



Policy for Clergy-related Complaints

1. Pastoral Preamble

Jesus said, *If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. (Mt 18:15-17).*

As Bishop, I normally follow the course of the Scripture in dealing with complaints with clergy. To this end, where possible, I encourage a complainant to discuss the complaint with the clergy member before becoming involved in the matter. I also ask the complainant to advise me of the outcome. In most cases when complainants contact me again, they are pleased they had the conversation and a resolution or mutual understanding or appreciation is achieved. This policy is for those complaints that were not able to be resolved using this Scriptural process.

2. Aim

To offer a simple, transparent and effective process for dealing with complaints against clergy.

3. Sexual Abuse/Misconduct

There is a separate clearly defined process, outlined in *Te Houhanga Rongo – A Path to Healing*, for dealing with Safeguarding complaints relating to sexual abuse/misconduct.

4. Rationale

Clergy have a right to know when a complaint is made against them and to be given the opportunity to respond.

5. Definition of Complaint

A formal protest or expression of resentment or serious displeasure by way of accusation or grievance.

6. Criteria

- 6.1. The essence of the complaint must be serious or significant.
- 6.2. Complaints that the Bishop considers trivial but have been received in writing deserve to be shared with the priest.
- 6.3. The complainant/s shall identify themselves.

6.4. The complaint shall be in writing and comprise:

6.4.1. a description of the issue giving rise to the complaint.

6.4.2. factual data with supporting evidence if available.

6.5. The complainant is informed that the priest will receive a copy of the complaint. Should the complainant not wish the priest to receive the complaint, the process does not proceed.

7. **Process**

The process is designed to receive, investigate and bring to resolution or satisfactory closure, in a timely manner, each complaint, where all are satisfied that justice has been done and the matter has been dealt with fairly, even if all do not agree with the outcome.

8. **Procedure**

8.1. The Bishop, having received a complaint, asks the complainant to follow the Scriptural process.

8.2. If this fails to resolve the matter the Bishop receives the complaint in writing, and decides if it falls within the criteria of §5.

8.3. If the clergy member has not already been given full details of the complaint the Bishop forwards a copy of the complaint to the clergy member who is invited to respond in writing within the next five days.

8.4. The Bishop receives the clergy member's response.

8.5. If the Bishop is satisfied with the response he responds to the complainant within five days sending a copy to the clergy member.

8.6. If the Bishop is not satisfied, he calls in the Delegate (the Bishop's delegate, or an appointed priest if the complaint is against the Bishop's delegate.)

8.7. In consultation the delegate may seek further assistance and report findings and recommendations for an optimal resolution for all concerned.

8.8. If a satisfactory outcome is still not achieved, a meeting of the parties concerned may be requested or mediation sought for an appropriate resolution.

9. **Conclusion**

The process is transparent. All parties understand the procedure. Issues are resolved. All parties adhere to a timely process.



✱ Steve Lowe
BISHOP OF HAMILTON

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