

Church of Ireland

The House of Bishops

PROTOCOL FOR GRANTING PERMISSION TO OFFICIATE TO CERTAIN PRIESTS WHO WERE ORDAINED IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OR EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND WHO ARE NOW MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

Introduction

Permission to Officiate, or a Licence, from a Diocesan Bishop (“the bishop”) is required for any form of public ministry as an ordained person.

This protocol sets out the circumstances in which Permission to Officiate may, on an occasional basis, be given to priests of the Roman Catholic Church or Eastern Orthodox Churches (“the enquirer”), who no longer exercise ministry in either of those Churches and have become well-established members of the Church of Ireland.

Such people may have, at this stage, no desire to have a ‘full’ ministry within the Church of Ireland. This protocol addresses to what extent, and in what circumstances, the reality of their priesthood might be acknowledged, particularly in the places where they live and worship.

Such priests may have passed an age where the prospect of a full and active ministry is, in reality, unlikely. It may be that such priests are well-established in other occupations and would not aspire to extend their ministry beyond the local context in which they have become well known.

This protocol:

- offers such priests an opportunity to exercise an occasional and local ministry as appropriate, under the immediate direction of the local incumbent or the archdeacon of the diocese, with the Permission to Officiate granted by the bishop
- enables them to be visibly the priests their peers and fellow parishioners know them to be, and
- recognises the fact that many such people, although long out of public ministry, have continued disciplines of prayer and devotion that are proper to their vocation.

Stage 1: Preliminaries and Enquiry

- 1.1 The enquirer should be resident in the Diocese and an established and practising member of the Church of Ireland for a period of 3 years.
- 1.2 The fact of the priestly ministry of the enquirer, formerly in the Roman Catholic Church or Eastern Orthodox Church, shall have been known and acknowledged locally.
- 1.3 The enquirer should supply a full CV to the bishop.

- 1.4 The enquirer should not be in a position to consider formal transfer to the ordained ministry of the Church of Ireland (in accordance with HoB Protocol 2013/002).
- 1.5 The enquirer should not previously have been formally turned down for transfer to the ordained ministry of the Church of Ireland (in accordance with HoB Protocol 2013/002).
- 1.6 The enquirer shall be in good standing in his local parish and within the diocese.
- 1.7 The enquirer shall make application to the bishop on the form provided.
- 1.8 The applicant should supply the names of at least 3 referees.
 - 1.8.1 One of these should if at all possible be senior clergy or bishops of the church to which the priest previously belonged.
 - 1.8.2 One should be a priest of the Church of Ireland – usually the enquirer’s rector – who has come to know the applicant well.
 - 1.8.3 Two should be from lay members of the Church of Ireland who know the applicant well.

Stage 2: Assessment by the Bishop

- 2.1 The bishop will seek written references from each referee and may wish, with the applicant’s consent, to follow them up as appropriate.
- 2.2 The bishop (with, as necessary, others appointed by him or her) will carry out in-depth interviews concerning:
 - Doctrine and spirituality, with a view to ascertaining that the enquirer has come to a true spiritual home in the Church of Ireland;
 - Attitude to authority and discipline;
 - The Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal, and the contents of the latter relating especially to Holy Scripture;
 - Familiarity with the Church of Ireland, and of wider Anglicanism; and
 - Overall approach to ministering in the Church of Ireland.
- 2.3 Formal evidence shall be sought of the date and place of the enquirer’s ordination to the priesthood.
- 2.4 The bishop shall establish that, prior to leaving the former church, that the enquirer was, at all times in good standing in that church.
- 2.5 Prior to the granting of Permission to Officiate the enquirer be required to undergo the Garda vetting or AccessNI vetting process (as appropriate), and to undertake the Safeguarding Trust training programme.
- 2.6 The enquirer shall be required to undertake such additional training locally as the bishop may deem necessary.

Stage 3: Permission to Officiate

- 3.1 Permission to Officiate shall be granted by the Bishop in the manner set out in House of Bishops Protocol 2014/003. Legally, Permission to Officiate is held at the Bishop's pleasure and may be withdrawn at any time.
- 3.2 The bishop should not give Permission to Officiate when s/he discerns that the enquirer should in fact be directed to preparing for a fuller and wider ministry within the Church of Ireland.
- 3.3 The bishop should make clear the limitations that surround the giving of permission to officiate including in terms of wider diocesan involvement, stressing that any desire to enter a fuller licensed ministry, should the enquirer's circumstances change, would involve following the adherence to the procedures in HoB Protocol 2013/002.

Stage 4: Recording, Notification and Limitations

- 4.1 The priest to be granted Permission to Officiate shall, in the presence of the bishop and two other witnesses make and subscribe the Declarations, the fact of which shall be recorded in the Diocesan Registry.
- 4.2 There shall be no public ceremony or liturgy marking the granting of Permission to Officiate.
- 4.3 The Permission to Officiate shall be recorded in the Diocesan Registry.
- 4.5 A priest to whom such Permission to Officiate has been granted is not eligible to be licensed.

**House of Bishops
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