



Pastoral Council Manual

A Call to Discern as Disciples

Archdiocese of Anchorage
Office of Evangelization

+ Roger J. Schmitz

Given on the Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, June 24, 2005



A Call to Discern as Disciples Pastoral Council Manual

Archdiocese of Anchorage – Office of Evangelization

From a Sunday Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, given May 29, 2005

Christ draws us to him, he makes us come out of ourselves to make us all one with him. In this way he also integrates us in the communities of brothers and sisters, and communion with the Lord is always also communion with our brothers and sisters. And we see the beauty of this communion that the Blessed Eucharist gives us...

He is the one same Christ who is present in the Eucharistic Bread of every place on earth. This means that we can encounter him only together with all others. We can only receive him in unity. Is not this what the Apostle Paul said in the reading we have just heard? In writing to the Corinthians he said: *"Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf"* (1 Corinthians 10:17). The Eucharist, let us repeat, is the sacrament of unity.

Part I	
Getting Started	2
Part II	
Background	4
Part III	
What?	6
Part IV	
Why?	8
Part V	
Who & When?	10
Part VI	
Relationships	11
Part VII	
Leadership	13
Part VIII	
Future	14
Part IX	
How?	15
Part X	
Now!	19



Pastoral Council Manual

Archdiocese of Anchorage

Getting Started

The Pastoral Council in Brief

Goal

The goal is to create an environment which enables all baptized Catholics to become persons of faith, living and sharing in ministry and community, encouraging all to live their baptismal call as they grow in their relationship to God.

Mission

The Pastoral Council provides pastoral planning for the faith community it serves. Through extensive prayer, listening, discernment, and learning the council assists the pastor/parish director in identifying and assessing the gifts and needs of the faith community; to clarify the parish's mission; and to develop and initiate pastoral plans to serve this mission for the Kingdom of God.

Purpose

It is envisioned that the Pastoral Council is to be a major consultative body in the parish which advises the pastor/parish director who convenes the Council which reflects the mission of Christ. The purpose of the Pastoral Council is to foster full participation of the entire parish in the life and mission of the parish and of the Universal Church. The parish faith community participates in this mission by: Worshiping God; Creating and nurturing Christian Community; Growing in Faith and Holiness; Serving those in need, especially the poor and marginalized.

Function

The primary function of the Pastoral Council is to advise the pastor/parish director in those pastoral matters presented to it by the pastor/parish director; to bring to the Pastoral Team what has been prayerfully discerned as to pastoral needs; and to continually discern gifts and talents so that new leadership may be encouraged. It carries out its function by:

1. Informing the pastor/parish director of needs and gifts of the parish and its members;
2. Developing a parish mission statement and periodically re-evaluating and revising it;
3. Developing a parish pastoral plan for evangelization and in ongoing pastoral planning;
4. Recommending policies, procedures and programs to further implementation of the mission;
5. Reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs;
6. Reflecting on Archdiocesan priorities, recommending how they can be implemented locally.

Membership

Everyone is uniquely called and gifted by God. While no one has all the gifts, all the gifts necessary for ministry and service exist within the faith community. The gifts of potential council members for pastoral leadership might encompass qualities of faithfulness, communication and listening skills, discernment, generosity of self, compassion, reflection, prayer, self-evaluation, integrity, balance.

Meetings

Pastoral Council meetings are convened by the pastor/parish Director at least six times a year. Extraordinary meetings can be held either upon request of the pastor/parish director or Coordinating Committee. Meetings require a quorum of members consisting of the simple majority of members. A yearly Day of Reflection for the Pastoral Council is encouraged to be facilitated in cooperation with the Office of Evangelization.

Consensus

The Pastoral Council is encouraged to use a consensus model, if after discernment there is no clear path of action.

Structure

The Pastoral Council, through a process of discernment, chooses a Coordinating Committee which is composed of the pastor/parish director, the chair, the vice-chair and the secretary. This committee is responsible for formulating the Council's agenda and dealing with Council matters between meetings. The Pastoral Council, through a process of discernment, selects the chair. The vice-chair and the secretary, members of the Council with a working knowledge and basic understanding of the Council process, are chosen by the Council; and serve a one year term. They may consult with the Office of the Archbishop in the name of the community in extra-ordinary situations.

Roles & Relationships

The Pastoral Council cooperates with parish committees and organizations such as worship, spirituality, evangelization, stewardship, education, social concerns, finances, etc. These are not Pastoral Council committees. Staff members and parish committees are a resource to the Pastoral Council. Parish committees through the pastor/parish director and the staff are linked to the Pastoral Council. To encourage unity and integration and to foster a close working relationship among all parish groups, the Pastoral Council meets with the leaders of all the parish committees and organizations at least once a year.

The Parish Finance Council, the Parish Stewardship Committee are separate and distinct from the Pastoral Council. Communication between the Councils and Committees is, however, essential. In order to ensure the communication, a member of the Parish Finance Council and/or Parish Stewardship Committee may serve on the Pastoral Council as ex officio members.

