

## **POLICY STATEMENT FOR FORMATION AND MAINTENANCE OF PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS**

It is the policy of the Diocese of Las Cruces that each parish shall establish and maintain a Parish Pastoral Council (Canon 536). Please refer to the Directives and Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils issued in 1992. The right and duty of the laity to participate in Parish Pastoral Councils are founded in the grace of baptism and confirmation (Guadium et Spes, 43). The 1983 Code of Canon Law provides that all the baptized possess the right “to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones and their desires” as well as “their opinions on matters which pertain to the good of the Church” (canon 212 §2, §3). The parish pastoral council provides a structure for the effective listening that is the responsibility of the pastor. Even though “pastor” is used throughout this document, in some cases an administrator or parish life coordinator may take on the practical functions of a pastor.

Parish Pastoral Councils are a representative body of parishioners which in collaboration with the pastor work toward consensus in discerning the mission, goals, and direction of the parish. They form a consultative, unifying, and coordinating body which leads the parish in continuous reflection of its mission and identity as a manifestation of being Church in this place and time.

Parish Pastoral Councils are charged with the responsibility of providing leadership and direction on goals which respond effectively to the needs and hopes of the parish and broader community and the call of the Gospel. The parish pastoral council maintains a relationship with the diocesan pastoral council through its representation at periodical regional/vicariate gatherings as sponsored by the diocesan pastoral council.

### **Functions of the Parish Pastoral Council**

Parish Pastoral Councils, in their mission of assisting the pastor with his mission of teaching, sanctifying, and shepherding the parish, have four major functions:

1. **Development of Mission Statement and Constitutions:** Each Parish Pastoral Council should develop a mission statement and constitutions. These should be on file both at the parish and at The Pastoral Center.
2. **Planning and Goal Setting:** Planning is the process by which the mission statement or policies are reduced to more manageable units of work. The planning process develops goals which give specific strategy for the accomplishment of these units of work. The parish pastoral council also assists with a cycle of evaluation of the implementation of the pastoral plan as part of the parish planning processes.
3. **Development of Parish Policy:** Policy statements are developed to regulate what can and cannot be done in relation to a given issue. Some policies come directly as a result of the parish mission statement. Others are the result of the need to clarify parish administrative procedures. Still other policies bring the parish into compliance with diocesan policies issued by the diocesan bishop. The parish pastoral council, however, cannot assume the responsibility for legislating apart from the pastor. Nor does it assume responsibility for the implementation of parish policy. Procedures governing the implementation of policies are the responsibility of the pastoral staff and respective parties or organizations.

4. Working with the Finance Council: The Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council should complement and enhance each other's work, but each will retain a separate identity and clear definition of its own functions. The Parish Finance Council will select a representative to be a member of the Parish Pastoral Council to ensure understanding and commitment of both councils to the same goals and action priorities. A similar relationship between the School Advisory Board and the Parish Pastoral Council may be considered in parishes where this applies.

In smaller parishes the Parish Pastoral Council may also function as the Parish Finance Council.

### Role of the Pastor

The pastor has a dual role within the Parish Pastoral Council. As a member he shares his experiences and insights in an effort to build consensus on a given issue. As pastor he has authority on matters relating to church policy and teachings on faith and morals, as well as parish administration. He may delegate some of this authority to others in the parish but holds the ultimate responsibility to the diocesan bishop in these matters. Also while the pastor presides at parish pastoral council meetings, the pastor usually delegates the function of facilitating or chairing of the meetings to a member.

### Record Keeping

Parish Pastoral Councils are to maintain on file a copy of this policy, the parish mission statement, constitutions, and by-laws. Copies of minutes, finance reports, and other pertinent materials will also be kept in this file until they are forwarded to The Pastoral Center archives. (See archival policy)

### Yearly Report

The pastor is responsible for providing a yearly report to the Office of the Chancellor at The Pastoral Center.

### Disbanding of a Parish Pastoral Council

A pastor may not disband the Parish Pastoral Council until he presents his reasons in writing to the bishop and receives the bishop's permission. When such permission is given, a new council must be established within one year.

### Transition of Pastor

Upon the resignation, removal or death of the pastor, the parish pastoral council will continue to function with the newly appointed pastor presiding. The parish pastoral council will assist in orienting the newly appointed pastor. The parish pastoral council members will share with the new appointed pastor their hopes and dreams for the parish community. At the same time, the parish pastoral council will be attentive to the insights and gifts offered by the newly appointed pastor.