

Codes of Ethics

Purpose

A clearly defined code of ethics is a valuable tool for a professional organization and for its members. Along with vision and mission statements, a code of ethics makes explicit the primary goals and values of the organization. These values provide the qualities or characteristics that should govern the behavior of the members as they exercise their ministry.

A code of ethics identifies the intrinsic worth of the organization by listing its core values. These values often appear as simple statements, preferably so simple that they can be committed to memory. As core values, they are to be obvious and succinct. For this reason, they can also stand alone without explanation.

The code of ethics assists the individual's growth in professional identity. It can foster a sense of unity and cohesion among those sharing a common lay ecclesial role since the same code guides the conduct of all the members. The code also strengthens the professional organization because its core values are thereby made explicit. For those receiving the organization's services, a code of ethics can give assurance concerning the expected behavior of its members by clarifying norms for accountability.

The code provides the framework for acceptable conduct in relationships and in the exercise of the ministry. Respecting all of creation, maintaining a close relationship with God, self, and others based on justice and charity; and promoting the dignity of all persons characterize the personal ethics of lay ecclesial ministers. Lay ministers are also lifelong learners. They maintain confidentiality, work collaboratively, avoid conflicts of interests, facilitate the growth in faith of those they serve, follow diocesan policies and appropriate legal statutes, empower others to use their talents, and are inclusive and respectful of the church's rich diversity.

Uses

The following codes of ethics are intended for personal reflection by those serving as lay ecclesial ministers in the roles identified. Sharing codes with the parish staff and parish community can generate increased understanding and support for each minister. The codes should be posted in a parish office. Diocesan offices can offer opportunities to reflect on the meaning and dimensions of the codes of ethics through prayer days, retreats or other events. As lay ecclesial ministers gather, the values expressed in their respective codes can be the occasion for fruitful discussion. The implications of the values need to be identified, especially in terms of the local community in which a lay ecclesial minister is serving. The practical application of the code will bring the meaning behind it to life, serving both minister and ministry.