It is the role of the pastor/parish director is exercised in the context of service in Servant Leadership: to convene the Pastoral Council. The pastor/parish director communicates vision and wisdom to the group not merely by excitement and enthusiasm, but by leadership. The Servant leader actively consults with the council by defining problems, exploring solutions, and facilitates discernment. The pastor/parish director focuses the tasks at hand and frees the gifts of the Council, thus guiding development of the vision of the faith community. Servant leadership seeks the practical wisdom of the Pastoral Council to discover the most genuine and urgent needs.

Background

Vision

This is a process to enable all baptized Catholics to become maturing persons of faith knowing themselves in community, growing in their relationship to God, lived in individual and shared ministry responses to their Baptismal call.

Assumptions

The direction is set. Archbishop through the Office of Evangelization and Evangelization Advisory Committee has initiated this model to be implemented over time.

We are mature Christian adults. This process respects the use of adult models of faith formation, discernment, collaborative ministry and leadership development.

Initial and Ongoing Formation is required of all leadership. Clergy, religious, and lay throughout the Archdiocese of Anchorage.

Principle Centered over Structure. Direction comes from the acceptance and living out of principles which allows for adaptation within the faith community.

We are called to Collaborative Ministry. Pastoral planning comes from identifying genuine pastoral needs and the discerning, forming and calling forth the gifts of people to serve those needs (i.e. collaborative ministry).

Introduction

To be authentic bearers of the Good News of Christ we need to respond to Christ's call to personal holiness. Our life in Christ is not a personal matter only, but because we are in Christ, we are also bound to one another. As each of us responds to his or her Baptismal call and lives out the Eucharist and all the other sacraments, the Church is built up. Our personal sanctification is increased. Our family life is deepened. Our parishes become more hospitable and vibrant. We become Disciples in Mission as an Evangelizing Church.

This spiritual vibrancy has been the constant aim of the Church. The Church's divine elements, essential to our salvation, are nevertheless channeled to us through the Church's human elements which are likewise important to our salvation. As we cooperate with God in the renewal of our spiritual lives we are in need of renewing those visible Church structures through which the response to our Baptismal calling is expressed.

Beyond the family, the most common Church experience for Catholics is the parish. In the Archdiocese of Anchorage we are embarking on a ten year Pastoral Plan of Evangelization. The Pastoral Council, a consultative body which discerns the gifts and needs of the community, advises and assists the pastoral team. Through the Pastoral Council, the parish engages in creation of a Mission Statement and development of a Pastoral Plan for Evangelization.

Pastoral Planning

Pastoral Planning is a prayerful and participative process through which a parish characterizes itself as a particular community of faith by developing its own Parish Mission Statement; assessing its strengths/resources, limitations/needs; making recommendations to the pastor concerning establishment of priorities and goals and devising ways to accomplish its mission. Parish Pastoral Planning helps to answer the questions: Who are we as a parish? What is our theology? What is the Spirit calling us to do? How are we best going to do it?

All of us are called to participate fully in the life and mission of the Church. From its earliest days the Church has responded to this mission in various ways depending upon the times and circumstances. **The mission of the Church, and therefore our Archdiocese, is to bring people to Christ. In this way we build up a community of faith that fosters the holiness of its members and the coming of the Kingdom. Each strives to that goal which was outlined by Saint Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."**

The Archdiocesan Mission Statement provides the focus for our ongoing parish renewal efforts. The Pastoral Council is to assist as Disciples in Mission so that it challenges the community to commit to be an Evangelizing Church; taking seriously Christ's command to "Go and Make Disciples!" Our goals for Evangelization are to **Grow in Faith, Share Our Faith, and Make the World a Better Place.** "This is how all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

A simple way to remember what is asked by the three goals is to understand them as: **Believe, Share, and Transform.** Additionally Archbishop Schwietz has said that Liturgy is how we begin the process of Evangelization. Liturgy begins with welcome and hospitality. The Archdiocesan Mission Statement is also intended to provide a basis for reflection by the parishes as they seek to respond more fully to what Jesus is asking of them in contemporary circumstances. It gives parishes a framework for examining how they are living out the mission of Christ.

Within each parish, the Pastoral Council is a structure which can foster the full participation of the entire parish in the life and mission of the Church. One of the chief ways that a Pastoral Council functions is by pastoral planning. The members of the Parish Pastoral Council need to be rooted in prayer, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, committed to patient listening and study, and working to recommend to the pastor/parish director the plans and directions which will enhance the quality of parish life and promote parish vitality. The pastor/parish director consults with the Pastoral Council through a consensus process in an atmosphere of prayerful reflection.

Pastoral discernment leading to Pastoral Planning is essential to the growth of a parish. It encourages the fullest collaboration of all God's people. Pastoral planning enables a parish to become ever more fully a portion of the people of God, sharing in the mission of Christ, and developing the structures necessary for supporting its community life and carrying out its mission. Pastoral planning increases clarity about the mission and priorities of the parish, affects the way in which the resources of the parish are used, and encourages the participative support of the parish members.

Pastoral planning is an ongoing activity within each parish. Once the pastor/parish director has considered the Council's recommendations and adopted a parish plan, the pastor/parish director is responsible for leading the parish in the implementing of the plan and revising it as circumstances require. The pastor/parish director does this through the parish pastoral staff, parish organizations and/or other persons designated by the pastor/parish director.

What?

