

Absence of Priests from Parishes – Priestless Weekends

The Diocese of Lubbock is currently experiencing a **critical shortage of priests** following the recent deaths of three priests and the retirement of another due to illness. This shortage affects our ability to provide coverage when priests are away for vacation, illness, or other obligations.

Diocesan Policy Overview

Under the direction of **Bishop Robert Coerver**, diocesan consultative bodies have established the following temporary measures:

- **Priest Vacations:** Priests are entitled by Canon Law to 30 days of vacation annually (Canon 533.2).
- **Mass Limitations:** A priest may normally celebrate one Mass daily, with exceptions when pastoral need requires more (Canon 905), but never more than three in any Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation.
- **Priestless Weekends:** Every parish should expect at least **two weekends per year** without a priest. In these cases, nearby parishes' Mass times will be published in advance.
- **Chancellor Coordination:** The **Office of the Chancellor** will coordinate priest coverage. If coverage cannot be found, the Chancellor will authorize **Communion Services** or cancellations as necessary.
- **Deacons & Ministers:** Deacons and trained Extraordinary Ministers may lead Communion Services following approved liturgical rites.

Weekday Absences

When a priest is away on weekdays:

- Substitute priests will be arranged through the Chancellor's Office when possible.
- If no priest is available, Deacons or Extraordinary Ministers may distribute Communion within a simple liturgical service.
- In some cases, Mass or Confessions may be cancelled, and parishioners encouraged to gather for prayer, Scripture, or the Rosary.
- Each parish must ensure a **published contact person** is available for emergencies.

A Call to Understanding and Prayer

These measures aim to ensure continued access to the Eucharist and pastoral care during this time of shortage. We ask the faithful to:

- Be **patient and supportive** of priests' need for rest and renewal.
- **Pray for vocations** to the priesthood and diaconate.
- Encourage youth and young adults (age 16+) to serve as **Extraordinary Ministers** and in other parish ministries.

Together, let us strengthen our faith community, support our priests, and pray for the renewal of vocations across the Diocese of Lubbock.

The entire document is available on the Diocese of Lubbock website:
<https://catholiclubbock.org/PriestlessWeekends.html>