

## **Catholic Diocese of Youngstown**

### **A Guide for Parish Pastoral Councils A People of Mission and Vision© 2000**

The Diocesan Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines are the result of an eighteen-month process of study, prayer, reflection, writing, consultation, and evaluation by the Diocesan Parish Pastoral Council Review Committee. The Guidelines reflect local Parish experience and wisdom, the insight of other American dioceses and the *Code of Canon Law*.

Four ideas underlie our understanding about Parish Pastoral Councils: communion, participation, gifts, and consultation. The idea of communion means that Catholics are chosen and united by God to form one people who seek ways to be Christ in this world. Through participation we are called through our Baptism to carry on the saving mission of Christ and work together in bringing forth God's Kingdom. As members of the Body of Christ, every Catholic has been gifted by God's Spirit and is called to serve the Church according to the gifts given. Consultation ensures that the pastor receives good advice and that the community remains united.

Within the Diocese of Youngstown Parish Pastoral Councils have a long and successful history. In the past thirty years, pastors and their parishioners have had a wide range of experiences as they have matured in their understanding of collaboration, consultation, church leadership, and shared responsibility. Collaboration is a key aspect of our reality as Church, living and working as the People of God. In his leadership role, the pastor can benefit from the practical experience, sound advice, and shared wisdom of his parishioners.

Because the Parish Pastoral Council is the key leadership body in the Parish it should be rooted in prayer, involved in study, reflection, sharing, open to dialogue, and attentive to the working of the Spirit. The direction, information, and resources found in *A Guide for Parish Pastoral Councils: A People of Mission and Vision© 2000* are intended to help re-energize our Parish Pastoral Councils and assist in parish pastoral planning for the new Millennium.

## **What is a Parish Pastoral Council? What does it do?**

The mission of the parish pastoral council is "to examine and consider all that relates to pastoral work and to offer practical conclusions on these matters, so that the life and activity of the People of God be brought into greater conformity with the Gospel." *Pope Paul VI*

It is to provide a means by which the full parish can participate in discerning the mission of Jesus and how this particular parish membership is being called to carry out that mission in this particular time and place.

## **What are the History, Nature and Foundations of the Parish Pastoral Council?**

Parish councils have their history in the documents of Vatican II and their understanding of the nature of the church. The two most important documents that form our understanding of the church are *Lumen Gentium (The Dogmatic constitution on the Church)* and *Gaudium et Spes (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)*. Fr. John Coleman, SJ who has written extensively on parish pastoral councils states that these documents inspired the formation of parish councils because of their emphasis on communion, collegiality, subsidiarity, and justice as participation

### **Communion**

Communion or fellowship speaks of unity within parish life, which is based on the equality of all believers. The foundation of this communion is baptism, which can be understood as our common vocation to the ministry of the church. Through baptism we are joined by Jesus in the life of the Trinity and in our being called to share in Jesus' mission. All of us have received this call no matter what our position in the church may be. All of us are called to be disciples of Christ and to proclaim and enable the coming of God's reign.

But the very heart of the concept of communion is participation. We, as baptized members of the church, share in the ministry of Christ, "in accord with the condition proper to each one." (*L.G.*) Parish councils give us a structure and a means to exercise our communion by seeking ways to be Christ in this world and to further the reign of God.

### **Collegiality**

The idea of communion leads to the notion of collegiality. If there is to be true communion among the baptized then there has to be collegiality between clergy and laity. *Lumen Gentium* in paragraphs 33 and 37 teaches that the laity's mission comes through baptism and confirmation and consequently the layperson has the right and often the duty to give his or her judgment on the church's internal affairs. Parish Councils offer the parishioners the opportunity to exercise collegiality to further the mission of Christ in union with those in holy orders.

### **Subsidiarity**

Subsidiarity, a fundamental principle of Catholic social teaching assumes that problems are best defined and resolved by those most closely affected by them. This principle assumes that diversity and good order can only be maintained through subsidiarity. In the spirit of this principle, parish pastoral councils and all ministry groups involved in the process of consultation are vital for the good of the Church.

