

## **A Bill of Rights For Parish Volunteers**

*(Taken from a city hospice-training program.)*

1. **Coworkers** – *Volunteers have the right to be treated as coworkers, to know as much about the parish and its policies and procedures as possible.*
2. **Suitable Assignments** – *Volunteers have the right to suitable assignments that take into consideration personal preference, temperament, life experience, education, and employment background.*
3. **Training** – *Volunteers have the right to training for the job as well as the right to continuing education.*
4. **Guidance and Feedback** – *Volunteers have the right to sound guidance, direction, and feedback on their performance.*
5. **Variety of Assignments** – *Volunteers have the right to a variety of experiences through advancements to assignments with more responsibility, and through the transfer from one activity to another.*
6. **Free Speech** – *Volunteers have the right to be heard, to feel free to make suggestions, to have respect shown for an honest opinion, and to have a part in planning.*
7. **Recognition** – *Volunteers have the right to recognition in the form of promotion, awards, and day-to-day expressions of appreciation.*

*“Some may protest that it is a legal misnomer to use the word “right” to describe the claims of volunteers. No church authority has granted these rights to parishioners. There are no sanctions if these so-called rights are curtailed or infringed. But I think they deserve to be called rights. Why? Because these statements describe what a Christian community owes its volunteers. If a parish is to be faithful to what the Church teaches about human dignity, and faithful to St. Paul’s doctrine of the many members and the one body; then every parish volunteer should claim these rights.*

*Ultimately, however, it is not a question of volunteers demanding concessions from the parish. Nor is it a question of the church owing something to volunteer parishioners. All of us are the church. We should freely give to one another the courtesy, respect, support, honesty, opportunity, freedom, and appreciation that we want for ourselves. When we acknowledge the rights of volunteers, we empower ourselves and build up a fuller communion.”*

By Bridget Lynch Fischer, in “Today’s Parish”, September 2001, pages 16-19.