Mission

The Pastoral Council provides pastoral planning for the faith community it serves. Through extensive prayer, listening, discernment, and learning the council assists the pastor/parish director in identifying and assessing the gifts and needs of the faith community; to clarify the parish's mission; and to develop and initiate pastoral plans to serve this mission for the Kingdom of God.

Purpose

It is envisioned that the Pastoral Council is to be a major consultative body in the parish which advises the pastor/parish director who convenes the Council which reflects the mission of Christ who was sent "...to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners..." (Luke 4:18). The purpose of the Pastoral Council is to foster full participation of the entire parish in the life and mission of the parish and of the Universal Church. The parish faith community participates in this mission by:

- Worshipping God;
- Creating and nurturing Christian Community;
- Growing in Faith and Holiness;
- Serving those in need, especially the poor and marginalized.

Mission Statement

A Parish Mission Statement is a concise expression of a parish's purpose for existence. It helps the parish identify itself as a community of faith and set broad goals. It responds to the questions: Who are we as a parish? What do we value? What is our theology? What do we seek to become as a parish community? The Parish Mission Statement is rooted in the mission of the universal church and the Archdiocesan Mission Statement and Plan for Evangelization.

As an initial element of pastoral planning, the Parish Mission Statement is to be inspirational, motivational and give overall direction for parish life activities. It explains the reasons why a parish exists with words that are simple, clear, and meaningful to the people of the parish. It is meant to be understood and used by the parish community as it strives to be faithful to the mission entrusted by Christ: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all of creation". (Mark 16:15)

Developing a Parish Mission Statement and periodically reviewing and revising it is a function of a Pastoral Council. Since this is the Parish Mission Statement and because all parishioners are called to participate in the mission of the Church, the parish should be involved in the development of the Mission Statement.

When the Parish Mission Statement is promulgated, the Council continues the pastoral planning process by assessing the parish's strengths and needs and by setting broad goals and priorities which are rooted in the Mission Statement.

Rationale

Through the Sacraments of Initiation all are called to exercise both their right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and mission of the Church. This mission of the Church is rooted in the mission of Christ who commanded everyone - clergy, religious and laity - to "Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all of creation" (Mark 16:15).

This vocation of all the People of God, the community of believers in Jesus Christ, to promote the Reign of God on earth permeates the teachings and spirit of the documents of Vatican Council II. All members of the Church - laity, religious and clergy- according to their proper charisms and roles collaborate in the responsibility for fulfilling its mission. Vatican Council II urged active involvement in the life of the Church by emphasizing the principles of collaborative responsibility, consultation and lay participation. *...the laity have an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness.* DECREE ON THE LAITY, #10.

The pastor/parish director needs to consult with the faith community, which in turn has the right to express its views and concerns. An important structure initiated to foster this collaboration in the mission of the Church by all its members is the Pastoral Council. The Pastoral Council assists as Disciples in Mission in achieving the cooperation of the parishioners and pastoral staff in the task of carrying out the mission of the Church on the parish level. *Pastors also know that they themselves were not meant by Christ to shoulder alone the entire saving mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary, they understand that it is their noble duty so to shepherd the faithful and recognize their service and charismatic gifts that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one heart.* CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH, #30.

While the Pastoral Council is not explicitly mentioned in the documents of Vatican Council II, the theological principles which underlie it are clearly enunciated and a rationale for its development is given. *... by reason of the knowledge, competence or pre-eminence which they have, the laity are empowered, indeed sometimes obliged, to manifest their opinion in those things which pertain to the good of the Church. If the occasion should arise, this should be done through the institutions established by the Church for that purpose and always with truth, courage and prudence and with reverence and charity towards those who by reason of their office, represent the person of Christ.* CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH, #37.

The 1983 *Code of Canon Law* gives juridical value to the Second Vatican Council's teaching on the vocation and mission of the People of God and provides structures to express and encourage collaborative responsibility on every level of ecclesial administration. *In virtue of their rebirth in Christ there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality with regard to dignity and the activity whereby all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ in accord with each one's own condition and function* CODE OF CANON LAW, 208.

Canon 519 calls for the pastor/parish director to develop structures which incorporate the principles of collaborative responsibility and of consultation with the staff and parishioners: *The pastor is the proper shepherd of the parish entrusted to him, exercising pastoral care in the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ he has been called to share; in accord with the norm of law he carries out for his community the duties of teaching, sanctifying and governing, with the cooperation of other presbyters or deacons and the assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful* CODE OF CANON LAW, 519. This Canon emphasizes the role of collaborative ministry in promoting the mission of the Church.

Why?