## **Justice as Participation**

Fr. Coleman teaches, “it is not enough for individuals to be mere passive recipients of justice.” *The Church in the Modern World* insists that we, the baptized, are active subjects in our society. We are artisans and authors of the culture of our community. We are responsible for the cultural mores in which we live. We are called to create a just society and to be a sign and a sacrament of the presence of Christ in our community. It follows that just ecclesial societies allow for the participation of all the baptized as they seek to work for the common good of society. Parishes are thus invited by Vatican II to establish parish councils. The nature and structure of parish councils continue to evolve. Although not mandated by the ecumenical council, it is difficult to understand how communion, collegiality, subsidiarity and justice as participation can be achieved without such structures.

(Resource: Coleman, S.J. John, *The Ecclesiology of Pastoral Planning*, ed. Arthur X. Deegan, II, *Developing a Vibrant Parish Pastoral Council*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999)

## **Canon Law Citations**

*John Paul II, Pope, Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition, Translation prepared under the auspices of the Canon Law Society of America (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1998.)*

### **Canon 204**

§1. *The Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God. For this reason, made sharers in their own way in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and royal function, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each.*

### **Canon 536**

§1. *If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity.*

§2. *A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.*

## **Documents Published After the Code**

John Paul II, Pope, “Christifideles Laici: Apostolic Exhortation on the Laity,” based on the 1987 World Synod of Bishops, January 30, 1987, *Origins* 18:35 (Feb. 9, 1989): 561, 653-595.

*“The [Second Vatican] council’s mention of examining and solving pastoral problems ‘by general discussion’ [A.A., no. 10] ought to find its adequate and structured development through a more convinced, extensive and decided appreciation for ‘parish pastoral councils,’ on which the synod fathers have rightly insisted. 39” (no. 27, p. 574)*

## What is the Background of Parish Pastoral Councils in the Diocese of Youngstown?

Within the Diocese of Youngstown, Parish Pastoral Councils have a long and successful history.

In the 1985-1990 Diocesan Action Plan, Goal Three, Strategy Three stated the following mandate in regard to parish pastoral councils:

*After consultation with the Priests Council, the bishop will call for every parish to have a functioning parish council by December 1985.*

- a. Parishes without a parish council will begin to form a steering committee before May 1985.*
- b. Parishes with a parish council should evaluate its effectiveness and renew and/or reorganize according to diocesan guidelines.*

Pastors see the need for sound advice in pastoral matters and parishioners want to put their time, treasure and talent at the service of parishes. Since the 1990 revision of our diocesan *“Policies and Guidelines for Parish Council,”* councils have increasingly taken on the role of pastoral planners. After much study and consultation, the Diocesan Parish Pastoral Council Review Committee offers these new guidelines in the hope that they will provide our parishes with the vision and tools that enable them to fulfill their mission as consultative bodies that make recommendations to the pastor.

**Because of the broad diversity of parish circumstances within the Youngstown Diocese (large suburban, rural, inner-city, urban, ethnic, etc.) it was determined that one model or structure would not “fit all.” Hence, the Review Committee saw the need to develop two models that can readily be adapted to local circumstances. Each pastor has the option of choosing the model or a combination of both models for a parish pastoral council that best serves the size, composition, and the nature of the parish.**

The Review Committee has developed descriptions of two proposed models, which will be characterized as Council of Ministries and Pastoral Planning Council. They describe two approaches to organizing the work of the council and how the council collaborates with other committees and groups within the parish.

**Some Important Understandings**  
**for**  
**Effective Parish Pastoral Council Leadership**

- ◆ Recognition and appreciation of the Pastor's role and vision.
- ◆ Recognition that the parish pastoral council is consultative to the pastor and/or duly appointed administrator of the parish.
- ◆ Recognition that clarity of expectations on the part of both pastor and council members is essential
- ◆ Recognition that when the pastorate is vacant, the parish pastoral council ceases until a new pastor or administrator is appointed.
- ◆ Recognition that the formation and education of pastor, council members and parishioners regarding the essential elements of the mission of the parish is critical to forming a vision.
- ◆ Recognition that prayer, reflection, and faith sharing are primary, integral parts of council ministry.
- ◆ Recognition that pastoral planning is critical to the life of the council and parish regardless which model is implemented
- ◆ Recognition that the process of consensus should be learned and used.
- ◆ Recognition that there needs to be clarity of relationship and roles between council and the Parish Finance Council.

