

To: The Pastors and Parochial Administrators of the Diocese of Beaumont
From: Most Reverend Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., D.D., Bishop of Beaumont
Re: **Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (update)**

The Congregation for Divine Worship (1988) promulgated a Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest; the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1994) published *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest: Leader's Edition* to be used where the diocesan bishop has given authorization. Since then, a revised edition of the *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest: Leader's Edition* was published (2007) and this edition is now the only edition to be used.

Authorization: After consultation with the diocesan Presbyteral Council in 2002 I formally authorized the use of the 1994 Leader's Edition in the Diocese of Beaumont. However, the 1994 edition is no longer to be used and every parish is to use the 2007 edition, a copy of which was given to each parish by the Office of Worship.

Use Limited: The Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP) may be used only when reasonable effort has been expended by the pastor (or parish/mission secretary) to secure a replacement priest(s) for Mass(es) when the pastor (or his parochial vicar) cannot be present.

A current Replacement Ministry List is available from the Vicar General (409-924-4303).

Permission: I grant permission to use the SCAP under the following conditions:

1. The pastor becomes ill or is called away for an emergency (e.g., death in his immediate family) and cannot secure a replacement priest on short notice.
2. For vacation and/or continuing education if, after diligent efforts, the pastor cannot secure a replacement priest.

I urge each priest to have at least one weekend free for his vacation, thus permitting him to plan a trip over a two-week period.

If a replacement priest cannot be secured, I ask that the pastor, at all Masses the weekend before his departure, announce his forthcoming absence, and publish the Mass times for the closest neighboring parish.

The pastor should inform the faithful that the SCAP will fulfill the Sunday/Holy Day obligation (this same announcement regarding the obligation should be made by the leader at the beginning of every SCAP).

3. Every effort must be made to secure a replacement priest for *at least one Mass*, preferably the main Mass of the parish or mission.
4. When a priest listed on the Replacement Ministry List is not available, the pastor (or parish/mission secretary) is to request the pastor of a parish with two priests to provide one of the priests for the Masses (or at least one Mass).

Notice: Notification by telephone, letter, fax, or email re the specific dates SCAP is being used must be sent to my office or that of the vicar general. I ask that the notification be provided prior to the dates of use, except for emergencies when notice should be provided immediately after the use. Notification assures that my office is informed should questions be raised.

{**Note:** this notification is not to seek permission; the pastor determines if the need justifies SCAP, and then simply informs my office.]

Leaders: The usual leader for the SCAP is a deacon, in vestments.

Persons, lay and religious, may be designated by the pastor and approved by me to lead the SCAP when a deacon is not available. **Those to be designated as leaders by the pastor must first attend a training class offered by the Office of Worship.** Upon completion of the class, their names will be submitted to me for approval and the pastor will receive notification from me that the person has received diocesan training and may be a SCAP leader. *Leaders of SCAP may be designated as such for a period of three-years.* Designated SCAP leaders should practice regularly to assure the faithful will have a prayerful experience if it becomes necessary to have a SCAP celebration.

The lay leader's vesture is to be suitable for the function, as determined by the pastor (or by religious community norms if the leader is a religious). Impressions that the lay leader is an ordained minister are to be avoided. **The presidential chair may never be used, either by a lay leader or by a deacon.**

Approval: The approval for such leaders by me is separate from approval to be an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Any person's name submitted by the pastor to be trained as a leader of SCAP must have the qualities required for liturgical presence and must have completed the Office of Worship training. Parishioners currently serving in parish liturgical ministries may also be recommended by the pastor to train to be a leader for SCAP.

Catechesis: Given the decreasing availability of Replacement Ministry priests in our diocese I ask that every pastor and parochial administrator provide a week-end catechesis at every Mass for the faithful re SCAP. The catechesis should cover the points made in #6 through #13 of the *Leader's Edition*.

A catechesis, presented with clarity, will offer our pastors the opportunity to speak again on the need for vocations to the priesthood from our Catholic families.

cc: Parochial Vicars
Deacons
Seminarians
Religious