

CHAPTER XI

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When interpersonal conflicts or “personality clashes” involve a member of the Community, they need to be acknowledged promptly, faced squarely and resolved quickly, with a minimum of rancor. Virtually all human experience suggests that the best prospect for satisfactory resolution is to attempt reconciliation at the lowest level possible. This application of the principle of subsidiarity has roots not only in Scripture, but also in the documents of Vatican II and in the Code of Canon Law.

Because the permanent deacon is a public figure and is therefore regarded by many as an official spokesman for the Church, he must exercise extraordinary discretion and diplomacy when disputes arise in which he is involved, either as a principal or as an advocate for one side or another. This is not to say that he must forgo the pursuit of justice on his own behalf or that of the cause he espousing. He must, however, be sensitive to the circumstance that he is not simply a private citizen but also an authority symbol with the power unwittingly to cause unusually grave scandal simply by becoming embroiled in a conflict that may become public knowledge.

The usual sequence of forums in which a deacon should try to resolve conflicts is this:

- His pastor
- His Dean
- The Director
- The Archbishop

Perhaps the most common, vexing and conspicuous example of a dispute involving a permanent deacon is one between the deacon and his pastor. Here, as in nearly all disputes, nothing is to be gained by broadcasting the argument among other members of the Community: the lowest level at which this particular conflict can be resolved is between the deacon and the pastor themselves. In charity and prudence, neither party to the dispute should appeal to any authority outside the parish until every effort to resolve the dispute internally, directly between the disputants, has been exhausted. This means, among other things, that the deacon should not escalate the grievance to the dean without first having attempted to iron out the dispute one-on-one with his pastor. If no mutually acceptable conclusion can be reached at the parish level, the deacon may choose to pursue the provisions set forth in Canons 1732 through 1739.

THE DEACON MANUAL
