

**GUIDELINES FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE  
WHEN SELECTING CONTRACTORS FOR CONSTRUCTION OR REMODELING  
FEBRUARY 10, 1993**

**Introduction**

When considering and awarding contracts for construction or remodeling projects, the Archdiocese of Baltimore has traditionally used an open-bidding procedure. This procedure allows for the use of union and non-union companies.

As a result of this practice, questions sometimes arise concerning the institution's commitment to Catholic social teaching, which recognizes the inherent right of workers to form unions or other associations to secure their rights to a just, living wage, and fair working conditions. While the Archdiocese continues to support fully organized labor and its principles, it is our view that such organization is not an absolute necessity for church construction projects so long as just conditions of employment are established and maintained.

To further emphasize the need for just conditions of employment, the Archdiocese has adopted a process to promote that the fair treatment of workers will remain a primary factor in determining the selection of contractors employed by the Church. This process is in keeping with longstanding Catholic beliefs.

The Catholic Church has traditionally supported and worked with organized labor. In fact, this tradition has roots in Baltimore. As long ago as 1883 Cardinal Gibbons was an outspoken advocate of workers and voiced the Church's support for shorter work weeks, improved workplace conditions and higher wages. His efforts were instrumental in shaping the Roman Catholic clergy's attitude toward labor and were reflected in Pope Leo XIII's classic social encyclical in 1891, Rerum Novarum, which called for a "just wage" and "humane" working conditions for all laborers.

Most recently, the U.S. Catholic bishops' pastoral on "Economic Justice for All" reflected our firm belief that rights and benefits, such as job security, health insurance, training, pension and vacation, are all essential if workers are to be treated as persons rather than simply as factors of production. Pope John Paul II also supported such rights and benefits for workers in his encyclical letter of May 1, 1991, Centesimus Annus.

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## **Principles: Fair Treatment, Wise Stewardship**

The Archdiocese maintains an open bidding process based on two principles: We wish to be fair to employers and their employees, and we wish to be wise stewards of the money entrusted to us by our parishioners.

More than 80 percent of all construction companies in the State of Maryland are non-union businesses. We believe it would be unfair to those companies and their thousands of employees to refuse to consider them for major construction projects because the employees have chosen not to join organized labor. An open bidding process allows for expanded competition and helps assure that we are receiving quality work at a fair market price. To automatically exclude more than 80 percent of the state's contractors from consideration would significantly reduce competition. Such a policy would be a disservice to our parishioners, who rightfully expect the Archdiocese, and the parishes and organizations under its supervision, to manage their funds prudently.

The Archdiocese has enjoyed working with union companies in the past, and we expect to continue to do so. The Archdiocese also respects workers who have chosen not to join groups associated with organized labor. We believe it is important to maintain relationships with companies and workers who are both union and non-union.

## **Survey of Worker Conditions**

The Archdiocese considers the availability of employee benefits to be a critical element to an economically just society. In keeping with our commitment to the fair treatment of workers, and in light of information obtained through our recent survey of union and non-union contractors, it was determined that the Archdiocese should implement a more stringent procedure governing their selection.

The procedure is designed to ensure that the Archdiocese employs firms who provide reasonable benefits to their workers. The new procedure was thoroughly discussed and unanimously approved by the Archdiocesan Priests Council on January 20, and the Archdiocesan Board of Financial Administration on February 10, 1993.

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## Pre-Qualification Guidelines

- 1.) **Employee Benefits:** The Archdiocese requires the pre-qualification of contractors to ensure that the Archdiocese will consider bids only from companies that provide reasonable employee benefits. As part of the pre-qualification process, companies must complete a questionnaire pertaining to personnel experience of their operation. The questionnaire is designed to determine whether or not a company provides health-care, sick leave, short-term disability, retirement and vacation benefits.
- 2.) **Minority Participation:** In addition, the pre-qualification questionnaire seeks information about the number of minorities employed by the firm and the degree of minority representation in management and ownership positions.
- 3.) **Workplace Conditions:** The pre-qualification questionnaire also asks about employee turnover, the use of worker safety programs, the availability of drug/alcohol prevention and/or treatment programs for employees, and a three-year history of the company's "worker's compensation experience modification rate."

## The Selection Process

Responses to these questions will be important factors in determining whether a company is qualified to submit a bid for consideration by an institution under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop. Contractors' responses to the questionnaire will be compared in the selection process. Particular attention will be paid to the availability of benefits and the participation of minorities.

The pre-qualification process will be used for every project costing \$300,000 or more. This policy is similar in scope and purpose to policies used by several highly respected companies in the private sector who are also dedicated to the principles of fair treatment of workers and cost-effective management.

Our process is designed to ensure that the Archdiocese is engaging companies whose primary goals are quality in performance and proper regard for the well-being of their individual workers.

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