

Diocese of Dallas

Policy on Benevolence and Discretionary Funds

Charity and compassionate ministry is a central tenet of our Catholic faith. Christ teaches us *'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'* *'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'* (Matthew 25: 35 – 36, 40)

Parishes must constantly balance the financial resources of the parish with the needs of its community and all of the ministries that it supports. The following guidelines are to be followed to strengthen the stewardship of these resources and to help protect the parish against fraud and abuse of the generosity of the Church.

1. The Pastor and Finance Council should designate a “Benevolence and Discretionary Fund” on an annual basis based upon the historical needs of the Parish community and available resources of the parish. Distributions from such an approved Fund for charity and compassionate needs may be made by the Pastor or a staff member designated by the Pastor without prior approval of the Parish Finance Council.
2. The Pastor or staff member should maintain a log of disbursements from the Fund and the reason for the request. These should be reported periodically to the Parish Finance Council.
3. Requests or needs in excess of the established Fund should be approved by the Parish Finance Council. Supporting documentation should be submitted to the Finance Council as to the basis for the request or needs of the community. The documentation and any decisions of the Finance Council should be maintained on file at the Parish for reference.
4. Parishes are encouraged to purchase gift cards for local food / clothing / gasoline retailers in small dollar amounts (\$25 / \$50) to manage day to day requests for charity. (i.e. Kroger, Tom Thumb, Albertsons, etc) The security over these cards should be at the same level as security over cash.
5. Individuals requesting a larger dollar amount or individuals not making requests in person should be referred to an appropriate charitable agency such as Catholic Charities of Dallas or St. Vincent De Paul. Should the parish decide to assist these individuals directly, supporting documentation should be submitted to the Parish Finance Council and approved by the Pastor and Finance Council.
6. Any parish Pastor or staff member suspecting fraud or abuse of the charitable resources of the Church must report the incident to the Vicar for Clergy at the Pastoral Center.