

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Parish Prescott, Arizona

Pastoral Council Guidelines

The following four ecclesial teachings serve to guide the relationship between our Bishop and Sacred Heart Parish. They can also assist our Pastor as they strive to develop proper relationships with our parishioners through the establishment of our Pastoral Council.

1. The Theology of *Communio*.

The theology of *communio* provides the foundation for understanding the nature of the Church and its mission of fostering unity and cooperation among the faithful. Furthermore, this *communio* must be visibly expressed through the Church's canonical structures. In effect, *communio* must be "ordered" so that it can be applied in the Church's human organization. One way of doing this is through the principle of subsidiarity.

Pope Saint John Paul II reiterated the importance of communion in his apostolic letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (45) marking the closing of the Jubilee Year 2000. He wrote:

Communion must be cultivated and extended day by day and at every level in the structures of each church's life. Their relationships between bishops, priests and deacons, between pastors and the entire people of God, between clergy and religious, between associations and ecclesial movements must all be clearly characterized by communion. . . to this end the structures of participation envisaged by canon law, such as the council for priests and the pastoral council, must be ever more highly valued. . . The theology and spirituality of communion encourages a fruitful dialogue between pastors and faithful: on the one hand uniting them a priori in all that is essential and on the other leading them to pondered agreement in matters open to discussion.

An understanding of the theology of communion plays an important role in how our pastoral council serves as a consultative body that supports communion between the Pastor and the people of God within our parish.

Purpose of Pastoral council:

The pastoral council is an advisory body to our Pastor with consultative approval only and functions in accordance with any norms that are established by the diocesan Bishop. The primary mission of the council is to advise the Pastor on matters of parish policy, planning and other items at the request of the Pastor. The administration of the Sacred Heart Parish and the execution of parish policies are the responsibility of the Pastor and the parish staff.

DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To assist in the process of ongoing pastoral planning and the development and updating of the parish pastoral plan by developing goals and objectives and the assignment of priorities for the future of the parish.
2. To engage in an annual review and evaluation of the progress that is being made to implement the parish pastoral plan.
3. To provide guidance to the Pastor in developing parish policies that will be executed by the parish staff.
4. To serve as an instrument of communication, bringing issues of concern to the attention of the Pastor.
5. To be actively involved in the life of the parish community and to be available to parishioners to receive comments and suggestions about parish ministries, policies, and programs.
6. To make praying for the parish an integral part of their personal and communal lives.
7. To work to demonstrate and inspire enthusiasm within the parish community by their example of leadership.
8. To promote positive communication and understanding among parish organizations, consistent with the guidance of the Pastor.
9. To work toward consensus as a model in decision-making, to promote the unity and mutual good of the council and parish.
10. To review the annual budget prepared by the parish staff and parish finance council, and to make any recommendations to the Pastor.
11. To propose programs and ministries that respond to needs within the parish community.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL TO THE PASTOR

As noted in Canon 536.2, the “pastoral council possesses a consultative approval only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.” While ultimately responsible for the spiritual and temporal affairs of the parish, the Pastor:

1. Assists in the formation of and gives approval to the council agenda.
2. May call special meetings of the council.
3. Seeks the guidance of the council in matters of parish planning and other matters affecting the life of the parish.
4. Does not vote when seeking advice from the council on issues brought before it.
5. Provides opportunities through formation to assist council members to understand and exercise the responsibility that is entrusted to them.

The contributions of the faithful are fundamental to communion, as the baptized share in the one priesthood of Christ and exercise, in their own proper way, his ministry of teaching, sanctifying, and governing.

2. The Principle of Subsidiarity.

Subsidiarity was one of the ten principles proposed by the 1967 Synod of Bishops for the revision of the 1917 code, which would impact church structures and offices.

First articulated by Pope Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) the Principle of Subsidiarity argues that the best institutions for responding to a particular social task are those that are most proximate to it. Larger institutions (e.g. a diocese) have a positive and necessary role to provide support but should never replace the smaller and more immediate institution (e.g. the parish) in responding to our parish’s unique situation.

Pope Saint John Paul II started in *Ecclesia in America* that:

Each ordinary will make sure to promote among priests and lay faithful the sense that the diocese is the visible expression of the Church’s communion, which is formed at the table of the Word and of the Eucharist, around the Bishop in union with the College of Bishops and under its head, the Roman Pontiff. The diocese is charged with initiating and deepening the encounter of all the members of God’s People with Jesus Christ, respecting and fostering the plurality and diversification which are

not obstacles to unity, but which give it the character of communion.

