

NORMS FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS



DIOCESE OF SAULT STE. MARIE

March 2018



Most Rev. Marcel Damphousse
Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie

granted

the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur

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Foreword

This document has been produced to:

- a. to help all those who have graciously accepted to offer their services, by serving on the Parish Pastoral Council;
- b. to ensure that Pastors and lay faithful are aware of the relevant canonical legislation and diocesan norms established by the Bishop regarding the operation of Parish Pastoral Councils (PPC) within the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie; and
- c. to provide guidance as to the establishment of a PPC within a parish, its proper function, its relationship with the Pastor, and its means of promoting the pastoral mission of the Church.

These norms express common standards and the vision of the Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie regarding the mandate of the PPC and the formation of its members.

This document supersedes all previous norms or guidance regarding the operation of Parish Pastoral Councils. The Pastor of each parish and Catholic community in the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie is to establish a PPC based on the norms articulated in this document.

NATURE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PPC

1. A Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) is established in order to foster pastoral activity within a local community or region. It is an advisory body chaired by the Pastor. The canonical basis for a PPC is found in canon 536 of the Code of Canon Law (CIC) which states:

§ 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.

2. While retaining their distinct canonical status, when two (2) or more parishes are clustered together under a single Pastor they are, as far as possible, to act as one faith community and form a single PPC with representatives from each parish.

3. The Parish Pastoral Council is not a management board nor a financial committee. It does not supervise the Pastor, parish staff or parishioners.

4. The PPC represents the entire parish community, not any one group or constituency within a parish.

5. Each PPC must write its own statutes taking into account the current norms. These statutes must include a conflict resolution process and must be approved by the Chancellor of the diocese.

Pastoral Activity

6. The primary role of the PPC is to help the Pastor in fulfilling his pastoral responsibilities towards the parish community entrusted to him, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop (canon 519 CIC).

7. The following are some of the key areas of mission and ministry within the context of pastoral activity:

A. Evangelization & Discipleship – The primary mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel and "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28, 19). It is the proclamation of the Gospel – "leading individuals to have a deeper encounter with Christ, best expressed in a simple, confident, informed, and joyous witness to the faith, which attracts others and invites them to wonder what secret is motivating the Christian disciple" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Living as Missionary Disciples*, p. 7).

B. Liturgy & Worship – "The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*). We enter into the mystery of God in a special way through reverent participation in the sacred liturgy, worship and other forms of devotional prayer.

C. Community – We grow as a community of missionary disciples by loving one another as Christ loves us (John 13, 34-35), sharing our journey of faith together, enjoying fellowship and providing support and accountability to one another.

D. Apostolate – We make the Kingdom of God present in our society by promoting a culture wherein every human life is recognized as a sacred gift from God, worthy of protection and care from the moment of conception until natural death. This is manifested especially through good works that provide effective relief for individuals and families in need.

E. Vocations – We encourage discernment and actively foster vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life. For men and women called to the vocation of marriage, preparing them to live this out according to God's plan and supporting them in their role as first teachers of the faith to their children.

8. A balanced approach to these areas of pastoral activity should be respected so that no one area is neglected or favored to the detriment of the others.

Membership

9. Parish Pastoral Council membership is not to exceed fifteen (15) members, including the Pastor and the *ex officio* members.

10. Members must be:

- a) baptized according to the rites of the Catholic Church or received into it;
- b) members of the parish;
- c) in good standing with the community;
- d) people of moral integrity and prudence;
- e) faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

11. The Chairperson of the parish finance committee is an *ex officio* member of the PPC. He/she can delegate another member of the finance committee to attend a meeting of the PPC.

12. Deacons are *ex officio* members of the PPC. They are not to represent more than one fifth of the overall members of the PPC. In the event that there are too many Deacons, it may be necessary, at the discretion of the Pastor, to rotate their participation.

13. Lay Pastoral Associates of the parish are *ex officio* members of the PPC. They are not to represent more than one fifth of the overall members PPC. In the event that there are too many Pastoral Associates, it may be necessary, at the discretion of the Pastor, to rotate their participation.

14. A member's seat may become vacant during the year because of resignation, changing parishes and, for a grave reason and after consultation by the Pastor with the Bishop's office, removal from the PPC. In either of these cases, the Pastor, in consultation with the Executive committee, will fill the vacant seat within two months of the vacancy.

Elections and/or Appointment

15. The Parish Pastoral Council is to write its own statutes in regards to the election and/or appointment of the members of the PPC including the officers of the Executive Committee (see articles 20-23). The following parameters are to be assured.

a. The duration of the mandate of each member will be two (2) or three (3) years, renewable only once.

b. It is important to stagger the mandates of those who are elected or appointed to the Parish Pastoral Council, in order to avoid having many members leave at the same time.

- c. As much as possible, equal numbers of men and women must be appointed.
- d. The PPC should include representation from recognised Catholic organisations operating within the parish or parishes, such as, the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Missions, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, etc. There should not be more than one official representative per organisation.
- e. Wherever possible, the PPC should include representation for youth and young adults and for young families.
- f. The number of persons appointed by the Pastor is not to exceed fifty-percent of the PPC.

