



POLICY COMMITTEE

Best Practice Document

RESPECTING THE

SELF-DETERMINATION

OF CANDIDATES

**(Creating an atmosphere of Safety, Trust,
and Emotional Stability)**

This document is intended to replace the paper previously known as:
Respecting the Self-Determination of Candidates from Nov. 2017

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BEST PRACTICE DOCUMENT

RESPECTING THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF CANDIDATES/PILGRIMS

BACKGROUND: Self-Determination is a core essential which may be easily overlooked as Communities prepare for and run a Tres Dias weekend. Section 3.2.22 of the Essentials which states *“That the freedom of self-determination of each candidate should be respected.”* The purpose of this document is to clarify that concept and enable a more uniform application related to this subject and to avoid unintentionally influencing candidates to achieve a preferred outcome.

DISCUSSION: In the Tres Dias weekend, Self-Determination is the assurance of a safe and secure environment including the freedom of candidates to explore individual beliefs while receiving the opinions of others. In other words, it’s understood that candidates/pilgrims (“attendees”) on a Tres Dias weekend are adults who are capable of deciding how to conduct themselves on a weekend. Some of the ways this applies to weekends include:

- Attendees should not be forced, shamed or coerced into participating in any activities.
- No pressure should be applied to encourage an attendee to partake in Holy Communion.
- No effort should be made to change an attendee’s opinions concerning spiritual matters.
- The table environment is the attendees place of discerning the importance of an individual’s role in the body of Christ.

At a more basic level, there are other areas in which the attendee’s self-determination can be negatively impacted, often without the awareness of Tres Dias Leadership. This includes activities such as:

- Requiring an attendee to be accompanied by an Auxiliary/Cha if he/she chooses to leave the Rollo Room
 - As adults, unless they need directions there is no need for them to be accompanied to a bathroom, sleeping area, or even outdoors if they choose to step outside for a moment.
- Preventing an attendee from “skipping” an event or even a rollo if they prefer to lie down or otherwise relax and absorb what they have experienced to that point in the weekend.
 - It’s understandable that we want attendees to experience ALL that the weekend has to offer. However, there are people who need time to process the data and can be overwhelmed by the fast pace that many communities utilize.
 - For example, migraine sufferers who experience an ‘aura’ prior to the onset of their headache are self-aware of steps required to reduce the impact of the pain they suffer. They may know that if they find a quiet place to lie down for a period of time, it may forego the headache, resulting in more quality time on the weekend.

- This also raises the question of sufficient “down-time” throughout the weekend. Many communities choose to fill every minute with activities that are outside of the Essentials, leaving some attendees in a state of stress. We strongly recommend that each community allocate sufficient time for extended breaks throughout the weekend, even if it means fewer “extra” activities.
 - This also implies that time management on a weekend is very important. It’s better to provide the attendees with longer breaks than to squander time between events. In other words, each 5 minute “waste of time” could be applied to a longer formal break, and this could reduce the stress on those who feel they need time to themselves.
- Requiring all attendees to be present before any activity can begin.
 - It’s actually a disservice to the group and the attendee to delay starting an activity just because everyone is not there.
 - Imagine an attendee having bowel difficulties and walking into the room late only to have everyone staring at him/her.
 - If an attendee consistently arrives late enough to an event to impact the starting time, that might be a case where the person needs to be spoken with by the rector and/or spiritual directors to determine the cause.
- Covering or removing clocks from public areas, such as the Rollo Room or hallways.
 - Although we encourage candidates/pilgrims to remove their watches in order to become more engaged in the process, using deceptive techniques to enforce that is not appropriate.
- Refusing to answer any legitimate question by a candidate/pilgrim.
 - An example would be a question concerning the time that the wake-up bells will be rung. (Keep in mind that there are attendees who would prefer to spend some prayer or devotional time before day starts, and some would prefer to get to the showers before the crowd).
 - Although “Participate, Don’t Anticipate” is a valuable mantra throughout the weekend, it must be kept in perspective with the legitimate needs of any particular attendee.

