

DIOCESE OF BEAUMONT

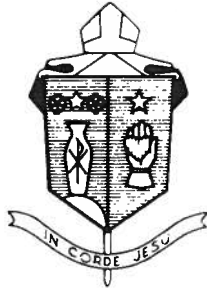


GUIDELINES

FOR

PASTORAL COUNCILS

1990



Bishop's Office

Diocesan Pastoral Office

Diocese of Beaumont

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September 1, 1990

My dear laity, religious and brother priests:

The 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law contains a Canon which refers to the Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Councils.

Canon 536 #1 If, after consulting the council of priests, the diocesan Bishop considers it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish. In this council, which is presided over by the parish priest, Christ's faithful, together with those who by virtue of their office are engaged in pastoral care in the parish, give their help in fostering pastoral action.


#2 The pastoral council has only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan Bishop.

In light of the implication of this canon and of all that has been learned through the experiences of councils since the second set of guidelines were issued in May 1983, this third revision has been written. It is my sincere hope that these guidelines will assist you to focus effectively on the many important aspects of council activity and parish life.

A vibrant Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Council in consultation with the pastor can be a source of vitality and growth for the parish. The recommendations and decisions of the council which are the result of prayer, discernment, dialogue and consensus will surely contribute to the spiritual growth of the parish as a community.

May these guidelines prove helpful to the pastors and the members of the Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Councils of this diocese as together you collaborate in a sharing of wisdom to make those decisions which will enhance the quality of life in the parish.

In Corde Jesu,


Bernard J. Ganter
Bishop of Beaumont

GUIDELINES FOR PARISH PASTORAL/
MISSION PASTORAL COUNCILS

PREAMBLE

When the Second Vatican Council chose the term People of God as one of its expressions of the mystery of the Church, it placed a renewed emphasis upon the role of each member in the life and mission of the Church. The sharing of wisdom is one of the responsibilities members are called upon to assume in the living out of this role.

The Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Council is called upon to provide counsel to the pastor/administrator thus becoming a part of the decision-making process through consultation. By sharing their wisdom and experience, the members of the Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Council assist the pastor/administrator in making the best possible pastoral decisions for the life of the faith community, the parish/mission.

Through prayer, reflection and dialogue as well as study, research and consultation with other parishioners, the pastor/administrator, with the members of the Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Council, work together in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect to reach decisions which help the parish/mission mature and grow as a Christian community open to the world around it.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Council, hereafter Council, is to offer counsel to the pastor/administrator in order to bring together the needs, anxieties, hopes and beliefs of the parishioners and of the larger community in order to set a direction for the parish. The vision of the Council for the parish must be that it become a community of faith united in all the beauty of the many diversities of culture, race, age and life-style.

The Council endeavors to achieve a deep personal and communal commitment to, and maximum participation in, all aspects of Christian life by the people of the parish. This requires that parish/mission and community priorities be structured in accordance with the mission and message of Christ applied to this time and this place.

The following are some of the ways a Council can help this become a reality.

1. Fostering and encouraging the unity of the parish/mission.
2. Assessing adequately, the spiritual and temporal needs of the parish/mission.
3. Assuring implementation of these needs.
4. Providing a forum for constructive dialogue among all members of the parish/mission and between the individual parish/mission community and the community-at-large.
5. Promoting programs and activities recommended by the Diocesan Pastoral Office, as well as by the parish/mission Council itself.

NATURE AND ROLE

The Pastor is both the convener of and the presider/president at the Council. The members, representative of the parish, are called to reflect and consider pastoral issues for the common good and for the future. Hence the Council must read the "signs-of-the-times" and reflect them to those planning or implementing pastoral activities in the parish/mission.

The members of the Council collaborate with the pastor/administrator in making decisions which affect the quality of life in the parish/mission as together they seek a consensus of thought and action. When there is an atmosphere of mutual charity, openness and respect, enhanced by prayer, decisions can be reached by the process of consensus. However, there will be times when circumstances will prevent the Council from reaching a consensus and voting will be necessary. Regardless, the growth of the parish as a Christian community should be the ultimate objective of all decisions.

Several requirements should be remembered when a decision is being considered.

1. All deliberations and conclusions must take into account, and be in accord with, the requirements of Church law as well as existing diocesan policy.
2. Decisions shall be reached by consensus or a favorable vote of the majority of the voting members present provided there is a quorum.
3. The Pastor retains the ultimate decision-making responsibility.
4. Any decision of the Council, reached through either the process of consensus or voting, becomes final and binding when ratified by the pastor/administrator.

5. The pastor/administrator, before making a decision contrary to the recommendation of the Council members, shall clearly indicate his reasons.
6. If two-thirds of the total membership of the Council disagree with the pastor's/administrator's decision, recourse may be made according to a process of conciliation and arbitration on the diocesan level.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership on the Council is a call to give one's gifts and talents to this ministry for the building up of the community. Members should have demonstrated a commitment to the parish community. They should be willing to commit the necessary time and energy required for effective consultation and research.

When selecting members, the following should be kept in mind.

1. There shall be at least five (5) and no more than twelve (12) members in a Council.
2. All members of the Council shall be selected at-large regardless of the process used.
3. Any registered, active member of the parish/mission, in full communion with the Catholic Church, is qualified to be a member of the Council.