The same principle is true on the parish level, with the Pastor observing his responsibility “to recognize and promote the proper part which the lay members of the Christian faithful have in the mission of the Church,” (Canon 529.2)

Our Pastoral council should reflect the diversity of the parish community and serve as a visible expression of the theology of *communio*. Pope Saint John Paul II referred to the importance of participation in the mission of the Church in *Ecclesia in America*, in which he wrote: “The spirit of participation and shared responsibility in the working of diocesan structures will certainly be strengthened if the nature of the particular Church is better known and appreciated.” The same is true on the parish level.

Similarly, Pope Saint John Paul II returned to the topic of diocesan *communio* in *Pastores gregis* (44) where he reminded diocesan bishops that:

Ecclesial communion in its organic structure calls for personal responsibility on the part of the bishop, but it also presupposes the participation of every category of the faithful inasmuch as they share responsibility for the good of the church which they themselves form.

Pope Saint John Paul II also wrote the following:

If communion expresses the church’s essence, then it is normal that the spirituality of communion will tend to manifest itself in both the personal and community spheres, awakening ever new forms of participation and shared responsibility in the faithful of every category. Consequently, the bishop will make every effort to develop within his church structures of communion and participation. . .

For the Principle of Subsidiarity to function properly in any parish, membership in a Pastoral council should consider the following categories:

- A. Ex-officio members: which may include any ordained clergy (priests and deacons) assigned to the parish and a representative (either voting or non-voting) of any religious who serve the parish. If non-voting, this person may have voice at council meetings.

- B. Selected members: The number of selected members to serve on the pastoral council is no more than nine. This may vary over time depending on the workload of the council and the decision of the Pastor. The following process is suggested as a method to be used in filling these positions.

1. Members must be practicing Catholics who are in good standing and in full communion with the Church.
2. Members should be at least 18 years of age.
3. Members must be active, registered members of the parish.
4. Members must have demonstrated an active interest in the parish by their participation in parish ministries or other activities.
5. Members must have given evidence of leadership qualities, especially within the parish by their past involvement in parish ministries, organization and/or special activities.
6. Members must be willing to make themselves available to attend regularly scheduled Council meetings.
7. Members must demonstrate a willingness to invest themselves in the process of studying areas that relate to issues of parish planning and evaluation.

C. Parish Staff: It is recommended that parish staff not serve as voting members of the Pastoral council. Staff members may, however, be required to attend council meetings, either regularly or as needed, at the discretion of the Pastor. They may give reports and be granted voice at council meetings, as judged appropriate by the Pastor.

Membership on the council should be understood as a call to serve the principles of *communion* and subsidiarity, representing the diversity of the parish community, in a consultative role to assist the Pastor in carrying out the mission of the parish.

Members of the council are selected by the Pastor in consultation with fellow cleric, parish staff and councils and parish members. It is recommended that terms on the council be staggered, so that there will be an orderly transition of council members. A suggested term of service is three years, with the possibility of being renewed once.

The structure of the Sacred Heart Pastoral Council is as follows:

- A. The Pastor: Since the council is advisory to him, the Pastor does not vote at Council meetings. The council can never meet in the absence of the Pastor without his consent and then only when he has designated a person to serve as his representative.
 1. The Pastor determines the agenda for council meetings. He may wish to include others (such as the council chairperson) in the process of agenda setting.
 2. He must give approval for any action that is affirmatively approved by the council for it to become effective.

3. It is recommended that when the Pastor exercises his authority to not approve an action that was affirmatively voted on by the membership of the council that he provides the membership with reason(s) for his decision. (This could be helpful to assist the members to better understand parish priorities, needs, limitations, etc.)
4. May call special meetings of the council, as needed.
5. The Pastor may appoint the officers of the council. Currently the executive parish council consists of the Pastor, chairperson and vice-chairperson and the council secretary.

B. The Chairperson:

1. Chairs meetings of the Pastoral council.
2. May assist the Pastor in the development of council agendas.
3. May be delegated to appoint chairpersons for any committees that are established by the Council, with the approval of the Pastor.
4. **Serves as Secretary of the Parish Board of Directors.**

C. The Vice Chairperson:

1. Chairs council meetings in the absence of the chairperson.
2. Succeeds to the office of chairperson should that office become vacant during the council year. (The Pastor may then appoint a new vice chairperson from among the members.)