Foundational Principles

The Archbishop has mandated that within the Archdiocese of Anchorage every parish is to have a Pastoral Council to foster full participation of the entire parish - clergy, religious, laity - in the pastoral life and mission of the parish and of the Universal Church. The following principles guide the formation of Parish Pastoral Councils:

1. **Baptismal Call** – Through baptism, every Christian is called by God to share his/her gifts to further the mission Jesus Christ. The four essential calls are to *Holiness, Community, Mission/Ministry and Christian Maturity*.
2. **The Mission of Jesus Christ for the Church** – The mission of Jesus Christ for the Church consists in 1) the Proclamation and active Witness of the Good News of Jesus Christ through acts of mercy and justice; 2) the Experience and Celebration of the mystery of Christ's presence in Christian community through Word and Sacrament; and 3) the Conversion/Transformation of individual hearts and the world.
3. **The Mission of a Pastoral Council** – In consultation with the pastor/parish director, the Pastoral Council discerns, plans, animates and guides the active response of the local faith community to the mission of Jesus Christ.
4. **Collaborative Ministry** – Collaborative ministry, as facilitated by a Pastoral Council, involves identifying, calling forth, utilizing and unifying the gifts of all baptized Christians to fulfill the authentic pastoral needs within the faith community and beyond.
5. **Centrality of the Pastor/Parish Director** – The pastor/parish director is central and essential to “shepherding” the activity of a pastoral council. Pastoral governance is primarily the Servant Leader's responsibility. The Pastoral Council exists to advise the pastor/parish director on the needs of the faith community, clarifying its mission and pastoral plans to serve those needs. The pastor/parish director leads the council in prayer, builds a climate of trust and shares with the council important and particular problems and needs of the faith community.
6. **Consultative Bodies** – Pastoral Councils are consultative to the pastor/parish director. Consultative bodies allow for the Church, both clergy and laity, to listen to the Spirit who is leading the Church and speaking to her through the gifts and experience of all parishioners.
7. **Subsidiary** – The pastor/parish director and Pastoral Council honor and respect the legitimate spheres of competency and responsibility among the various levels of the faith community. The subsidiary body always exists to protect and enhance the common good of the whole body.

Function

The primary function of the Pastoral Council is to advise the pastor/parish director in those pastoral matters presented to it by the pastor/parish director; to bring to the Pastoral Team what has been prayerfully discerned as to pastoral needs; and to continually discern gifts and talents so that new leadership may be encouraged. It carries out its function by:

- a. Informing the pastor/parish director of needs and gifts of the parish and its members;
- b. Developing a parish mission statement and periodically re-evaluating and revising it;
- c. Developing a parish pastoral plan for evangelization and in ongoing pastoral planning;
- d. Recommending policies, procedures and programs to further implementation of the mission;
- e. Reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs;
- f. Reflecting on Archdiocesan priorities, recommending how they can be implemented locally.

Guiding Principles for Effective Pastoral Councils

1. **Reflection** – Every Pastoral Council must engage in ongoing faith formation.
 - a. **Quality Prayer** – All Pastoral Council activity and community life is rooted in a prayerful relationship and response to God. Communal prayer is celebrated thoughtfully and intentionally, reflecting the life and experience of those present and the community at large. Council members spend quality time reflecting on their own faith lives and spiritual development. Individual members trust in the support of the community/group. Generally, this prayer should be Lectionary based. *Disciples in Mission* is an excellent resource.
 - b. **Learning** – Some time is given to learn more about what our faith teaches and how it calls the community to respond to the mission of Christ in daily life. The Council reflects upon the theological, moral and liturgical wisdom of the Church, especially the Church's social teachings. This may involve the study of Sacred Scripture; church documents from the Holy See, the Archdiocese; the Catechism; and writings that give insight into ministry or society.
2. **Planning** – The Pastoral Council develops an Evangelizing Christian community through:
 - a. **Prayerfully Discerning** God's desire in all aspects of pastoral planning;
 - b. **Listening** to people of the faith community;
 - c. **Identifying and Assessing** the genuine gifts and pastoral needs of people, especially the alienated, marginalized and poor, in their local, regional and world communities;
 - d. **Articulating a Shared Mission** for the faith community in reference to those pastoral needs, wisdom of the Church and the mission of Jesus Christ.
3. **Animating/Acting** – Pastoral Councils call forth and animate those ministries, services and programs that are necessary to realize the mission of the faith community. This is done through **Identifying, Calling Forth and Coordinating the Gifts** of people in service to that mission. The basic and ongoing activity of the Pastoral Council is to empower others in the faith community. Council members are not to assume the duties and tasks that are the responsibility of the entire parish community, but rather they seek to enable each member of the faith community to accept personal responsibility for the shared mission of the community.
4. **Assessment and Planning** – The Pastoral Council assesses the ministry of the parish in light of the parish mission statement and goals through an annual review. The pastor/parish director and the Pastoral Council ensure the continuation of all pastoral ministry by continually discerning, developing, renewing and empowering the mission and ministry of the baptized.
5. **Decision Making** - At all times the guidelines, authority, and function of the Pastoral Council are subject to the teachings of Sacred Scripture, the Canon Law of the Church, solemn pronouncements of the Holy Father, the decrees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Archbishop of Anchorage. In light of this, the actions of the Pastoral Council will have significant effect only when there is some form of ratification by the pastor/parish director. Ordinarily this ratification occurs in the normal course of discernment and decision-making within the council. When, in the pastor's/parish director's judgment, the council is departing from the norms of Church law, the teachings of the Church, or a known policy of the Archdiocese, it is his/her obligation to clarify points of law and policy for the council. The pastor/parish director ultimately has the right and obligation to grant or withhold approval of council decisions. This authoritative pastoral office seeks to preserve unity within legitimate diversity. The pastor/parish director is sent by the bishop to oversee, in his name, the life of that unique community of faith and bind it by word and sacrament into the communion of faith that is the local church gathered around the Archbishop, into communion with the universal church and its Supreme Pastor, the Bishop of Rome.

