

These words of Jesus and of St. Paul are a reminder of the gospel call to unity and peace. As members of the Church, we, too, are called to proclaim and to live the gospel in our daily lives.

A sincere respect for the dignity and worth of each individual should be evident in the interactions of members of the Church. At times within our community, however, conflicts can develop. Our response to these is a measure of our belief in the unity to which Christ calls us. True to our heritage we should strive to apply gospel values to the mediation of conflicts. Where there is disagreement, the desire for peace and reconciliation should move us to take appropriate steps to resolve our differences.

Whenever there is a disagreement, the first and best forum for resolving it is in the loving dialogue between the parties. Only after all efforts at reconciliation in this forum have been exhausted should those involved have recourse to others.

While we sincerely hope that such disputes do not arise or that, when they arise, they be resolved by those involved, we also recognize that at times this is not possible. For this reason the Diocese has established this procedure for conciliation and arbitration. It is our hope that the procedure will enable all who participate to experience once again the unity to which St. Paul attests.

When would the Diocesan Conciliation and Arbitration Procedures be helpful?

- When members of the Church disagree and are unable to reach a private reconciliation with one another.
- When the actions of a person with authority in the Church seem unduly arbitrary or unfair and one is unable to resolve the apparent unfairness with the person involved.

Steps in the Process

Preliminary

- Communicate your problem directly to the person or group involved.
- Discuss the matter with the appropriate supervisor or superior.
- Consider the use of a problem resolution process at your parish.

If these fail . . .

Contact the Conciliation Clerk through the Chancellor's Office at the Diocesan Pastoral Center for assistance.

Any disputes which cannot be resolved internally may be submitted to the Conciliation Clerk to initiate the diocesan Conciliation procedure, provided that the aggrieved party has made efforts in good faith to resolve the grievance by available internal mechanisms.

Conciliation involves a third party conciliator assisting the parties to the dispute in coming to their own resolution of the case.

If Conciliation fails. . .

Request that the case be submitted to the Arbitration Panel for review.

Arbitration, which can only be done should Conciliation fail, is the final step in the grievance process where an impartial arbitrator, having heard the disputants, renders a decision which is final and binding on both of them.

Those Providing Assistance

The Conciliation Panel members are trained to assist you in negotiation and mediation. They can make a real contribution toward the peaceful and equitable resolution of disputes. They can be of assistance in opening lines of communication which seem blocked beyond hope. They can also be useful in finding the middle ground between two strong but opposing views.

The Arbitration Panel can assist you by providing a review of the dispute, gathering information from all those involved, and rendering a final and binding decision to resolve the dispute.

Conciliation Panel

Tim Maroney, Clerk
Sr. Marie Damian Glatt, SCL
Rev. Jim O'Neil
Ms. Mary Penberthy Macki
Sr. Bernadette Helfert
Sr. Loretta Sedlmayer
Deacon Bill Medved

Conciliation Pool Members

Mary Dupuis
Pam Kania

To initiate the process send a written petition to:

Conciliation Clerk
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings
PO Box 1399
Great Falls, MT 59403-1399

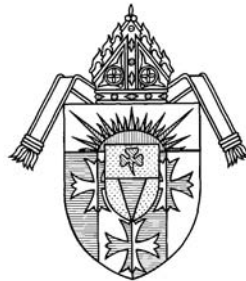
The conciliation procedures will be formally initiated at the time that a written petition has been received by the conciliation clerk

The petition must contain within it a signed affirmation that an effort has been made to reach a settlement prior to filing,

The conciliation clerk will determine whether or not the petition falls within the scope of the conciliation procedures. Should the conciliation clerk find the petition allowable under these procedures, the conciliation clerk will transmit a copy to the respondent, who is to respond in writing within ten days.

Within five days after the receipt of the response, the conciliation clerk shall assist the petitioner and the respondent in selecting a conciliator from the slate of conciliators approved by the Bishop who in the opinion of the petitioner and the respondent is a competent person who would be informed of the facts involved in the petition, sensitive to the feelings of the parties, and would be capable of bringing both parties together in a face to face dialogue.

For further information call:
Sr. Lynn Casey
(406) 727-6683, ext 23 or 1-800-332-9998



Office of the Chancellor
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings



Procedures for Conciliation and Arbitration

If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the brother or sister 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 brother or sister refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile or a tax collector.

Matthew 18: 15-17

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to come to a mutual understanding in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my true yokemate, to help them, for they have struggled at my side in promoting the gospel.

Phil 4:2-3