
Ministry Formation – Parish Pastoral Council

What is a Parish Pastoral Council?

It is a collaborative body of the Christian faithful whose purpose is the promotion of the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church. It works closely with the pastor or administrator in a consultative capacity to identify, implement and evaluate those pastoral preparations and policies best suited to proclaim and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Is a Parish Pastoral Council necessary?

Canon 536 leaves this decision with the diocesan bishop. As of February 2017, norms for the Erie Diocese state: “Every stand-alone parish in the diocese is to have its own pastoral council.” “Partnered parishes are to share a single parish pastoral council” (c. 536 §§1-2). [This] forum...” enables all to collaborate in fostering pastor activity, i.e. an organized, unified endeavor, which broadly includes liturgy, education, social service,” etc. “Parish council committees [e.g., liturgy committee] frequently correspond to these areas of concern (*Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, by Cordiden, Green and Huntschel, Paulist Press, 1985).

What is the laity’s role in a Pastoral Council?

- “The laity are called to participate actively in the whole life of the Church” *Gaudium et Spes*.
- “The Spirit...distributes special graces among the faithful...and makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church” #12 *Lumen Gentium*.
- The Christian faithful... have become sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic and royal office... [T]hey are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world... (*Canon 204*)
- Participators in the function of Christ...the laity have an active part...in the life and action of the Church. ...[W]ithout it the apostolate of the pastors will frequently be unable to obtain its full effect. (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People – *Apostolica Actuaosetatem*)

What does a Parish Pastoral Council do?

The council places at the heart of the parish a consciousness of and zeal for the mission of Jesus Christ. The primary responsibility of the parish pastoral council is pastoral planning which helps communities to discern what needs to be changed, supported, or enhanced in keeping the parish faithful to its mission (*Revisoning the Parish Pastoral Council: A Workbook*, Gubish, Jenny, McGannon, Paulist Press, 2001)

What does pastoral planning involve?

- Keeping, as the primary focus of the parish, the seven essential elements of parish life, evangelization, worship, Word, community, service, stewardship, and leadership
- Prioritizing, and determining the importance and urgency of each element to create goals and a vision for the parish
- Evaluating & adjusting responses to the parish vision
- Connecting the mission of the church with the parish goals

The Office of Worship has developed a retreat PowerPoint to introduce the *Revisoning the Parish Pastoral Council* workbook by Gubish, et al, to parishes and councils. Contact the Office of Worship for assistance.