

A COVENANT FOR RESPONSIBLE MINISTRY

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY LEADERS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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"The time is coming," declares the LORD,
"when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.

"This is the covenant I will make with the
house of Israel,"
declares the LORD.

"I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people."

Jeremiah 31:31-33

Prologue

In the fall of 1987, the school chaplains from across the province gathered as a group for the first time in Waterdown, Ontario. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the formation of a professional association for school chaplains. The fruits of those deliberations were realized the next school year when the first Catholic School Chaplains Conference was held in Niagara Falls in January of 1989. At the conference, the Catholic School Chaplains of Ontario (CSCO) was established and its first executive elected. In Biblical language, the formation of CSCO can be seen as a covenant relationship among School Chaplaincy Leaders. Through their membership in the association, they pledge to work collegially in order to enhance their ministry to their school and board communities.

Since those early days, CSCO has become the official voice for Catholic School Chaplaincy Leaders in the province of Ontario. It has become a resource for those in the ministry of school chaplaincy, particularly through its annual conference. CSCO regularly advocates on behalf of chaplaincy with the other partners in Catholic education. It has also produced several documents, such as guidelines, outlining the role of school chaplaincy and describing its worth to Catholic education.

In the evolution of any association, it inevitably arrives at a stage where a code of conduct document becomes essential. As a standard feature of any professional association, a code of conduct details the responsibilities which the members of the association agree to uphold and articulates a set of ethics to guide their work. CSCO has come of age and is now ready to set out the principles that will guide school chaplaincy into the future. With this document on professional ethics, School Chaplaincy Leaders in the province of Ontario continue to build on their covenant relationship and declare publicly a vision of school chaplaincy which they agree should guide their ministry. As the Canadian Bishops state in their code of conduct document for ordained and lay ministers, "Most of the provisions in this document reflect ideals to inspire ministry rather than a set of rules and regulations to be enforced." This document, then, will cover the responsibilities and ethics that school chaplains pledge to uphold in four different areas: those to whom they minister, their colleagues, the Catholic Church, and last but not least, themselves.

Responsibilities To Those To Whom We Minister

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

John 13:14-15.

Responsibilities To Those To Whom We Minister...

The Catholic school chaplains of Ontario covenant with one another for the benefit of the people with whom and for whom we minister:

1. To promote a better understanding of pastoral counselling and spiritual direction in Catholic education , especially as it differs from psychological counselling and psychiatric assistance.
2. To respect the limits of our academic qualifications in the practice of spiritual counselling.
3. To acknowledge the limits of our academic qualifications to our supervisors and to those we counsel.
4. To clarify with those we counsel what realistic outcomes can be expected from any counselling process.
5. To respect and not supplant the work of qualified guidance, social work, or psychology personnel of our boards.

Responsibilities To Those To Whom We Minister...

6. To work collaboratively with other professionals in our school system and to actively seek the advice of other professionals in difficult cases.
7. To respect the confidentiality and privacy of those we counsel, as far as legally possible and unless serious harm would ensue.
8. To clarify with those we counsel the limits of confidentiality.
9. To acknowledge that lay chaplains do not have any special privileges like the "seal of the confessional."
10. To refer students, with their permission, to other professionals when their issues go beyond our competencies.
11. To gain permission from those we counsel prior to discussing their case with another professional or supervisor.
12. To store any files securely and to dispose of them with due diligence.
13. To inform ourselves of the laws on child abuse and to report suspected cases according to our board policies.

Responsibilities To Those To Whom We Minister...

14. To recognize that a pastoral relationship involves an imbalance of power and to not abuse that trust.
15. To establish appropriate boundaries between ourselves and those we counsel, not fostering dependent relationships.
16. To refrain from any romantic involvement and physical relationships with those we counsel and minister.
17. To accept all staff and students without discrimination and without reference to religious or ethnic background.
18. To promote church teaching in counselling situations.
19. To be aware of our own psychological issues and to seek out appropriate care for our own personal problems.
20. To seek feedback from the staff and students with whom we minister.
21. To exercise good stewardship with the funds in our budgets and with monies entrusted to us for charitable purposes.