## **The Essential Elements of Parish Mission\***

**Evangelization** encompasses any way in which the parish continues to spread the good news of Jesus.

**Worship** gives expression to the sacramental and prayer life of parishioners. Includes Sunday Eucharist and other ritual forms of sacred celebration.

**Word** proclaims, explains, informs, and forms parishioners of all ages in the Scriptures and tradition of the Church.

**Community** draws parishioners together with Jesus Christ in mutual support, activity, and celebration marked by inclusivity.

**Service** extends the resources of the parish to the needs of others and demonstrates a commitment to works of compassion and justice.

**Leadership** calls forth gifts of visioning, planning, empowering, and evaluating for the service of the community.

**Stewardship** challenges all parishioners to share their time, talent, and treasure for the fulfillment of the parish mission.

\*From *New Wine, New Wineskins* Program of Diocese of Greensburg, PA.

# **COUNCIL OF MINISTRIES**

## **Outline**

### **Overview:**

These guidelines are intended to give direction and clarity to those Parish Pastoral Councils, which provide consultation to the pastor through a representative body of parishioners, many of whom are appointed from various ministerial committees. The standing committees should reflect the needs and priorities of the parish. They can include but should not be limited to: Worship, Stewardship, Social Action, Adult Education and Formation, Evangelization, etc. The council is to serve as a vehicle of dialogue and communication among the pastor, the parish staff, the committees, parish organizations, and parishioners. The council is not intended to be a decision making body or administrative board but one that collaborates with the pastor to identify the needs of the parish and then implements the parish pastoral plan through the coordination of various parish activities and committees.

### **What is the purpose of the Council of Ministries Model?**

- ◆ To offer consultation to the pastor and help the pastor plan the parish's pastoral program.
- ◆ To be a visionary, consultative, planning, coordinating, and evaluative voice of the parish.
- ◆ To give parishioners a voice in supporting, guiding, and directing various aspects of parish life in light of Church teaching and the mission of the local diocese and universal Church.
- ◆ To assist the parish in understanding the essential elements of the pastoral mission of the parish.
- ◆ To help plan for the future.
- ◆ To coordinate the ministries and activities of the parish through representation of appropriate standing committees or commissions such as Worship, Word, Community, Service, Evangelization, Stewardship, etc.

### **What are the functions of the Council of Ministries?**

- ◆ To state and clarify the mission of the parish.
- ◆ To present opinions and evaluations as part of initial input to the consultative process of decision-making.
- ◆ To identify matters of concern relating to the effective pastoral mission of the parish.
- ◆ To survey the needs, both spiritual and temporal, of the parish and discuss and analyze the data gathered.
- ◆ To discuss proposals, alternatives, and recommendations and prioritize them.
- ◆ To strive for consensus and recommend courses of action on the strength of the information available.
- ◆ To develop a vision of the parish's preferred future and set goals both long and short range.
- ◆ To communicate to the parish at large the decisions and thinking of the council.
- ◆ To attend to the prayer and on-going formation necessary for the spiritual development of members.

## **What is the relationship of the Council of Ministries model to Ministry Committees?**

In this model representatives from various standing committees are part of the council membership. The pastor and council should determine which groups are represented and how they are chosen. The council will need to collaborate with the committees represented as well as other parish groups in order to implement the goals and objectives of the pastoral plan.

## **How should the membership of this model of Parish Pastoral Council be constituted?**

The Parish Pastoral Council should consist of eight (8) to fifteen (15) members so as to reflect the wisdom of the entire parish. EVANGELIZATION, WORSHIP, WORD, COMMUNITY, SERVICE, STEWARDSHIP, and LEADERSHIP are essential elements of the pastoral mission of the parish and the council should pay attention to these essential elements in determining the concrete make up of committees or commission representatives.

- ◆ According to *Canon 536 of the Code of Canon Law*, “the pastor presides over (it) the council.” It is recommended that the chairperson or someone else chair the meetings.
  
- ◆ Each council should have a standing executive or agenda committee and other committees as needed to effectively lead the parish toward the discernment and fulfillment of its mission. The parish pastoral council should establish guidelines as to how its membership is constituted.
  
- ◆ In the Council of Ministries Model, representatives are appointed from parish commissions and along with others chosen through a variety of methods, complete the representative body.
  
- ◆ Local guidelines should be established for attendance at meetings. This expectation needs to be clearly stated as part of the discernment process.
  
- ◆ Parish staff act as resources and attend meetings as needed.

# **PASTORAL PLANNING COUNCIL**

## **Outline**

### **Overview:**

The following guidelines are intended to give direction and clarity to those Parish Pastoral Councils, which provide consultation to the pastor on matters of pastoral planning and policy. The council works with the pastor to discern God's will, to develop a parish vision, and to clarify the mission of the parish. They engage in pastoral planning by developing parish goals through dialogue with the various parish ministries. The council pursues its mission in connection to the larger church, aware of its interdependence with other parishes, the diocese, and the universal church.

### **What is the purpose of the Pastoral Planning Council?**

- ◆ To offer consultation to the pastor on matters of pastoral planning and policy.
- ◆ To be a visionary, consultative, planning, and evaluative voice of the parish.
- ◆ To gather data, analyze, and formulate an effective plan for the parish.
- ◆ To give all a voice in supporting, guiding, and directing various aspects of parish life in light of church teaching and the mission of the local, diocesan, and universal church.
- ◆ To assist the parish in understanding the essential elements of the pastoral mission of the parish.

### **What are the functions of the Pastoral Planning Council?**

- ◆ To prayerfully consider how God is calling the parish to fulfill its mission in this particular time and place.
- ◆ To serve as a vehicle of dialogue, communication, coordination, and cooperation with all the parish committees.
- ◆ To gather data through a survey or an annual parish assembly.
- ◆ To use the process of consensus in coming to agreement on recommended courses of action.
- ◆ To empower the implementation of parish goals and objectives with the various parish ministries and commissions.
- ◆ To annually develop and evaluate progress toward agreed parish goals and objectives and update the plan.
- ◆ To communicate to the parish at large the decisions and thinking of the council.
- ◆ To attend to the prayer and continuing education necessary for council action and the spiritual development of members.

## **What is the relationship of the Pastoral Planning Council model to Standing Committees?**

In this model the Council empowers and communicates with the standing committees and parish groups that represent the pastoral priorities of the parish, e.g. the essential elements: EVANGELIZATION, WORSHIP, WORD, COMMUNITY, SERVICE, STEWARDSHIP, and LEADERSHIP. These committees work independently of the parish pastoral council to implement the pastoral plan and the goals and objectives of that plan. The various committees and groups keep the council informed of their work through either the pastor or the parish staff person who works with the committee.

## **How should the membership of this model of Parish Pastoral Council be constituted?**

In the Pastoral Planning Model, representatives are chosen “so as to reflect the wisdom of the entire people of God.” They are chosen not because they belong to a particular ministry or parish committee but because they have the gifts: first, to study, investigate, and examine pastoral matters wisely; second, the capacity to reflect widely and the patience to ponder deeply; and third, the ability to listen to differing opinions, integrate various points of view, and discern with others what is best for the parish. Parish Pastoral Council should consist of eight (8) to twelve (12) members so as to reflect the wisdom of the entire parish.

- ◆ According to *Canon 536* of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, “the pastor presides over (it) the council.” It is recommended that the chairperson or someone else chair the meetings.
- ◆ Each council should have a standing executive or agenda committee and other ad hoc committees as needed to effectively lead the parish toward the discernment and fulfillment of its mission. The parish pastoral council should establish guidelines as to how its membership is constituted.
- ◆ In the Pastoral Planning model, representatives are chosen through one of the suggested discernment processes.
- ◆ Local guidelines should be established for attendance at meetings. This expectation needs to be clearly stated as part of the discernment process.
- ◆ The staff acts as a resource and attends council meetings as needed.

