) They will be actively involved in the two-step “informal” evaluation of the IP ([Appendix 6](#))

Appendix 6

EVALUATION

A team from the Personnel Board in cooperation with the Office of Ministry to Priests will conduct the evaluation. The evaluation has two components:

- 1) One, “formal”, to be done with the IP himself, addresses the impact of the entire program: mentoring, parish welcoming, IPAP, and accent modification.
- 2) Another, “informal”, includes the observation of the people who work with the IP, such as the Pastor, Pastoral Associates and the Parish Support Team, who also may give constructive feedback about the IP's growth in ministry.
- 3) Both sets of the evaluation will be held twice:
 - a) Initially, by the end of the month of August
 - b) Then, by the end of December, as the *discernment time* finishes and the decision to continue or not the IP's service in Galveston-Houston is about to be made.

A. Questionnaire for the International Priest himself

Father,

Thank you for your service in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. We are anxious to support you in your priestly ministry. As we reflect on the mentoring program for international priests, the IPAP and the group of people who are accompanying you at your place, we need now your insights and wisdom. Your honesty and frankness in responding to these questions is of vital importance. Your responses will be kept in confidence by the Ministry to Priests Office.

Data: name, date of entry into archdiocese, current assignment, mentor, e-mail, etc.

- 1) Who is your priest-mentor?
- 2) How frequently have you and he met?
- 3) In settling into priestly ministry in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, how has your mentor been most helpful to you? (Please name and describe at least three areas).
- 4) In settling into priestly ministry in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, how has your mentor been least helpful to you? (Please name and describe at least three areas).
- 5) In order to make the support programs for arriving International Priests more effective, please share your judgments experience and suggestions about:
 - a) The July IPAP gathering
 - b) The monthly IPAP sessions
 - c) The language improvement/accent modification process
 - d) The overall communications and support offered you by the Office of Ministry to Priests
 - e) Gatherings of Native and International Priests, e.g., Deanery meetings, the Archbishop's Christmas party, the Chrism Mass, support group, etc.
- 6) Please describe your level of satisfaction in ministry in the archdiocese.

- a) Your relationship with the pastor (or supervisor)
 - b) With other priests at the institution and in the archdiocese
 - c) With staff
 - d) With people in the pews
- 7) Are you happy in your present assignment?
 - 8) What makes you happy/unhappy at this time?
 - 9) Please, name some areas that you have found difficult.
 - 10) How do you see your future as a priest serving in this archdiocese?

B. Questionnaire for Pastor, Fellow Vicars and a representative of the Parish Support Team (see [Appendix J](#)) or Staff and Parish Members working with the IP)

Date; Name; Parish position

This is a confidential questionnaire and will not be shared directly with the international priest, although recommendations and challenges may be offered to him as a result of trends appearing in his total evaluation population, both parish and archdiocesan.

- 1) What is your position in the parish?
- 2) Describe your working relationship with the IP: frequency, tasks, supervision.
- 3) Do you perceive any cultural challenges or concerns (e.g. authority, gender, life-style, ministry style, work ethic) in the IP?
- 4) Where do you see Father's biggest contribution to your parish community?
- 5) What is Father's most outstanding personal or ministerial gift?
- 6) On a scale of 1 to 10, in which 10 represents fluent, non-accented English and 1 indicates total inability in the English language, how would you rank Father the day he arrived at your parish? What ranking would you assign him today? Comments.
- 7) If appropriate: On a scale of 1 to 10, in which 10 represents fluent, non-accented Spanish and 1 indicates total inability in the Spanish language, how would you rank Father the day he arrived at your parish? What ranking would you assign him today? Comments.
- 8) Where do you see Father ideally in future ministry (pastor, parochial vicar, hospital chaplain, etc.)? Why?
- 9) What, if anything, has the parish done to learn more about Father's native land and culture?
- 10) Is there anything of a confidential nature that you believe you should discuss with a priest from the chancery or Ministry to Priests office? If so, when and at what number should you be reached?
- 11) Other comments: