



Pastors and Conferences: Maintaining Good Relations

The Rule of the Society is clear that a priest (especially, but not only, the spiritual advisor) can be an active member of a Conference. Often a pastor will assign a parish priest as spiritual advisor. Sometimes a pastor himself assumes this role. As spiritual advisor, a priest is a member and should attend all Conference meetings, his ideas and input being as vital as those of any other active member. Unfortunately, given the demands on pastors today, few can participate in this active way. Because parishes in the United States host most of them, Conferences must conscientiously maintain close relations with their pastors and keep all lines of communication open. There are five ways to achieve this goal:

1. Pastors and parishioners should be regularly informed about the income, expenses, and works of the Conference, to assure them that all funds received from the parish are being handled appropriately and responsibly. Though it must certainly respect the confidentiality of those served, such reporting is necessary to secure the trust and cooperation of the pastor.
2. If a pastor who is not a spiritual advisor cannot attend regular meetings of the Conference, some mutually convenient time should be arranged between the Conference president and the pastor, providing each an opportunity to share ideas, express concerns, and ask questions.
3. Although a lay organization, the Society has always supported and respected priests. Since a mutual and necessary collaborative relationship

must exist between pastor and Conference for our Society to thrive, a Conference should always be careful how it treats a pastor, who has the final say about whether or not the Conference can function in the parish. Pastors who are kept informed about the Society and its works are more likely to encourage and support its efforts.

4. Establishing clear guidelines of operation with every newly assigned pastor is essential. What has been done under the administration of one pastor might make another uncomfortable. As long as the Rule of the Society is not violated, compromise is a necessary and good thing.

5. Providing a pastor with information about the Society and informing him regularly about what is going on -- not just in the parish, but also regionally, nationally, and internationally -- is absolutely vital to the preservation of a solid relationship with a pastor and to a pastor's continued growth in knowledge of the Society's mission and purpose. In addition, a Conference should help the pastor by providing the parish (most likely through the parish bulletin) with at least an annual report of the works of the Society in the parish, although more frequent reporting to parishioners is certainly encouraged.

For more information on maintaining good relations with pastors, contact:

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