

THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

By

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I. Official Church Teaching:

1. *The People of God*: The People of God are the Hierarchy, the Clergy, the Religious and the Laity. "Although they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless *ordered* one to another; each in its own proper way *shares* in the one priesthood of Christ." (*Vat. II: Dog. Const. of the Church*, par. 10).

2. *The Clergy*: The ministry and activity of Priests is intrinsic to and profoundly significant in the life of the Church: "The Council is fully aware that the desired renewal of the whole Church depends in large measure on the ministry of *priests* vitalized by the spirit of Christ." (*Vat. II: Decr. on the Training of Priests, Introd.*) In fact, Priests are "true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, Teacher, Priest and Shepherd." (*Idem*, par. 4).

3. *The Laity*: The apostolate of the Laity is of Divine Origin. Lay people are not merely helpers nor optional auxiliaries in the apostolate: "Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are *assigned* to the Apostolate by the Lord Himself." (*Vat. II: Decr. on the Apost. of the Laity*, par. 3). In effect, laymen and women "have an active role to play in the life and activity of the Church as *shares* in the role of Christ the *Priest*, the *Prophet* and the *King*." (*Idem*, par. 10).

4. *The Clergy and the Laity*: The Clergy and the Laity complement each other. Thus: "Let the lay person not imagine that his pastors are always such experts that to every problem that arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution . . . Rather, enlightened by Christ's wisdom . . . let the laymen take on his *distinctive* role." (*Vat. II: Past. Const. on the Church in the Mod. World*, par. 43). Wherefore: Priests "should *unite* their efforts with those of the lay faithful . . . should have an unfailing respect for the just liberty that belongs to everybody in civil society . . . should be willing to *listen* to lay people, give brotherly consideration to their wishes, and *recognize* their experience and competence in the

different fields of human activity. In this way, together they will be able to recognize the signs of the times." (*Vat. II: Decr. on the Minis, and Life of Priests*, par. 9). Reason: "Lay action within the Church communities is so necessary that without it the apostolate of the pastors will be frequently unable to obtain its full effect." (*Vat. II: Decr. on the Apost. of the Laity*, par. 10).

5. *The Parish*: The Parish is the venue of a united apostolate. "The parish offers an outstanding example of *community apostolate*, for it gathers into a unity all human diversities found therein and inserts them into the universality of the Church. The laity should develop the habit of working in the parish in close union with their priests, of bringing before the ecclesial community their own problems, world problems, and question regarding man's salvation, to examine them together and solve them by deliberating in common. According to their abilities, the laity should cooperate in all the apostolic and missionary enterprises of their ecclesial family" (*Vat. II: Decr. on the Apost. of the Laity*, par. 10).

6. *The Particular Councils*: Particular Councils are in order for the apostolic activity of the Church. "In dioceses, councils should be set up to assist the Church's apostolic work, whether in the field of evangelization and sanctification, or in the fields of charity. — social relations and other spheres — the clergy and the religious working with the laity in whatever way proves satisfactory. These councils will be able to promote the mutual coordination of the various lay associations and undertakings, with the autonomy and particular nature of each duly recognized. Such councils should be also established in *parochial and interparochial... levels*." (*Vat. II: Decr. on the Apost. of the Laity*, par. 26).

7. *The Small Ecclesial Communities*: The Small Ecclesial Communities (*Basic Christian Communities*) form a part of God's People within Parishes. "Having solidarity with her life of the Church, being nourished by her teaching and united with her Pastors, they spring from the need to live the Church's life more intensely, or from the desire and quest for a more human dimension such as larger ecclesial communities can only offer with difficulty... and lend to life in mass and anonymity... to bring together, for the purpose of listening and meditating on the Word, for the sacraments and the bond of the agape, groups of people who are linked by age, culture, civil state or social situation..., to be united in the struggle for justice,

brotherly aid to the poor, human advancement. This is all presupposed within communities constituted by the Church, especially individual Churches and parishes." (*Paul VI, Evangelization in the Modern World*, no. 58).

II. Premises of Parish Apostolate:

Through the Parish Pastoral Council

1. The establishment of Parish Pastoral Council in a parochial community is a *pastoral mandate* based on sound theological reflection, ecclesial necessity, sociological reality and practical truth. A Pastor can be all things for all men only through the principle of *collegiality* and *subsidiarity* with others in his ecclesial community professing the same Faith, communicating in the same sacraments and inspired by the same Gospel teaching.