Two options present themselves for selecting the members of the Council. These are election and discernment. In both, the parishioners are involved. Selecting Council members is both a privilege and a duty. When the process is carried out in an atmosphere of freedom and prayerful concern for choosing effective leadership, assuredly those persons will be chosen who have the talents and gifts appropriate for the time.

The Council shall devise the manner of selecting new members and dismissing delinquent members.

See p. 8-9 rc: parish staff

TERMS

In order that there be on-going development of leadership, continuity in membership and reasonable expectations of the time commitment of members, the following should be observed.

1. Members shall be selected for staggered terms of not more than three (3) years.
2. No member shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms but can be eligible for selection again after an interim of one full term.
3. Any vacancy of a member shall be filled by the Council, with the approval of the pastor/administrator, for the remainder of the unexpired term. When possible, vacancies shall be filled at the first meeting following such vacancy.

OFFICERS

Each Council should select from among its members, by election or discernment, a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and a Secretary or Recorder. These officers should be selected annually.

If the taking of notes inhibits a member from full participation in the consultation process, it is advisable to appoint a non-member to serve as Secretary or Recorder.

Any vacancy in one of the offices should be filled for the remainder of the term by a selection process within the Council at the first meeting following such vacancy.

STRUCTURE

Structure is a response to need. Therefore, the structure of any Council may vary in detail depending upon the character and population of the parish/mission community.

Some areas of parish/mission life which may need an organized ministry are:

1. Worship (Parish Celebration of Liturgy, Paraliturgies and the Celebration of the Sacraments)
2. Education (Religious Education, Adult Education)
3. Parish Life and Growth (Spiritual Enrichment, Social Events, Family Life, Ecumenism)
4. Social Concerns (Social Action, Civic Community Activities)
5. Evangelization (Special emphasis on the Unchurched and the Alienated)
6. Maintenance (Physical Plant)

It is advisable to establish only those ministries which respond to demonstrated needs. Others can be established as needs arise.

The pastor/administrator and the Chairperson of the Council should be willing to attend the meeting of a ministry when doing so would be reasonable and of assistance.

Policies established by any ministry should not be at variance with those of the Council or the goals of the parish.

MEETINGS

The work of the Council is achieved through its regular meetings. The quality of the meetings will be enriched as the members grow in an awareness that each one is endowed by the Spirit with wisdom and gifts which can strengthen the community. As these are shared through consultation, the distinct roles of the pastor and the members are understood as complementary in community because of their common bond in the Body of Christ. Therefore:

1. The Council should normally meet monthly although this may not be feasible during one or two of the summer months.
2. Special meetings may be called by the pastor/ administrator or the Executive Committee as need arises.
3. The Executive Committee, composed of the pastor/ administrator and Council officers, should prepare the agenda for each meeting. This should be received by the members at least three days before the meeting to allow sufficient time for preparation, research and reflection.
4. Each meeting should open and close with prayer. This provides an atmosphere for discernment of the Spirit. Responsibility for these times of prayer can be rotated among the membership.
5. In order that each decision result from the shared wisdom of the members, at least sixty percent (60%) of the membership should be present before a recommendation to the pastor is finalized.
6. Each Council should devise the manner in which a member of the parish/mission may speak at a meeting, and the manner in which items may be placed on the agenda.

THE PASTOR/ADMINISTRATOR

The pastor/administrator, as chief governing person and president, and accountable to the Bishop, must preside at the Council meetings and participate in its activities.

When a pastor/administrator leaves a parish through transfer, retirement or death, all formal activity of the Council ceases until the new pastor/administrator reconvenes the Council.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FINANCE COUNCIL

The Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Council should endeavor to maintain a quality of communication with the Finance Council which would enable each to share a common awareness of the overall mission and pastoral vision of the parish in all consultation.

As assessor of parish needs, the Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Council should share with the Finance Council those needs whose implementation will require funding. In turn, the Finance Council should share the proposed budget with the Parish Pastoral/Mission Pastoral Council as together these two councils work to enhance the quality of life in the parish.

RELATIONSHIP WITH VARIOUS BOARDS

Where there is a School Board and/or Religious Education Board, special care should be taken to allow these boards to operate according to Diocesan Norms and the agreed upon operational norms of the particular parish that are in conformity with Diocesan Norms.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STAFF

The Council provides consultation and support to the parish/mission staff. In turn, the Council should consider each staff member to be a great resource.

Staff members assist the pastor/administrator in the

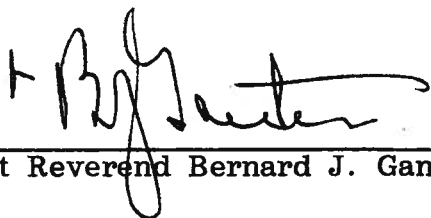
administration of various parish/mission programs. In light of their administrative role, it seems inappropriate that they would also serve as members of a body whose express purpose is counsel and consultation.

CONCLUSION

The Council is called to be the core group that supports the pastor/administrator in his leadership role, expands his awareness of needs and achievements, counsels him on pastoral outreach, while affirming his indispensable office as the people's mediator with the Father and as their tangible link with the bishop and the universal church.

APPROVED AND PROMULGATED:

August 1, 1990
Date



Most Reverend Bernard J. Ganter