Creating an atmosphere of Safety, Trust, and Emotional Stability. Communities must ensure whatever we do considers all personality types – some of which are very loud and outgoing, and some of which are introverted and easily shocked. Just as we are all different, so are the candidates that come on a weekend.

Many of us who volunteer in this ministry enjoy being able to see candidates impacted by their experience on a weekend as we were, and so may intentionally or unintentionally use activities in

such a way as to artificially draw out a more emotional response. We need to prayerfully evaluate our motivations when we create or expand any event on a weekend. In everything that we do, we always need to be intentional and mindful, and Essentials-centered and candidate-focused. Here are some examples of areas to be considered:

- **Overdramatizing events to evoke a more emotional response.** Emotion is certainly an important part of our relationship with God, but so is clear, logical thought. Most of us are impacted emotionally when we are touched by the Holy Spirit, and God certainly uses our emotions when He interacts with us. Yet trying to force a response is inappropriate; the Holy Spirit is more than capable of reaching each of us exactly where we are. That said, overdramatized events can happen unintentionally. Therefore, with this in mind, the tone of weekend should be set by the Rector early in the weekend planning process with the involvement and support of the local Secretariat.
- **FORGIVENESS SERVICES:** A forgiveness service, in itself, can be desirable. It makes sense to use certain props that the candidate can relate to, such as a cross to nail issues to and a receptacle to retrieve them. Keeping this simple, straightforward and not rushed allows opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak to attendees on a close, introspective level.
- **COMMUNION SERVICES:** These are 'Essential' with at least one being performed per day on the weekend. A Communion service is, of course, a wonderful sacrament that most candidates will readily respond to. However, if the setup begins to approach something of a skit, or some sort of role playing, that's where we need to be discerning.
- **SKITS:** Skits can also be used effectively to drive home a point that focuses on the specific spiritual activity surrounding it. However, if the skit begins to become overly dramatic, graphic, or generates emotions such as fear or anger, it needs to be carefully evaluated. Are we trying to simply highlight a point or are we trying to engage the candidates at a very deep level with the purpose of enhancing their emotions to be in a "better place" when participating in the event?
- **VIDEOS:** While we are a video driven culture, we need to be very careful in the use of videos that can create an overly emotional response. Videos, if used, need to be carefully considered for their time, content and appropriateness.
- **PRAISE & WORSHIP:** Has the worship team considered what their goal is? Is the goal to provide generate a sense of awe and wonder of God's greatness, or to ramp up emotions.
- **EMOTIONALLY CHARGED PERSONAL TESTIMONY:** Personal testimony is an integral part of many of the rollos, but if the testimony is not connected to or supporting some talking point of the rollo that it is connected with, no matter

how “stirring”, then it should be carefully critiqued and perhaps saved for another time and place.

There are other examples but this provides a sufficient overview. In other words, our candidates/pilgrims are adults who must not be coerced, pressured or manipulated to participate in activities they don’t feel able or ready to participate in.

We must relinquish control to the Holy Spirit, understanding that He will make certain each attendee gets what they need out of a weekend, and our pressure on the person may actually be counter-productive.

EXCEPTION: Having said that, an individual’s right to self-determination must be weighed against the impact on the table group and/or the entire group. If an attendee is consistently late or seems to be missing large portions of the weekend, it is reasonable to have a conversation to determine if this is the right weekend for that person. And if an attendee’s actions are consistently disruptive, it is perfectly reasonable to ask that person to leave the weekend and to come back when they are in a better state of mind.

SUMMARY: The Policy Committee believes that candidates/pilgrims should be encouraged to participate in all activities of the weekend. However, they should not be forced or coerced to participate in any particular activity, as long as their absence is not judged to be a distraction to the other attendees.

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Prayerfully submitted,

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