

Frédéric's E-Gazette

Q&A 8-24-2017

Q: We have a Conference in a parish that has no pastor. Our deacon is the parish administrator so his role is more or less the same as the pastor. He feels that he should have control over the decisions made by the Conference. Please explain what his role is in relation to the Conference.

A: You will find this both in the Rule (Part III, Statute 15) and the Manual (pages 26 and 48). Ordained ministers (deacons and priests) normally hold the role of spiritual advisor of a Conference or Council. As such, they are asked to give spiritual guidance to the Conference members related to their own personal growth as well as their ministry. As such they can participate in any of the discussions. They may also go on home visits if they choose to. They are not the decision makers. In fact, ordained ministers may not vote or hold office or be a signor on Conference accounts. For more information on this, [click to read](#) a letter to all Bishops sent this past June from the Society explaining its independence.

Q: Our parish is requesting that we assist with religious education costs to families who cannot afford the fee. The fee for each child is in the amount of \$115. So if a family has 3 children, they would have to pay \$345. We recently were presented with a bill for \$2,000. I know that we cannot pay funds directly to an organization but in this case we are funding religious education for children who cannot pay the fee. The request is for our Conference to pay directly to the church.

A: There are three considerations to be made here. First is that we are not to contribute funds to other organizations - that includes your parish. Second, typically, SVdP does not cover costs of education because education in the United States is available at no cost. However, in this case, religious education is different. In the original Rule of the Society developed in 1835, you will find the following under the objectives of the Conferences: "#3 To apply ourselves according to our capabilities and the time which we can spare to the elementary and Christian instruction of poor children..." The main issue in doing this is that you will have to maintain a case record for each individual student you assist. You cannot give just a lump sum to the parish. You can provide this assistance to individuals as long as you follow the normal rules. And third, keep in mind that this is a choice of the Conference and you should not simply respond to a bill for \$2,000. The parish does not define who we serve or how.