Who & When?

We must learn the great lesson of forgiveness: we must not let the gnawings of resentment work in our soul, but must open our hearts to the magnanimity of listening to others, open our hearts to understanding them, eventually to accepting their apologies, to generously offering our own
Pope Benedict XVI, May 2005.

Membership

The membership of a Pastoral Council includes a wide variety of people. They reflect a cross-section of people from the faith community, without being representatives of specific groups, causes or agendas. The member's objective is to always strive for the common good of the people they serve to seek the best interest of the entire community of faith.

With the perspective of Evangelization, the Pastoral Council should be particularly attentive to calling forth new members who may be uninvolved, isolated or marginalized within the faith community, such as; youth, elderly, ethnic minorities, single-adults, divorced and the poor.

Depending upon the specific needs and gifts of the faith community and the direction of the pastor/parish director, the Pastoral Council is best served if there is concurrent membership. The recommended length of membership is at least three (3) years and not more than (4) years. A process for the transition of membership should be in place to ensure continuity. One or two members could mentor the new council as consultative, non-voting members for one year.

After an entire council has served their tenure, new membership may be called together at any time. Of most importance, membership of the Pastoral Council should be selected or appointed on the basis of a **discernment of gifts** that are necessary for pastoral council members to possess. The pastor/parish director and the parish leadership facilitate the discernment and selection of potential members. Members are designated in a manner determined by the pastor/parish director.

Everyone is uniquely called and gifted by God. While no one has all the gifts, all the gifts necessary for ministry and service exist within the faith community. The gifts of potential council members for pastoral leadership might encompass some of the following:

- Faithfulness** to actively deepening their personal relationship with Jesus Christ shared in community, courage, integrity, self-giving, generosity, compassion, hope, and joy;
- Skills** for effective communication and listening, creative discernment and articulation of a vision, working collaboratively with others, and supporting and challenging others to answer their baptismal call;
- Values** of ministry, generosity of self, compassion, justice, reflection/prayer, self-knowledge, self-evaluation, humility, integrity, simplicity, peacefulness, and balance.

Meetings

Pastoral Council meetings are convened by the pastor/parish director at least six times a year, preferably monthly if possible. Extraordinary meetings can be held either upon request of the pastor/parish director or Coordinating Committee. All meetings require a quorum of members consisting of the simple majority. Council meetings should be scheduled a year in advance. A yearly Day of Reflection for the Pastoral Council is encouraged to be held in cooperation with the Office of Evangelization.

Relationships

Consensus

Coordinating Committee

The Pastoral Council, through a process of discernment, chooses a Coordinating Committee which is composed of the pastor/parish director, the chair, the vice-chair and the secretary. It is responsible for formulating the Council's agenda and dealing with Council matters between meetings. The Pastoral Council, through a process of discernment, selects the chair. The vice-chair and the secretary, members of the Council with a working knowledge and basic understanding of the Council process, are chosen by the Council; and serve a one year term. They may consult with the Office of the Archbishop in the name of the community in extra-ordinary situations. The Pastoral Council is encouraged to use a consensus model, if after discernment there is no clear path of action.

Chair Responsibilities

1. Collaborates with the pastor/parish director to call meetings;
2. Presides at Pastoral Council meetings;
3. Coordinates the preparation of Agendas for meetings and facilitates any council gatherings;
4. Responsible for coordinating the Parish Pastoral Council yearly reflection day in cooperation with the Office of Evangelization.

Vice Chair Responsibilities

1. Presides at meetings in the Chair's absence;
2. Assists the pastor/parish director in conducting the Council's work;
3. Serves on the Coordinating Committee which formulates the Council's agenda.

Secretary Responsibilities

1. Records the minutes of the Pastoral Council meetings and makes them available;
2. Handles all Council correspondence, maintains attendance and other records;
3. Serves on the Coordinating Committee which formulates the Council's agenda.

I seek active and wise collaboration, prayer and counsel, so that I can truly be *Servus servorum Dei*. As Peter and the other apostles constituted, by the will of the Lord, a unique Apostolic College, in the same way the Successor of Peter and the bishops, successors of the apostles, must be very closely united among themselves, as the Council confirmed forcefully (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, # 22). This collegial communion, though in the diversity of roles and functions of the Roman Pontiff and of the bishops, is at the service of the Church and of unity in the faith, from which depends in notable measure the efficacy of the evangelizing action in the contemporary world
Pope Benedict XVI, Message to the Cardinals, April 2005.

Relationship with Parish Finance Council

The Parish Finance Council, mandated by Canon Law and regulated by norms established by the Archdiocese, is separate and distinct from the Pastoral Council. Communication between the two Councils is, however, essential. In order to ensure the communication, a member of the Parish Finance Council may serve on the Pastoral Council as an ex officio member.

The Finance Council shares with the Pastoral Council information regarding the parish finances and temporalities on a regular basis; assists the pastor/parish director in implementing the pastoral plans suggested by the Pastoral Council by making fiscally responsible recommendations. The Finance Council shall offer its technical skills in fiscal matters and seeks to provide stewardship for the pastoral plan or mission articulated by the pastor/parish director and the Pastoral Council.

