

Foundation Document

Pastoral Council of Cathedral of Mary our Queen

1. Introduction

Recognizing that sound pastoral decisions are informed by the wisdom of the People of God, Monsignor Richard Woy re-established the pastoral council of the Cathedral of Mary our Queen on January 1, 2016. The documents of the Second Vatican Council recommended the establishment of such councils. They state that Catholics have a right and duty to express their opinion on what pertains to the good of the Church. Pastors should willingly consult their people, say the documents, and use their prudent advice. By establishing a pastoral council, the pastor acknowledges the wisdom of his parishioners and expresses his desire to share with them his responsibility for the governance of the parish.

2. Purpose

To investigate and consider pastoral matters and propose practical solutions or draw sound conclusions. These solutions or conclusions should be presented to the pastor in the form of recommendations.

This threefold task of the council – investigating, considering, and recommending conclusions – is called pastoral planning. After the pastor has accepted the recommendations of the council, he directs their implementation. Council members may assist him, but strictly speaking, implementation is the responsibility of the pastor, not the council.

3. Scope

The scope of the council is pastoral matters. These may include everything that pertains to the pastor's ministries of proclaiming God's word, celebrating the sacraments, caring for the faithful, promoting the mission of the Church to the world, and being a good steward of parish resources. The scope includes all the practical matters of parish life. There is, in short, nothing about which the pastor may not consult the council, apart from faith, orthodoxy, moral principles or laws of the universal Church.

4. Criteria for Membership

Pastoral council members are chosen, above all, for their ability to accomplish the main task of the council -- the work of investigating, considering, and recommending practical solutions. They are baptized Catholics, in good standing with the Church, who reflect the diversity of the parish's various neighborhoods, social and professional groups, and apostolates. Finally, they are parishioners noted for their faith, good morals, and prudence.

Members of the Council shall automatically lose their seats if absent three consecutive meetings without sufficient reason, as determined by the Pastor. A parish member selected as an alternate parish council member at the previous discernment shall fill an at-large member's vacant seat. A committee representative's vacant seat shall be filled by the choice of the committee's membership.

5. Selection of Members

Ten pastoral council members are elected every three years. The election takes place after two assemblies during the month of May to which all parishioners are invited. Each assembly introduces parishioners to the work of the pastoral council. The pastor explains his motives for establishing it and invites parishioners to express their hopes

for it, to identify the strengths of the parish and those areas in which the council may help it to develop. The assembly includes a reflection on the qualities of a good councillor and it culminates with nominations.

The pastor, following consultation with current councillors, prayer and discernment, selects ten new councillors. Commissions may select liaisons to participate in pastoral council meetings for each of the three-year periods. With the exception of the pastor and parochial vicars, a member of council may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

6. Officers

The pastor presides at every meeting of the council. He consults, accepts or rejects recommendations, and develops the agenda with the council officers. The pastor and councillors select three officers from among their number. They are the chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary. With the pastor they develop the council agenda.

The chairperson facilitates council discussions, making sure that everyone speaks and is heard. The chairperson also monitors the work of the councillors between regular meetings. The vice-chairperson assists the chairperson and facilitates meetings in the chairperson's absence. The secretary keeps the minutes. He or she ensures that they are sent, along with the agenda and supporting documents (including updates from each Committee), to each councillor at least one week before every meeting.

7. Operation

The pastoral council has a three-year planning cycle, and members are selected for a three-year term. The pastor defines the theme of the planning cycle during the May assembly at which the council is selected. In the beginning of the council's second and

third year, the members facilitate a parish assembly to report on the council's progress and to elicit the advice of parishioners. At the end of the third year, the council completes its work. Then a new council is selected and a new planning cycle begins.

A. Standing Commissions

1. *The Council shall have the following Standing Commissions:*
 - a. *The **Worship Commission** which shall assist the Pastor in the planning and implementing parish worship and other prayer opportunities;*
 - b. *The **Evangelization Commission** which shall assist the Pastor in the planning and the implementation of the evangelical and educational mission of the parish;*
 - c. *The **Service Commission** which shall assist the Pastor in enabling the parishioners to respond to the needs of the poor and deprived, both within the parish and throughout the world;*
 - d. *The **Parish Community Life Commission** which shall assist the Pastor in fostering community development, ministering to the diverse needs of the parish community, and enhancing parish social life.*
 - e. *The **Stewardship Commission** which shall assist the Pastor with building an appreciation for the gift of life that we have been given and the need to make responsible use of the our individual gifts and resources, especially our time, talent & treasure.*
2. *These commissions will serve as autonomous groups, reporting regularly to the Council.*
3. *There are other important groups that exist outside the Council, such as the Finance Council and Facilities Commission.*

8. Agenda

The pastor develops the agenda with the council officers. Reading materials, including committee updates are distributed in advance, and only discussed if there are questions or concerns. If time allows, there should be time devoted to discussing the general sense of the parish. If the pastor is dissatisfied with any part of the consultation, he expresses his reservations and asks the council to clarify whatever remains obscure. When he is satisfied with the consultation, he formally accepts the council's recommendations. He may then ask the parish staff or other parishioners to implement them.

The council will usually reach its decisions by consensus, defined as 'a process whereby the members of a group work toward an agreement/conclusion that all, though not necessarily in total agreement, can still support.'

9. Relation to the Staff and Finance Council

The pastor consults others besides the pastoral council about parish governance. He relies upon the parish staff for their expertise and consults them daily about the management of parish operations. Indeed, he may occasionally ask parish staff members to attend council meetings in order to put their knowledge at the service of the pastoral council.

Moreover, the pastor relies on the finance council to develop, monitor, and report on the parish budget. Finance council members are chosen for their technical skill in realms of accounting and finance. The pastoral council, by contrast, offers practical wisdom. That is the ability to investigate pastoral matters in a general way, to reflect on them deeply in dialogue, and to propose conclusions appropriate to the parish.

10. Meetings

The pastoral council meets once a month from September to May. Meetings are one and half hours in length. Between the monthly meetings, council members are expected to follow up the previous meeting and prepare for the next. This may entail work on ad hoc committees.

The first meeting of the new pastoral council is dedicated to the call and mission of the newly-chosen members. The council's second and third year begin with a parish assembly. After each assembly, the council assimilates the assembly results. During the final meeting of each year, the councillors reflect on the progress of the three-year planning cycle. The pastor thanks them for their service and reflects on the progress made by the council toward reaching its goals.