2. The close collaboration and respectful regard among Priest(s), Religious and laypersons in the parish apostolate are not really standing factors that need no formation nor insusceptible of greater realization among those concerned, but are features of ecclesial action to be *learned* and *promoted* through the observance of basic ethical norms and the practice of christian virtues.

3. The renewal of the *Church* ultimately means the revitalization of the evangelical life and apostolic activity of the *Parish*, whose organizational structure such as its Parish Council of previous long standing should also undergo renewal for a more efficient and effective apostolate pursuant to the needs of the *times*.

4. The participation of the Clergy, the Religious and the Laity in the *priestly, prophetic* and *kingly* role of Christ cannot but find *due expression* in the parish apostolate through the Parish Pastoral Council, the members of which are consequently and necessarily Priest(s), Religious if any, and lay persons active in the Ministry of *Formation, the Ministry of Liturgy, and the Ministry of Service*.

5. The Parish Pastoral Council may not be an *exclusively* lay composite entity because it must reflect the concerns of the whole parochial community which is the Clergy, the Religious and the Laity, because the ministry of the *pastor* must remain the leading, uniting, inspiring and central figure in the

Parish no matter how well organized and competent the Council has become, and because sharing pastoral authority in *no* way means abdicating responsibility and accountability.

6. The concrete circumstances of time and place, the existence of particular customs and traditions, the changing and emerging peculiar situation provide *relative latitude* to Pastors and their parishioners in specifically fashioning their Parish Pastoral Councils to meet their definite and defined pastoral needs, without prejudice however to the universality of the Gospel Truths, the catholicity of the Church and the force of common law and diocesan statutes.

7. In the establishment and presence of Small Ecclesial Communities, the Parish through its Pastoral Council carries out an *integral* ecclesial function as it accompanies individuals and families throughout their lives by fostering their faith and directing their morals, assumes the center role of coordinating and guiding organizations, movements and Small Ecclesial Communities, helps these Communities through its threefold Ministry in a series of services beyond their reach or above their initial capability.

III. Goal, Purposes and Functions of a Parish Pastoral Council:

Goal:

The *goal* of a Parish Pastoral Council cannot but be substantially identical with the very *goal* of the Parish itself which is a portion of God's People in a given place whereto a Parish Priest is assigned for their pastoral care.

The goal of a Parish Pastoral Council is *community* (brotherhood and belonging), *communion* (sharing and dividing) and *participation* (responding and collaborating) in the Parish through formation, liturgy and service in favor of individuals, families, Small Ecclesial Communities and the faithful as a whole, in union with the local, particular and universal Church.

Purposes:

The *purposes* of a Parish Pastoral Council should be in accordance with its substantial finality as an instrument of the apostolic work of the Church in the pursuit of its *goal*:

1. To promote the apostolate of the Parish in its evangelizing, sanctifying, serving and governing endeavors.
2. To serve as a forum for dialogue, deliberation and consultation among the representative People of God in matters affecting the life and activity of the Church.
3. To provide collaboration, leadership, direction, guidance, inspiration and unity in the ecclesial apostolate.
4. To coordinate and integrate apostolic movements, organizations and service entities in the Parish in order to maximize their potentials and to avoid duplication of labors.
5. To know the needs of God's People, design pursuant programs and implement consequent action plans in view of satisfying these felt needs.
6. To attend in particular to the plight of the poor, the dying, the sick, the age, the orphans, the oppressed, the prisoners, the children and the youth.
7. To collaborate with civic, government and non-catholic agencies in areas of common concern and interest.

F u n c t i o n s :

The *functions* of a Parish Pastoral Council must in essence meet the requirements for the realization of its *finalities*:

1. The organization of the Parish Pastoral Council particularly as to its officers, members, authority, term of office, meetings, and other related matters, always subject to the continuous apostolic formation and the on-going christian renewal — which are fundamental agenda — of the Council people as a whole.
2. The establishment of the Ministry of Formation, the Ministry of Liturgy, the Ministry of Service, and the formation of standing and ad hoc Committees, responsive to the goal and purposes of the Parish Pastoral Council.
3. The provision of adequate facilities and resources for the efficient apostolic activity of the Parish Pastoral Council as a whole, the effective implementation of pastoral program and the realization of given particular options.

IV. Parish Pastoral Council Constitutional Guidelines:

The Parish Pastoral Council should be constituted, structured and organized pursuant to its *nature* as an instrument in the apostolic work of the Church, and in accordance with its *basic goal, substantial purposes and functions*.