Responsibilities To Our Colleagues

"For we are God's servants working together."

1 Corinthians 3:9

Responsibilities To Our Colleagues...

The Catholic school chaplains of Ontario covenant with each other for the benefit of our colleagues:

1. To acknowledge that many gifts are present in the Christian community and that effective ministry calls for a collaborative style.
2. To share leadership and work cooperatively with our lay and ordained colleagues, respecting their different charisms, spiritualities, qualifications and ministries.
3. To recognize that school chaplains answer directly to the local school administration and to keep them apprised of their work within the school.
4. To encourage evaluation from superiors and to welcome job performance reports.
5. To be accountable to the board, staff, and students in which we work and the church in which we minister.
6. To refrain from being judgmental about the faith lives of staff members and other colleagues, especially in public forums.

Responsibilities To Our Colleagues...

7. To promote reconciliation and healing among those who feel alienated from the church community.
8. To reach out with compassion and concern to colleagues who appear to be suffering or in difficulty in their ministry or personal life.
9. To participate, as much as possible, in associations of peers at the board, diocesan, and provincial level, including CSCO and meetings with local school chaplains.
10. To plan, work, and review in a collegial manner, in consultation with colleagues, superiors, other staff, local clergy, and students, not in isolation.
11. To seek out and engage in collegial relationships, recognizing that isolation can lead to a loss of perspective and judgment.
12. To maintain the practice of exchanging ideas, networking, and sharing resources with other school chaplains and with other board and diocesan personnel.

Responsibilities To Our Colleagues...

13. To show sensitive regard, within the parameters of our religious affiliation, for the differences of race, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, age, and religion of other individuals and societies.
14. To respect the ministry of our predecessors and to refrain from interfering in the ministry of our successors.

Responsibilities To The Roman Catholic Church

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you
is a part of it."

1 Corinthians 12:27

Responsibilities To The Roman Catholic Church...

The Catholic School Chaplains of Ontario covenant with each other for the benefit of the Catholic community.

1. To present ourselves as representatives of the Catholic Church and to minister in communion with the universal church and the local ordinary.
2. To be accountable to the local bishop in matters of theology and pastoral and liturgical practices.
3. To liaise with parish, deanery, and chancery personnel whenever appropriate.
4. To keep the local ordinary and area pastors apprised of our yearly plans and year-end reviews.
5. To avoid representing our own views as teachings of the Catholic Church.
6. To commit ourselves to ecumenical and multi-faith cooperation.
7. To promote the social teachings of the church, particularly the preferential option for the poor, the dignity of each person, the equality of all people, and the care of the environment.

Responsibilities To Ourselves

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and
your neighbour as your self."

Lk 10.27

Responsibilities To Ourselves...

The Catholic School Chaplains of Ontario covenant with
each other for the benefit of ourselves:

1. To recognize that effective ministry calls for enthusiasm and stamina; therefore, we will endeavour to care for our physical and emotional well-being.
2. To manage our time effectively, according to the priorities of our vocation and ministry.
3. To use work time for school or board-related activities and not outside commitments.
4. To develop mature friendships with men and women that are supportive of and compatible with our vocation and ministry.
5. To get proper nutrition, adequate sleep, regular exercise and leisure.
6. To avoid substance abuse.
7. To recognize that we are called to live and share our faith as fully as possible; therefore, we will strive to grow spiritually.

Responsibilities To Ourselves...

8. To pray daily and to reflect on the Scriptures regularly.
9. To participate in the Eucharist and other sacraments.
10. To seek out spiritual direction or accompaniment and periodic retreats.
11. To live a simple lifestyle according to gospel values.
12. To engage in ongoing academic, spiritual and personal formation.
13. To commit ourselves to continuing education and to enrich our professional formation.
14. To develop a spiritual formation/professional development portfolio as a record of our professional growth.