Relationship with Parish Stewardship Committee

The Parish Stewardship Committee, regulated by norms established by the Archdiocese, is separate and distinct from the Pastoral Council. Communication between the two groups is, however, essential. In order to ensure the communication, a member of the Parish Stewardship Committee may serve on the Pastoral Council as an ex officio member.

The Stewardship Committee shares with the Pastoral Council information regarding the gifts and needs of the parish community on a regular basis; assists the pastor/parish director in implementing the pastoral plans suggested by the Pastoral Council by making visible community building events and catechesis as to our baptismal call to be stewards as Disciples in Mission. The Stewardship Committee seeks to assist the staff in making real the pastoral plan or mission articulated by the pastor/parish director and the Pastoral Council.

Relationship with Parish Committees

The Pastoral Council cooperates with parish committees and organizations such as worship, spirituality, evangelization, stewardship, education, social concerns, finances, etc. These are not Pastoral Council committees.

Staff members and parish committees are a resource to the Pastoral Council. Parish committees through the pastor/parish director and the staff are linked to the Pastoral Council. To encourage unity and integration and to foster a close working relationship among all parish groups, the Pastoral Council meets with the leaders of all the parish committees and organizations at least once a year.

All recognized groups within the faith community are accountable to the pastor/parish director and the Pastoral Council for living out the mission of the faith community within the context of their particular activities.

Relationship with Office of Evangelization

The Pastoral Council maintains regular contact with the Archdiocesan Office of Evangelization for materials and information on continuing educational opportunities and days of discernment. The office serves as a resource in council formation and discernment. The Pastoral Council will provide the Office of Evangelization their Parish Plan for Evangelization as well as the names of the members of their Pastoral Council on a yearly basis. The Office of Evangelization will assist in preparing the Parish Pastoral Council's yearly Day of Reflection.

The consequence is clear: we cannot communicate with the Lord if we do not communicate with one another. If we want to present ourselves to him, we must also take a step towards meeting one another *Pope Benedict XVI, May 2005.*

Servant Leadership

Role of the Pastor / Parish Director

It is the role of the pastor/parish director is exercised in the context of service in Servant Leadership, to convene the Pastoral Council. Servant leadership empowers the members of the faith community to participate more fully in the life and mission of the Jesus Christ in the world and challenges the people of God to serve in leadership ministry roles. The pastor/parish director communicates vision and wisdom to the group not merely by excitement and enthusiasm, but by leadership. The Servant leader actively consults with the council by defining problems, exploring solutions, and facilitates discernment. The pastor/parish director focuses the tasks at hand and frees the gifts of the Council, thus guiding development of the vision of the faith community. Servant leadership seeks the practical wisdom of the Pastoral Council to discover the most genuine and urgent needs.

It is not a question of honors, but of service to be carried out with simplicity and availability, imitating our teacher and Lord, who did not come to be served but to serve (cf. Matthew 20:28), and who in the Last Supper washed the feet of the apostles, asking them to do the same (cf. John 13:13-14) *Pope Benedict XVI, May 2005.*

The pastor/parish director insures that:

1. The scope of the Council's concerns reflects the entire mission of the parish and of the Universal Church;
2. An atmosphere of trust and unity is created and maintained among the members of the Council and staff as a witness in strengthening and nurturing the faith community;
3. The Council agenda is established in consultation and collaboration;
4. Members share information, listen actively, reflect to integrate the mission, contribute to the discussion and promote consensus;
5. The Council is invited to take ownership and responsibility of the pastoral ministry of the faith community;
6. The door to mission is open.

In the event that the pastor/parish director of a parish dies, resigns or is transferred, the Pastoral Council ceases to exist. It is the prerogative of a newly appointed pastor/parish director to either confirm the present membership of the former Pastoral Council or choose to appoint new members. The pastor's / parish director's final decision in this matter should occur within three to six months of his installation as Pastor.

Future

Purpose of Cluster Pastoral Planning

Parishes of a particular Cluster will also be called to gather together in a process of Cluster Pastoral Planning. Through this process, parishes are challenged to reflect and pray, and to be open to ideas and ways they could work together to renew the lived expression of the Church in the parishes of that Cluster. The possibilities for dialogue and mutual cooperation are endless as we accept the challenge, aware that the Spirit of God is with us.

The purpose of the Cluster Pastoral Planning is to reflect prayerfully on and evaluate the vitality of the Church in the reality of a cluster of parishes. The product of the Cluster Pastoral Planning is the recommendation to the Regional Vicar, for presentation to the Archbishop, of a five-year pastoral plan for the parishes in the cluster. The plan would include organizing and coordinating ministerial activities within the cluster for a more effective expression of Church in the parishes of that cluster. It would be developed within the spirit of the Archdiocesan Renewal and according to the goals of the Archdiocesan Ten Year Plan to become an Evangelizing Archdiocese.

Cluster Pastoral Planning is an integral part of the ongoing renewal of parishes, since it enables a group of parishes to find the ways and means to be better Church communities in our Archdiocese within the present realities and in the most authentic and effective manner possible. Cluster Pastoral Planning allows parishes to learn from the pastoral plans of neighboring parishes, to blend with and support one another's plans and, when advisable, to combine these efforts with other parishes in certain common activities.