## **How should prayer and formation be included in the schedule?**

- ◆ The council needs to spend time together in prayer and retreat experiences for the growth of Christ's community of faith and love. Planning an annual day or evening of retreat can do this.
- ◆ Significant time for prayer should be a scheduled part of each meeting.
- ◆ Formation opportunities should be provided on a regular basis.

## **What are the basics of Parish Pastoral Council prayer?**

- ◆ Create a warm and inviting atmosphere that helps the group be attentive to the presence of God's Spirit in their midst.
- ◆ Create a setting with a Bible and other sacred symbols.
- ◆ Include prayers that reflect the liturgical seasons, work of council, or address needs of the community.
- ◆ Use scripture, Liturgy of the Hours, or Church Documents to shape the prayer and establish the theme.
- ◆ Silence and/or time for quiet reflection is an important part of prayer. Include time for quieting down at the beginning to help everyone settle and be open to the wisdom of the Spirit.
- ◆ Prayer may be done at anytime during the meeting but at the beginning is preferred.
- ◆ Invite as many members of the council as possible to take part. The person leading should be different from the reader, etc.

## **When the Parish Pastoral Council gathers for prayer, what should be the format?**

**Call to prayer.** This helps people to open their hearts and minds to the presence and power of God and enables them to set aside other concerns and focus on the business of the meeting.

**Opening prayer.** This sets the tone and theme of the prayer which begins our dialogue with God: God calls and we respond.

**Reading from Scripture, Liturgy of the Hours, Church Documents, etc.**

**Response to the reading:**

**Shared reflection.** This encourages the councilors to hold up their experience against the reading and look for points of integration.

**Prayers of intercession.** This provides the opportunity for councilors to bring personal and community concerns and needs forward.

**Closing prayer with transition to the meeting.** This should summarize the theme of the prayer service and asks that the Lord guide the council during their discussions and deliberations.

## **What should be included in the prayer at the end of the meeting?**

This should provide closure and send the councilors forth with a sense of mission, knowing that they have God's help.

## What is the relationship with the Parish Finance Council?

The Parish Finance Council and the Parish Pastoral Council are distinct and separate. They are related, however, since both are concerned with the life and mission of the parish. Each parish community is to foster a cooperative relationship between the Parish Finance Council and the Parish Pastoral Council.

### **Canon 537**

*In each parish there is to be a finance committee to help the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish, without prejudice to can. 532. It is ruled by the universal law and by the norms laid down by the diocesan Bishop, and it is comprised of members of the faithful selected according to these norms.*

### **Canon 532**

*In all juridic affairs the pastor represents the parish according to the norm of law. He is to take care that the goods of the parish are administered according to the norm of cann. 1281-1288.*

- ◆ This *Canon* also prescribes that the Parish Finance Council be distinct from the Parish Pastoral Council because each has responsibility for distinct aspects of parish life and the membership of each is different.
- ◆ Both Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils are consultative to the Pastor; the Pastoral Council in formulating the pastoral plan and the Finance Council in financing that plan.
- ◆ The Finance Council looks to the Parish Pastoral Council for a statement of the mission of the parish, a pastoral plan and parish priorities.
- ◆ The Parish Pastoral Council looks to the Finance Council for sound financial guidance and planning regarding the resources needed to develop and implement parish plans, programs and policies.
- ◆ The Finance Council's recommendations deal with financial plans and policies and not with ordinary matters of day-to-day administration.

Cooperation between the Councils may be realized in some of the ways that follow. Regular reports can be exchanged between the two Councils. The Parish Finance Council may choose one of its members to be a liaison to the Pastoral Council. A joint meeting of representatives from both councils may discuss a particular issue of common concern. Both Councils can foster cooperative relationships through regular communication. Each parish is to determine how this relationship is best lived out in its local situation and specify ways to foster cooperation with its local Council guidelines.

Adapted with permission from Diocese of Cleveland, Parish Finance Council Policy