

Return of Former Incumbents

The underlying principle is that when a priest takes up a new ministry in another appointment, or enters into retirement, he/she does not return to officiate at services, etc., in the former parish. However, long relationships and affectionate remembrance by the people often bring about such requests.

In such cases, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. **In the interim**, before the new incumbent arrives, the former priest may return for weddings, funerals, etc., if requested and with the concurrence of the acting priest-in-charge and/or the area bishop. It is understood, of course, that pastoral needs in the new parish will take precedence.
2. **After the new incumbent arrives**, former clergy and others may be invited back when requested, but such invitations must always be directly **from the incumbent**. It would be appropriate to have the incumbent officiate and the outside clergy to assist in the service at the direction of the incumbent. **Under no circumstances** should such ministry be done without the knowledge and invitation of the incumbent whether in the church or elsewhere in the parish. It is entirely inappropriate for parishioners to request the ministry of a former incumbent/curate in place of the present one. By his/her induction vows, the current incumbent has the responsibility and the right to be in charge of all the church's ministrations within his/her parish.

Pastoral relations are understandably warm and personal and former incumbents will undoubtedly retain friendships in the parish. The obligation then is always for a former incumbent to be absolutely loyal to and supportive of the successor's ministry and to help parishioners to form warm and personal relationships with the new incumbent. In any return to the parish for informal visits, it is an appropriate courtesy to let the new incumbent know of one's presence.