Through Cluster Pastoral Planning, a Regional Vicar gathers representatives from a group of parishes to reflect prayerfully and to dialogue about the vitality of the Church in that area. The Regional Vicar leads the group in a collaborative process to evaluate whether the parishes, programs, buildings and organizational structures in a given cluster are of the necessary number, type and variety in light of the Pastoral Plans of that cluster. In the spirit of ongoing conversion, some change can always be anticipated in Cluster Pastoral Planning. In some instances, given the realities in a particular cluster, a parish may need to be founded there, or altered or even closed. The same could be said of schools, programs and other parish organizations as the situation warrants.

Within each parish, the Pastoral Council is the key structure which facilitates the ongoing renewal of parishes by fostering the full participation of the entire parish (clergy, religious and laity) in the devising of a plan for the pastoral mission of the parish. Members of the Pastoral Council participate in ongoing Pastoral Planning on a parish level and some members participate as well in Pastoral Planning on the cluster level. The adoption of a Parish Mission Statement and the formulation of a Pastoral Plan for Evangelization are fundamental prerequisites for successful Cluster Pastoral Planning.

The Holy Spirit calls the Church to an ongoing renewal in greater fidelity to her vocation (cf. CCC #821). Parish Self-Study, then, will be repeated periodically to allow for further reflection on and adjustment of the Parish Pastoral Plan. Results and insights from the Parish Self-Study are then brought to the pastoral planning activity on the Cluster level.

How?

Preparing an Agenda

- Involve more than one person in planning the agenda: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Mt 18:20).
- Before a planning meeting, pray for its work and prayerfully reflect on possible agenda items.
- Take time in silence and prayer upon convening an agenda-setting meeting.
- Sort out matters to handle routinely or outside the meeting.
- Make sure that the meeting you are planning, as well as the agenda-setting meeting, takes place in the context of prayer.
- Determine which item or group of items is most important for discussion.
- Plan the agenda so the group can:
 - have a clearly stated goal for the meeting outcome
 - take time to center in Christ
 - share reflections
 - look for signs of the Spirit: peace, joy, energy, persistence, convergence
 - identify consensus
 - make plans to act
- Make time for faith formation of your group.
- Identify issues to act on at a later time.

Discerning

1. Formulate the question(s) and commit to do what the Spirit is asking.
What are the two most important needs of our faith community?
What gifts do we have available to us in the parish?
2. Gather information and ideas.
3. Explore the practical considerations and the data.
4. Become still in God’s presence.
5. Begin in silence. Return when necessary!
6. Use evocative questions, draw upon Scripture.
“Find the distinction between supporting a person and supporting their ministry”
7. Look for signs of the Holy Spirit.
8. Be Patient! Wait for consensus.
9. Make plans for action! Pastor ratifies the decision.

*From “Grounded in God: Listening Hearts Discernment for Group Deliberations” by Farnham, Hull, McLean.
“Discerning God’s Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church” by Morris and Olsen, Upper Room Books.*

Sample Agenda

Goal: Get to know the community and define who we are by whom is represented here tonight through the Parish Mission statement which is in three parts. There will be two other meetings each addressing a section of the statement, and one final meeting to complete the task of assembling the work to report back to the Pastoral Council.

Date: Tuesday – February 15 at 6pm Social; 6:25-8:30pm Meeting

AGENDA FOR PARISH MISSION IMAGE – PART I

- 6:00pm Social with an informal supper
Rational: Group wanted to meet immediately after work and some needed a light snack. This provides for table hospitality in order to help group building.
- 6:25pm Welcome and Introductions of Guests by Facilitator
Each Member self Introduction, stating Ministry, Length of Time in Parish, and Why they chose Saint Elsewhere as their community.
Rational: To build community and trust through self-revelation
- 6:30pm Prayer with Scripture reading and Shared Reflection
Rational: To begin to build a faith community and trust
- 7:00pm Remarks by Pastoral Council Chair
Rational: To clearly state the mission of this group and why they were chosen by the Pastoral Council. Chair leaves the meeting when the Pastor leaves.
- 7:05pm Remarks by Pastor
Rational: To clearly state the important of this committee's work thus integrating this committee's mission into the ministry of the whole parish. He then leaves the meeting.
- 7:10pm Experience of the Parish Mission Statement
Understanding and Re-stating the Parish Mission in each person's terms.
What it means to each member. To listen to the shared experience
Rational: To build community, trust, and expand each person's view of the parish. To begin to integrate each others points of view and experience. Stage 1– Information sharing
- 7:30pm Break
Rational: To build safety, trust, and comfort in the group; reinforces the parish community's mission of hospitality.
- 7:45pm Brainstorming Mission Statement Experience
Rational: To bring the mission statement to life through the lives of the members in new words or expressions. Stage 2–Clarification and Discussion
- 8:00pm Consensus Summary of Brainstorming
Rational: To clarify and provide a list of phrases for the Pastoral Council
- 8:15pm Evaluation of Meeting
Rational: To provide feedback
- 8:25pm Closing Prayer and remarks
Rational: To reinforce building a faith community
- 8:30pm Reminder of next meeting date and time

RATIONAL

Each of these three meetings will move the group through the Parish Mission Statement, which is in three parts. The final meeting will allow this group to finalize its work for presentation to the council. The group relationship is fostered through shared meal, shared prayer, shared reflection, and feedback at every meeting. The goal for each meeting is clearly stated and adjustment can be made because of the evaluation process.