The Parish Pastoral Council as a coordinating and unifying apostolic instrument of the Church in a given Parish may in fact and in truth *differ* from other Parish Pastoral Councils in its particular operational dimensions on account of incidental situational factors. This however notwithstanding, all Parish Pastoral Councils have the *same* basic substantial apostolic concern based on dated ecclesial findings and pastoral cares, viz., the Ministries of Formation, Liturgy and Service in favor of the individual, the family, the Small Ecclesial Community and the Parish as a whole which is a portion of the Local Particular and Universal Church.

The Parish Pastoral Council of a concrete Parish, whose primary goal is community, communion and participation in that given portion of God's People, must itself *equally* promote community, communion and participation in relation to other Parish Pastoral Councils and other Parishes, and in relation to the Local, Particular and Universal Church: In the same way that *no* true Small Ecclesial Community as such may dissociate itself from its Parochial Ecclesial Community, *no* Parish Pastoral Council, *no* Parish as such, may really isolate itself from other Parish Pastoral Councils and other Parishes, from the Local, Particular and Universal Church.

1. Membership:

Membership in the Parish Pastoral Council is a position of honor but not an honorary position. As an apostolic body, its members should be particularly *gifted* with a strong faith, an exemplary christian life in the community, the attributes of leadership and executive talents together with the availability to serve, the willingness to grow and the humility to listen and to learn. *Experience* seems to indicate that to fall very short of these attributes opted in the members of the Parish Pastoral Council is to undermine the very essence and rationale of this apostolic entity.

Membership in the Parish Pastoral Council as to *incorporation* therein, be these members of the Clergy, the Religious or the Laity, may be *ex-officio*, through appointment by the Pastor, by *nomination* of those concerned and subsequent free confirmation by the Pastor or the pertinent Chairpersons, and through *election* by the constituents, all according to the talents and disposition of the chosen Council Members, as required of

a given apostolic concern. *Experience* seems to indicate that it is not pastorally wholesome to have but by appointment membership in the Parish Pastoral Council.

Membership in the Parish Pastoral Council as to *functional organization* may be Principal or Auxiliary: *Principal* for the Pastor as the ex-officio Council Apostolate Director, the President and his Vice, the Secretary and the Treasurer, the Chairpersons of the Ministries of Formation, Liturgy and Service, and of the various Committees, and the Ecclesial Relations Officer. *Auxiliary* for the members of the Ministries and Committees, for Resource Persons and others. *Experience* seems to indicate that for a truly representative, manageable and operative Parish Pastoral Council pursuant to the apostolic demands of the times, the Principal Members thereof as a rule should not be less than eleven and not more than thirty one.

2. Authority:

The *authority* of the Parish Pastoral Council is manifestly *confined* to Parish Affairs and clearly subject to Vicariate Norms, *Common Law* and Archdiocesan Statutes. The Parish Pastoral Council must always operate *within* the framework of the laws, policies and practices enacted and observed by higher ecclesiastical authority. It is incumbent upon the Pastor as the ex-officio Council Apostolate Director to know, to affirm and to define those areas of administrative action that are *beyond* the competence of the Parish Pastoral Council.

The authority of the Parish Pastoral Council in the question of policy and decision making may be purely *consultative*, *truly deliberative*, or *partly consultative* and *partly deliberative*. It is simply consultative when the members thereof render their advice to the Pastor on questions and issues brought to their attention. In this case, the Pastor is bound to listen to the recommendation although he is still free to decide otherwise for serious overriding factors. It is properly deliberative when the members thereof make a decision or adopt a policy that in effect binds the Pastor and all those concerned. It is in part consultative and in part deliberative depending on whether the Pastor expressly asks the advice or requires the decision of the members on concrete matters hereto submitted for discussion.

3. Term of Office:

The *Term of Office* of the Principal and Auxiliary Members of the Parish Pastoral Council is something that should be *expressedly* provided for, and not left indefinite and undefined. The same is true with reference to *Removal from Office* which admittedly is a delicate matter — save in the case of resignation, supervening incapacity, transfer of pastoral residence and the like — particularly when the cause enters the realm of Faith and Morals.

The Term of Office of the ex-officio Apostolate Director is manifestly dependent on his tenure of office in the Parish concerned as Pastor thereof which is in the competence of superior ecclesiastical authority. In determining the Term of Office of the other Principal and the Auxiliary Members, while it is possible to provide the same tenure for all so that everybody begins and ends the office at the same time, it appears more practical to adopt a *staggard system* of tenure in order to promote the continuity of the apostolic spirit and activity of the Council. In effect, different Terms of Office could be given to Principal and Auxiliary Members or to Ex-Officio, Appointed, Nominated and Elected Members — subject to provisions on re-appointment, renomination and re-election — in such a way that only but one-third of the total number of Council Members is possibly changed every year. In the event that the Principal Members all have ex-officio Council Membership by reason of their Presidency or the like in the different Parish Religious Organizations, needless to say, their Tenure of Office in the Council altogether depends on their very Tenure of Office in the Organization they represent in the Council.

