



**DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA**

**STATUTES**

**FOR**

**PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS**

**November 2005**

A parish is a community of Christ's faithful within the Diocese. The pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a parish priest by the bishop.

The Second Vatican Council recommends that

*In dioceses, as far as possible, 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 the rest; the clergy and religious working with the laity in whatever way proves satisfactory.*

*(Apostolate of the Laity, n.26)*

*By reason of the knowledge, competence or pre-eminence which they have the laity are empowered--indeed sometimes obliged--to manifest their opinion on 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. (The Church. n. 37)*

In the Code of Canon Law (Canon 536) states that

*#1. If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity.*

*#2. A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.*

In order for the Church to have the fullness of God's light and guidance the people must be consulted. Thus a totally new ministry of the people of God is born: a special ministry of people and pastor reflecting on the parish's ministerial activity.

On the basis of that reflection a discernment of what needs to be changed or developed in the parish takes place. It is this ministry that is specifically the task of the parish pastoral council.

The parish pastoral council is a representative body of the whole parish, priests, religious and laity, working together to form a Christian community which seeks out and responds to the spiritual and material needs of all God's people.

A parish pastoral council, therefore, should be truly pastoral and reflect the sharing of responsibility for the Church's mission so that the Church in this diocese may be more obviously the presence of Christ.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To announce the Word of God, to instruct people in the truths of the faith and to provide catechetical formation.
2. To foster works by which the spirit of the Gospel, including issues of social justice, will be promoted.
3. To provide religious education for children and young adults.
4. To bring the Gospel message to those who have ceased the practice of their faith and to those with no faith.
5. To provide for and to promote the celebration of the sacraments particularly the Eucharist and Penance, and see to it that the Eucharist is the centre of the parish assembly.
6. To labour diligently so that spouses and parents are supported in fulfilling their responsibilities and to foster Christian family life.
7. To encourage and sustain communion within the parish, the diocese and the universal church. This objective includes especially the promotion of Christian unity.

## **ROLE AND FUNCTION**

The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body. As such it has the right and duty to provide wise and constructive assessment to the pastor. It is to be involved in prudent policy making, goal planning and setting objectives for the furtherance of the Christian ministry within the parish.

The mission of the Parish Pastoral Council, in cooperation with the pastor, is to see to it that every avenue is opened for all members of the parish to:

1. realise their call as disciples of Christ;
2. develop the confidence and skills they need to carry out their mission;
3. find in the parish the structure they will need for their continuing growth and support;
4. review regularly individual parish goals and strategies to that everyone will have a sense of proceeding purposefully towards establishing God's reign.

In carrying out this role the Parish Pastoral Council will:

1. Provide for education and formation of parish councillors and parishioners in understanding the role of the council within the mission of the Church.

2. Initiate processes of pastoral planning in order to
  - develop a vision for the parish
  - plan appropriate goals and objectives for the spiritual, liturgical and apostolic life of the parish
  - ensure regular evaluation of the parish's attempts to achieve these goals
3. Overview the workings of the parish groups and services and the sharing of services with other parishes so as to provide for
  - the efficient co-ordination of those services and
  - the initiation of new services where needed.
4. Ensure that lines of communication are kept as open as possible amongst parish administration, parish agencies and individual members of the parish and be a means of communication with other parishes, the deanery and the diocese.
5. Prepare the parish for the future, particularly through opportunities for future leaders of the parish to emerge and be trained.

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

1. The Council shall consist of:
  - a) Pastor, other clergy and pastoral associates;
  - b) elected parishioners in sufficient numbers to adequately represent the parish;
  - c) such parishioners as may be co-opted by the pastor and council provided that these not exceed the number of elected members.
2. People who are active members of the Church community and have reached the age of 18 years are eligible for election.
3. Membership of the council shall be for a period of two years. A retiring member may be re-elected provided that he/she has not Served for more than six consecutive years.

On completion of six years service a retiring member may again be eligible after a lapse of one year.

Should the position of an elected member become vacant the council shall have the power to appoint a replacement until the next election.
- 4, Any member of the council may resign by giving written notice intention to the secretary. The resignation shall operate from its acceptance by the council.

## **COUNCIL MEETINGS**

1. The Pastor is ex-officio the president of the council.
2. Council members shall elect their own chair, vice-chair and secretary. They may hold office for no more than two years.
3. The council shall normally meet once per month or as often as necessary.
4. Sub-committees may be appointed as required to which other persons may be co-opted. These groups report to the council.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS**

An annual general meeting of parishioners should be held on a date fixed by the council.