Collaborative Ministry

Be A Person of Prayer

Pray as if everything depended on you, work as if everything depended on God (Luke 6:12).

Be A Team Player

Work together – He sent them in pairs (Luke 10:1-12; 17-20).

Be A Compassionate Person

Everyone is wounded in some way. “What I do, I do not understand” (Romans 7: 14-25a).

Be Ready to Receive A Gift

Every person is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 1-13).

Be A Servant Leader

Jesus washed the feet of the twelve (John 13: 1-5; 12-15).

Be Direct and Be Courageous

Say “yes” when you mean yes and say “no” when you mean no. Anything less is not of the Spirit (John 13:36-38).

Be A Listener to the Spirit

Not what I want, but what you want (Mark 14: 32-42).

Be Generous, Available, Flexible

Say not, I am too young. To whomever I send you, you shall go: whatever I command you, you shall speak (Jeremiah 1: 4-8).

Be Courteous and Tolerant

In contrast the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another (Titus 3: 1-7; Galatians 5: 13-26).

Be Forgiving

“Lord if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times, but seventy times seven” (Matthew 18: 21-35).

Be Humble

Do not cling to your own opinions and avoid competition. “Let there be no competition among you (Phil: 2-10).

Be Affirming

Complimentary and complementary. “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3: 21-22).

Treat Others the Way You Want to be Treated (Matthew 7:12)

Community Building

Evangelization is the Mission of the Church and therefore the Archdiocese and thus every parish and every Catholic. Evangelization is for everybody.

The thrust of Pastoral Ministry within the parish is to recognize and promote the gifts and needs of the parish in all of its diversity. All are welcomed and all are valued. We minister when we uphold the human dignity of each person and create an environment of Hospitality.

The Pastoral Council begins by:

- Listening
- Dialogue within parish
- Dialogue with Mission partners within the greater civic community
- Table Sharing
- Faith Sharing
- Parish Town Hall Meetings

The Pastoral Council first must work to create a spirit of trust through listening.

The purpose of which is to build community by:

- Getting to know each other
- Inviting and welcoming new members into the parish
- Building and strengthening relationships within the parish
- Empowering others to become involved and engaged in the life of the parish
- Collaborating
- Promoting sense of ownership among members of the parish especially its ministries
- Surfacing values, issues, hopes and dreams (vision)
- Organizing to put faith into action

The Pastoral Council can and should be a community of faith sharing and prayer modeling it as a part of its regular meeting. The Pastoral Council is a community of Disciples, who are:

- Disciples in Prayer
- Disciples in Mission
- Disciples in Action
- Envision: Planning Our Parish Future (*online at: www.pariahplanning.org*)

Parish Mission Statements

Sample A:

Web based information on Parish Mission Statements: www.texasatholic.com/default.asp?NodeId=1766

Sample B:

We, the community of _____, in the Archdiocese of Anchorage, do hereby make a covenant with our God, to fulfill the Kingdom of Jesus in this world by building a community in which His people are served and nourished by the proclamation of His Holy Word and the celebration of Holy Eucharist.

We are resolved to become a community of faith where good works are evident and where all can become brothers and sisters in Christ through social and personal relationships which are a sign of the fullness of God's Kingdom.

We are resolved to build this community so that loving hospitality will be evident, where all members of God's people are invited to accept the opportunity to grow spiritually through programs of religious education, formation, and the common sharing of faith.

We are resolved to show our thankfulness for God's abundance by meeting Christ in our brothers and sisters, satisfying their human needs, both physical and spiritual.

Finally, we are resolved to care for the material goods, buildings, and physical surroundings as gifts of God, provided for us, to be used as holy places to give God praise.

Sample C:

We the people of _____ accept the call of God to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus and living the Reign of God among us.

We answer this call when we prayerfully work together: to grow closer to God; to build the warm, welcoming, and vibrant relationships of a parish family open to everyone; to foster each other's gifts; to provide opportunities for spiritual growth.

We carefully learn from the wisdom of our Roman Catholic Tradition: to prepare ourselves for the various parish ministries; to be just and compassionate in our relationships with others.

We especially reach out and care for: our families; our elderly; our children and youth; the materially poor; those who experience isolation.

Sample D:

We Welcome. . .

People of All Faiths and All Races, Divorced or Separated Persons, Families with Children, Our Gay Brothers and Lesbian Sisters, Homeless Persons, Married Couples, Single Persons, Widows and Widowers, Those in Recovery, Travelers from Far and Near, and Our Visitors.

We Seek. . .

To Live the Gospel of Jesus Christ; To Gather the Community and Tell the Story; and To Break the Bread and Share the Cup.

We Celebrate. . .

Diversity, A Spirit of Hospitality, the Unity that God Wills, Enlightening Those Who Seek God, Forming Small Faith Communities, Reaching Out to Alienated Catholics, Reverencing the Dignity of Each Person, Caring for the Needs of the Marginalized, Evangelizing Christians, Honoring Understanding among All Faiths, Nurturing Our Gifts and Sharing Them, Discerning New Ways to Serve, and Being a Good Neighbor.

Now!

 Parish Notes