Role and Duties of the Parish Pastoral Council

16. Prayer is central to the organisation and work of the PPC. The members are to set aside a reasonable amount of time to pray together when they meet. Through prayer, they are to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

17. The PPC has a responsibility to develop a vision for the promotion of pastoral activity in key areas of mission and ministry. They are to plan pastoral

activities and see how they can be achieved within the context of the parish or region. These should take priority over all other areas of parish activity.

18. PPC members may lead or form committees in order to carry out a specific pastoral activity as required.

19. The PPC is in no way to promote, organise or participate in any activity that is contrary to the mission and teachings of the Catholic Church.

Executive Committee

20. To assist the Pastor, an Executive Committee is to be constituted in accordance with the statutes of the PPC. The officers are the following:

- a. The Chairperson;
- b. The Vice-Chairperson; and
- c. The Secretary.

21. The Chairperson in collaboration with the Pastor oversees Parish Pastoral Council activities and directs discussions during the meetings of the PPC, while remaining available to carry out other tasks required by the Pastor. He/she must take into account every member's opinion and should not impose his own.

22. The Vice-Chairperson assists the Chairperson in his/her functions and directs and moderates discussions during meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council in the absence of the Chairperson. He/she is to carry out other tasks required by the Pastor or the PPC.

23. The Secretary provides written convocation to meetings, along with the necessary information pertaining to such meetings. He/she records in writing the minutes of the meetings.

Convening and Presiding the Meetings

24. It is incumbent upon the Pastor to convene the Parish Pastoral Council, to preside over it and, in consultation with the Executive committee of the PPC, to determine the issues to be discussed.

25. The Parish Pastoral Council cannot be legitimately convoked by the members themselves, nor meet without the presence of the Pastor.

Meetings

26. The PPC is to meet a minimum of four (4) times per calendar year, but they may meet more often in order to ensure a consistent approach to ministry and mission in the parish.

27. An agenda, prepared by the Executive and the Pastor, is to be issued to all the members by the Secretary prior to the commencement of each PPC meeting. All agenda items are to be approved by the Pastor and may not be altered or removed without his consent.

28. Parish Pastoral Council meetings should not exceed two (2) hours in length. If more time is needed to discuss a specific issue, a secondary meeting should be scheduled at another date for this purpose. If more practical, the PPC may establish an ad-hoc committee to research and debate the question and to give their advice to the members of the PPC.

29. All members have a right to express their views at Parish Pastoral Council meetings; however, in order to ensure that meetings are conducted in an efficient manner and that all members are heard, the Chairperson may place a time limit on how long an individual member may address the PPC.

30. In providing recommendations or rendering decisions, the PPC is to function through group consensus.

31. Minutes are to be taken by the Secretary or another member of the PPC and a summary provided in a timely fashion to all members following the conclusion of the meeting.

Decisions of the PPC

32. While the PPC is a consultative body, its decisions and recommendations bear considerable weight. Pastors are to adhere to the decisions or recommendations of the Parish Pastoral Council unless there is a serious reason for him to do otherwise. In such cases, he is required to make known the basis for his decision to the members of the PPC.

33. The Pastor is solely responsible for promulgating decisions of the PPC.

Dissolution of the PPC

34. If the PPC is unable to carry out its assigned duty for the benefit of the parish or if it seriously abuses its mandate, the Pastor, after consultation with the Bishop, may dissolve it, but he is be obliged to reconstitute it within three months of the dissolution.

Death, transfer or removal of a Pastor

35. The members of the PPC cease to meet upon the death, transfer or removal of a Pastor or priest administrator. However, the Executive Committee is to oversee the completion of any ongoing pastoral activity in the interim. The new Pastor or priest administrator is to reconvene or reconstitute the PPC as expeditiously as possible.

Resources

Code of Canon Law (1983), Book II, Chapter 5: Diocesan Pastoral Council (cc. 511-514) and Chapter 6, c. 536.

Ferguson, J., "Handbook for Parish Pastoral Councils", Columba Press, 2005, 285 p.

Fischer, M. E., "Making Parish Councils Pastoral", Novalis, October 2010, 224 p.

John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christi fideles laici*, December 30, 1988, #26-28.

Pagé, R., "The diocesan pastoral council", Paramus, N.J., Newman Press, 1970, 175 p.

Paul VI, Motu Proprio *Ecclesiae sanctae*, Application of decrees of the VaticanII Council, August 6, 1966, #16.

Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, "Private Letter on 'Pastoral Councils'" (*Omnes Christi fideles*, January 25, 1973), reprinted in James I. O'Connor, editor, *The Canon Law Digest*, Vol. VII: Officially Published Documents Affecting the Code of Canon Law 1968-1972 (Chicago: Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus, 1975), pp. 280-288.

Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, #30 and 37.

Vatican II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay Faithful *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, #10, 26 and 27.

Contact information

Any enquiries regarding the implementation of this document or pastoral ministry in general can be directed to the Diocesan pastoral office:

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The Church is "sent into the world to continue the works of Jesus Christ." It is the mission of all baptized to become Disciples of Christ and to announce the good news.

Works such as preaching, teaching, healing, and acts of charity and justice in the Name of Jesus help to fulfill this mission.

