

# HOLY FAMILY PARISH

## POLICY ON THE USE OF PARISH BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

### I. Purpose and Guiding Principle

Holy Family Parish maintains its churches, parish halls, classrooms, meeting rooms, grounds, and other facilities for the purpose of advancing the religious, sacramental, pastoral, educational, and charitable mission of the Roman Catholic Church.

Parish buildings and grounds are **church spaces and are not purely rental facilities**. They are not civic or commercial venues generally available to the public. Rather, they are places belonging to a community whose life is centered upon Jesus Christ and the sacramental life of the Catholic Church from birth until death.

Accordingly, the use of parish property should ordinarily have a meaningful connection to the sacramental, spiritual, educational, pastoral, charitable, or communal life of the Church and should foster the Catholic life of parishioners, parish families, and the wider Catholic community.

The fact that a parish facility may be available for certain private celebrations does not convert that facility into a public rental hall, commercial event venue, or "destination venue."

### II. Appropriate Uses of Parish Facilities

Holy Family Parish facilities have historically been used, and may continue to be used, for activities consistent with the mission and life of the Catholic Church, including but not limited to:

- Celebration of the Holy Mass and other liturgies;
- Eucharistic Adoration and other forms of prayer and devotion;
- Prayer services;
- Religious education and faith formation;
- Bible studies and other Catholic educational programs;
- Vacation Bible School;
- Christian Experience Weekend (CEW) and other retreats;
- Diocesan, deanery, and parish-sponsored events;
- Sunday coffee, donuts, fellowship gatherings, and parish meals;

- Sacramental preparation programs;
- First Holy Communion and Confirmation receptions;
- Funeral luncheons and gatherings associated with Christian burial;
- Weddings and wedding receptions;
- Baptism-related gatherings and baby showers;
- Graduation parties and similar family celebrations involving parishioners;
- Meetings, programs, and activities sponsored or approved by Holy Family Parish; and
- Other activities determined by the Pastor or his designee to be compatible with the religious and pastoral mission of the parish.

This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. Approval of a particular use remains within the discretion of the Pastor or his designated representative.

### **III. Parish Facilities Are Not Public Rental Venues**

Nothing in this policy shall be understood as creating a general right of access to parish facilities.

Holy Family Parish reserves the right to approve or deny any request for use of parish property based upon the nature of the proposed activity, its relationship to the mission of the Catholic Church, facility availability, pastoral considerations, safety concerns, insurance requirements, diocesan policy, civil law, canon law, or other relevant circumstances.

Permission granted for one event does not establish a precedent or entitlement regarding future requests.

The payment of a facility fee, cleaning fee, deposit, or other charge does not constitute a commercial lease or create a landlord-tenant relationship. Such payments are intended to assist the parish with expenses associated with the use, maintenance, preparation, cleaning, utilities, and preservation of parish property.

### **IV. Weddings and Wedding Receptions**

Because Christian marriage is a sacrament and an important part of the life of the Church, the use of parish facilities for wedding receptions shall ordinarily have a meaningful connection to the celebration of marriage within the Catholic Church.

When a parish hall or other parish facility is requested for a wedding reception, there must therefore be some connection between the reception and the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony or the Catholic Rite of Marriage.

This requirement does **not** mean that the entire wedding celebration must take place at Holy Family Parish, nor does it require an elaborate church ceremony.

A couple may choose to hold their principal wedding ceremony, celebration, or reception at another venue or location while also celebrating the Catholic Rite of Marriage at the parish when permitted by Church law and approved by the appropriate clergy.

When appropriate, the Catholic celebration may be simple and may consist of the priest or deacon authorized to preside, the bride, the groom, and the witnesses required by Church law. The precise form of the rite and the requirements for the valid and lawful celebration of marriage shall be determined according to canon law, diocesan policy, and the direction of the Pastor.

The purpose of this requirement is not to impose an unnecessary burden upon couples. Rather, it recognizes that the parish hall and other parish buildings exist because of the sacramental community they serve.

Permitting a parish facility to function solely as a wedding reception venue when there is no meaningful relationship whatsoever to the Church's celebration of marriage risks reducing sacred and ecclesial spaces to the status of a commercial or "destination" event venue. Such use is inconsistent with the primary purpose for which parish property is maintained.

## **V. Activities Contrary to Catholic Faith or Morals**

Parish property shall not be used for any activity, ceremony, presentation, organization, advocacy, fundraising effort, or event that is contrary to:

1. the faith, moral teaching, or discipline of the Roman Catholic Church;
2. the religious mission of Holy Family Parish;
3. applicable policies or directives of the Diocese of Davenport;
4. the Code of Canon Law, when applicable; or
5. applicable federal, state, or local law.

Approval of facility use does not constitute parish endorsement of every statement, opinion, or activity of persons participating in an approved event.

## **VI. Approval and Authority**

All use of parish buildings and grounds is subject to the approval of the Pastor or a person specifically designated by him.

The Pastor retains final authority regarding the religious, pastoral, and ministerial suitability of activities conducted on parish property.

The parish may establish additional administrative procedures governing such matters as:

- scheduling;
- facility fees;
- security deposits;
- insurance;
- alcohol;
- food service;
- decorations;
- candles and open flames;
- music and entertainment;
- building access;
- supervision of minors;
- Safe Environment requirements;
- setup and cleanup;
- property damage;
- parking;
- closing times; and
- use of parish equipment.

Approval may be withdrawn when circumstances arise that make the proposed use inconsistent with parish or diocesan policy or otherwise unsuitable for parish property.

## **VII. Responsibility of Persons Using Parish Facilities**

Individuals and organizations permitted to use parish property are responsible for respecting the religious character of the property and for complying with all parish rules and instructions.

Those using parish facilities shall:

1. conduct themselves in a manner respectful of the Catholic identity of the parish;
2. protect parish buildings, furnishings, grounds, sacred objects, and equipment;
3. comply with applicable safety, insurance, alcohol, Safe Environment, and occupancy requirements;
4. leave facilities in the condition required by the parish; and
5. accept financial responsibility for damage resulting from their use of parish property when appropriate.

Use of parish facilities may be immediately terminated if conduct occurs that is unsafe, unlawful, seriously disruptive, damaging to parish property, or plainly inconsistent with the religious character of Holy Family Parish.

### **VIII. Exceptions**

Because pastoral circumstances vary, the Pastor may approve exceptions to the ordinary provisions of this policy when, in his judgment, there is a sufficient pastoral, charitable, sacramental, or parish-related reason for doing so and the exception is consistent with diocesan policy and Church law.

An exception granted in one circumstance shall not establish a precedent requiring the parish to grant similar exceptions in the future.

### **IX. Interpretation**

This policy shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the teachings and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church, the policies of the Diocese of Davenport, applicable canon law, and applicable civil law.

The parish may revise this policy as necessary to reflect changes in pastoral needs, diocesan requirements, canon law, civil law, insurance requirements, or parish circumstances.