4. Ministries:

The Ministry of *Formation*, Ministry of *Liturgy* and Ministry of *Service* are dated ecclesial language and pursuant apostolic endeavors based on scriptural passages on the role of Christ as *Teacher*, *Priest*, and *Shepherd*. Although this threefold role was assumed by *one* and the *same* Christ, they are nevertheless distinct in nature and consequently thus identified in their practical consideration and concordant particular action in the apostolate of the Church. It must be very well noted however that these three Ministries should function hand in hand or an *integral* apostolic labor. To altogether separate or isolate any of the

Ministry from the other two Ministries in the exercise of the apostolate is not only to *divide Christ* but also to *thwart* their intrinsic significance and integrative connotation.

The Ministry of Formation (Kerygmatic Function, Christian Education) briefly refers to the relationship between *man* and *God* and his *fellow men* in Faith and Morals. The Ministry of Liturgy (Koinoniac Function, Christian Worship) essentially indicates the relationship between *man* and *God*. The Ministry of Service (Diaconic Function, Christian Social Action) substantially denotes the relationship between *man* and his *fellowmen*. It is evident that for a man to worship God and serve his fellow men as a matter of course, he must be first well formed in Faith and Morals. This demonstrates the cardinal importance of formation. It stands to reason that in the christian world, when a man serves his fellow men without any reference to God at all Whom he must worship, his service could be anything but christian. This establishes the *intimate interrelationship* among the three Ministries.

5. Committees:

The *Committee System* primarily serves to assist the Parish Pastoral Council in duly attending to the *special* or *specialized* areas of apostolic concerns for which they are accordingly formed. Committees, be they *Standing* or *Ad Hoc*, are designed to undertake the necessary study of their respective apostolic commitments, make its consequent recommendation and implement the policy or decision arrived at by the Parish Pastoral Council. Committees in the Parish Pastoral Council are equally meant to *broaden* the base representation of the parochial community at the Council, and to *spread* the burden of and accountability for the various apostolic labors.

The Committee System can be adopted even *within* the Ministries of Formation, Liturgy and Worship in relation to individuals, families, Small Ecclesial Communities, the Parish as a whole, the Local, Particular and Universal Church. The Officers of the Parish Pastoral Council may also act as Chairpersons of different Committees, v.g., the President for the Committee on Justice and Peace, the Vice President for the Committee on Conciliation and Arbitration, the Treasurer for the Committee on Finance, the Secretary for the Committee on Survey, Planning and Programs, and the Ecclesial Relations Officer for the Committee on External Affairs. If needed, Committees can *also* be formed for the Youth in and out of school, for Vocations, for Non-Catholics, and the like.

6. Meeting:

The *meeting* of the *Parish Pastoral Council* should be either preceded or followed by the meeting of the different *Ministries* and *Committees*, whose reports on their respective apostolic concerns constitute the usual principal agenda of the Council Meeting. *Regular* monthly meeting on clearly predetermined day or date, time and place is strongly recommended for the continuous activity, effective endeavor and consistent progress of the Council in the apostolate. *Special* meeting is in order in the event of urgent, serious or complicated agenda items that require immediate attention or prolonged deliberation.

The meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council that as a rule requires the presence of at least *half* of the members expected, to constitute a quorum and perform *official* acts, could adopt the following regular agenda: a) Opening Prayer, Scripture Reading and Reflection. b) Roll Call and Minutes. c) Report of Ministries. d) Report of Committees. e) Unfinished Business. f) New Business. g) Closing Prayer and Blessing.

7. Consensus Process:

The *Consensus Process* and the Robert's Rule of Order (Revised) differ as decision or policy making techniques with reference to the emphasis placed on persons and tasks. The Robert's Rule simply requires 51% votes agreement for passage, thus allowing the possibility of 49% dissenting votes which is a rather large portion of the decision or policy making body. The *Rule* is *task oriented*.

The Consensus requires more deliberation and greater reflection on the arguments in favor and against a given issue, until a common feeling is reached. There is consensus when all those concerned can accept and live with the decision reached or the policy made. The *Process* is *person oriented*.