

**From Parish Council
to
Pastoral Council**

Parish Councils

The creation of parish councils by Vatican II provided yet another way in which lay people could serve the local church. Their role as members of the parish council was principally a practical one, advising the pastor on fiscal matters and planning various parish events.

They were the “doers” in the parish!

Role of the Laity

The Christian faithful are those who, through baptism, have become the people of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal office, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world.

(adapted from Canon 204)

Pastoral Council

- 1983 Revised Canon Law...

A pastoral council is to be established in each parish; the pastor presides over it, and through it the Christian faithful along with those who share in the pastoral care of the parish in virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity. (code 536.)

Journey from Vatican II – Revised 1983 Code of Canon Law

The concept of the council as a leadership body called to discern and articulate the pastoral mission of the parish evolved over years of lay involvement. A deeper understanding by the laity of their co-responsibility for the mission of Christ developed through their ongoing participation.

Shift from the Parish Council to the Parish Pastoral Council

From

- Parish Council
- A Body of Leaders
- Coordinating Ministries
- Crisis Management
- Doing Activities
- Business and Politics
- Competition
- Voting

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To

- Pastoral Councils
- A Leadership Body
- Articulating the Mission
- Pastoral Planning
- Empowerment and Oversight
- Prayer and Discernment
- Collaboration
- Consensus

Leadership Roles and Relationships:

- **Pastor/Parish Life Director:** Delegate of the bishop, responsible for the overall life of the parish. Link between and among parish staff, finance council and pastoral council.
- **Parish Staff:** Delegate of the pastor/parish life director, accountable to pastor alone. Accountable for day to day ministry according to job description.
- **Parish Finance Council:** With the pastor/parish life director, responsible for managing budget, facilities, and development efforts based on goals and objectives of the parish pastoral plan.
- **Parish Pastoral Council:** With the pastor/parish life director, responsible for long-range pastoral planning affecting the whole of parish life, supported and assisted by parish staff and finance council.

Pastoral Council - Visionary

Says what the community is basically about

Helps indicate the priorities of the parish

Utilizes church documents, i.e.,
Evangelization - “Go and Make Disciples”.

Works with staff who are responsible for the everyday workings of the parish

Collaborates with parish leadership in all areas of Ministry

Helps Congregation see themselves as the most important asset...(DISCIPLES)

Growing, serving, celebrating, inviting, and sharing.

Therefore, The Pastoral Council

Helps define the center and mission

Works with staff to support Parish
leadership in attaining the
vision/mission

Goals of Parish (Canon 528)

- Celebrate Sacraments
- Educate children in faith (all people)
- Serve Poor and Needy
- Help Catholics return to faith
- Bring Gospel to all

Seven Elements of Parish Life

The Mission and Ministry of Christ

- Evangelization
- Worship
- Word
- Community
- Service
- Stewardship
- Leadership

The Parish Community

- provides belonging, identity and security
- provides a setting where Catholics can maintain their faith against a hostile culture
- is Good News in and for the world
- provides an environment where Catholics can be empowered to touch and transform their culture

- Each parish community has a unique mission.
- The essential mission of every parish is evangelization. Enacting Jesus command:
“Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations,...(Matt 28:19)

Important to remember...

- Parishes do not have the primary task of serving the needs of their members
- Rather parishes have the primary task of serving their members so that these members can reach out and serve the world

Characteristics of Effective Council Ministry

- Acknowledges, articulates, and experiences a sense of ownership of common mission
- Achieves a sense of unity accompanied by a desire to work together for a common goal.
- Decides to identify, value and bring together the various gifts.

Strategies for Pastoral Planning

Parish Mission Statement



Goals



Objectives (Programs/Activities)



Committees

Action Plan

Action Plan

Action Plan

Process of Establishing Pastoral Council

- Call of candidates
- Notification to all candidates of “call”
- Information Evening on Role of council member
- Evening of discernment for new council members

Process of Discernment

- Prayer for openness to the Holy Spirit
- Scripture/Sharing
- Part I: Questions of Candidates

Name? Length of time in the parish? In what ways have you been involved in the parish? What area of church ministry or activity have you found most rewarding?

Prayer of Affirmation

- Part II: *What do you believe the work of the Pastoral Council to be?*
What gifts do you have for the ministry of leadership?

Process continued...

Part III: Discernment. Each person identifies several individuals whose gifts would bring what is needed to renew and revision the work of the *parish pastoral council*.

If it appears that certain persons are clearly selected by the group, their names are listed.

Continuing rounds of identifying persons with their gifts in relationship to the council's needs are held until the full numbers of council members are selected. If it appears that certain persons are discerned as equally possessing the needed gifts and the group cannot make a choice, after additional prayer, selection may be chosen by a caucus among all those whose names are still being considered.

Process continued...

Part: IV

Final Affirmation and Closing Prayer