

# DIOCESE OF WINONA

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE USE OF CHURCH FACILITIES

### **Background**

The churches, oratories, and chapels of the Catholic community are set apart by a rite of blessing or a solemn dedication marking them out as places for divine worship, most specifically the celebration of the Church's liturgy. In addition, these places are to be houses of prayer that foster the intimate communion that human beings have with the living God. This "setting apart," therefore, has a positive purpose: the place is devoted to a special set of wonderful activities. As a corollary, this also means that the holy place is not used for other things, though they may be valuable in their own right.

Canon law establishes the general norms of the appropriate use of churches, oratories, and chapels. Further specification is left to the Diocesan Bishop. The following policies cover three items:

- Non-liturgical "yet religious" events
- Non-religious events
- "Suggested Donations" for any such events

### **Official Notification**

The following policy statements are based upon the canonical and liturgical law of the universal Church and have been reviewed by various consultative bodies and approved by the Diocesan Bishop.

They are applicable in all churches, oratories, and chapels in the Diocese of Winona.

### **Definitions:**

*Church:* A sacred building set aside for public worship to which all the faithful have a right of access (e.g., the cathedral and parish churches).

*Oratory:* (sometimes called "public chapel"): A place set aside by permission of an ordinary (e.g., the Diocesan Bishop) for divine worship for the benefit of some community or assembly of the faithful who gather there; other members of the faithful may also have access to it with the consent of the competent superior. All sacred celebrations may take place in an oratory unless otherwise excluded by the law, by particular provision of the local ordinary, or by liturgical norms.

*Chapel:* (sometimes called a "private chapel"): A place set aside by permission of the local ordinary (e.g., the Diocesan Bishop) for divine worship for the benefit of one or more persons.

Special permission over and above that given to establish the chapel is required for the celebration of Mass or other sacraments in a chapel.

***Religious Event Other than the Liturgy:*** A non-liturgical event (e.g., concerts, recitals, artistic presentations, talks) that serves the exercise or promotion of worship, piety, or religion and is consistent with the holiness of the sacred place.

***Non-Religious Event:*** An event that is neither a liturgical celebration nor in service of the exercise or promotion of worship, piety, or religion.

### **Non-liturgical Religious Events in Churches, Oratories, and Chapels**

1. Non-liturgical events which serve the exercise or promotion of worship, piety, or religion and are consistent with the holiness of the sacred place may be permitted in churches, oratories, or chapels.
2. In all such events, care should be taken that the sacred nature of the altar is respected (e.g., that items not be placed upon it, that non-sacramental functions be avoided, etc.)
3. If, in the judgment of the pastor, rector, or competent superior, the occasion requires it (e.g., because of the placement of persons or equipment), the Blessed Sacrament may be removed from the tabernacle to a more appropriate and secure place in the church, oratory, or chapel or even removed altogether to a secure place in the sacristy or some other location.
4. Permission for such religious or spiritual events may to be granted by the pastor, rector, or competent superior of the place in each case.
5. Admission is not to be charged for such events held in churches, oratories, or chapels, though unspecified freewill offerings may be accepted;
  - A. suggested donations may be sought when circumstances indicate the appropriateness of such and with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop. Requests for permission, addressed to the Diocesan Bishop, should indicate the date and nature of the event, and the reasons requiring the suggested donation.
  - B. In such cases: the words “suggested donation” are to be used on any printed tickets, and no one will be refused entrance to the church, oratory, or chapel due to financial constraints.
6. Catholic churches are consecrated or blessed buildings, which have an important theological and liturgical significance for the Catholic community. They are therefore generally reserved for Catholic worship. However, if priests, ministers, or communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church do not have a place or the liturgical objects necessary for celebrating worthily their religious ceremonies, the diocesan Bishop may allow them the use of a church or a Catholic building and also lend them what may be necessary for their services. (*Ecumenical Directory*, 137)

## **Non-Religious Events In Churches, Oratories, and Chapels**

1. As a general rule, events of a non-religious nature are not to be held in churches, oratories, or chapels.
2. In individual cases and for good reason, the Diocesan Bishop may permit such a non-religious event to take place in a church, oratory, or chapel as long as the event is not contrary to the sacred nature of the place.

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