D. The Secretary:

1. Is responsible for the accurate recording (the council may have a non-voting recording secretary) of the minutes of council meetings. This will include an accurate record of any Council recommendations and the Pastor's decision to approve or not approve them.
2. Should facilitate the communication of information to council members. This may include agendas for future meetings, and notifications of special meetings.

E. The Pastoral Council Members:

1. Assists the Pastor with the development of education and formation opportunities to better instruct the members of the parish to be good stewards who are grateful for their God given gifts and lovingly share those gifts by serving others.
2. Helps to identify ways to promote the use and safeguarding of the material

and human resources of the parish.

3. Suggests ways that members of the parish community can work concretely to make their parish a true community of faith and a vibrant source of service to the larger community.
4. Gives personal witness to a life that is lived in faithfulness to the pattern of Our Lord's paschal mystery.
5. The Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council serves to aid the Pastor in his canonical responsibilities.

Canon 529 states, "In order to fulfill his office diligently, a Pastor is to strive to know the faithful entrusted to his care." Along with his obligation to visit families, as described in this canon, our Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council serves as an effective tool to help the Pastor stay in touch with the needs of his parishioners and the state of parish life.

In this same canon we read, "A Pastor is to recognize and promote the proper part which lay members of the Christian faithful have in the mission of the Church . . ." As the Pastor "is to cooperate with his own bishop and the presbyterium of the diocese, also working so that the faithful have concern for parochial communion, consider themselves members of the diocese and of the universal Church, and participate in and sustain effort to promote this same communion." Our Pastoral council provides the Pastor with an opportunity to inform members of his parish on issues of importance to the Diocesan Bishop by bringing them to the attention of those who serve as leaders of the parish community and include the council members in the process of discerning the role of the parish in addressing these issues.

Canon 528 also encourages the "collaboration of the Christian faithful", as the Pastor fulfills his obligation to proclaim the word of God, instruct the faithful in the truths of the faith, foster works that promote the spirit of the gospel and address issues of social justice, while ensuring "that the Christian faithful are nourished through the devout celebration of the sacraments . . ." As a consultative group, our Pastoral council aids the Pastor by assisting him in a process of assessing the needs of the parish, establishing parish priorities and making recommendations concerning the allocation of parish resources.

3. Discipleship and Stewardship.

A fundamental role of the Pastoral Council is to promote Discipleship and Stewardship within the parish community as a way of life.

Discipleship means having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Stewardship is expressed as a way of life in receiving God's gifts gratefully; developing those gifts responsibly; sharing those gifts lovingly; so that we may return those gifts with increase back to God.

4. Evangelization.

The word evangelization stresses the idea of an on-going process of proclamation and conversion. Consistent with the principles of *communio* and subsidiarity, the local parish community is best suited to advance the goal of the new evangelization, while also serving as an instrument of Christian evangelization within the neighborhood community in which the parish is located.

Members of the Pastoral Council serve the Pastor by assisting him to identify areas where proper catechesis is necessary within the parish community itself and how the parish may be called to provide services that give witness to the virtue of charity by responding to needs that exist within the local community.

Evangelization has several components: first and foremost, love of God, love of others, love of self; then, invitation into a personal relationship with Jesus, ongoing conversion, conscious, active extension of ourselves and our communities and the nurture of spiritual growth within the context of a worshipping faith community, and loving service to others.

Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, offers a summary of the ingredients of an effective Evangelization: Proclamation, Conversion, Incorporation and Service.

A. Proclamation:

The Gospel must be proclaimed by witness of lifestyle.....which includes presence, sharing solidarity.....the wordless witness of a Christian life." (EN 21)

“Nevertheless, this always remains insufficient.... The witness of life sooner or later must be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed” (EN 22).

B. Conversion:

“But above all, each individual gains this kingdom and this salvation through a total interior renewal which the Gospel calls metanoia; it is a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart” (EN 10)

C. Incorporation:

In fact, the proclamation only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it.....Such an adherence, which cannot remain abstract and unincarnated, reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers.... Thus those whose life has been transformed enter a community which is itself a sign of transformation, a sign of newness of life: it is the Church, the visible sacrament of salvation” (EN 23).

D. Service:

“How in fact can one proclaim the new commandment without promoting in justice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of man? We ourselves have taken care to point this out, by recalling that it is impossible to accept „that in evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems ... concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world. This would be to forget the lesson which comes to us from the Gospel concerning love of our neighbor who is suffering and in need” (EN 31).

The contributions of the faithful are fundamental to communion, as the baptized share in the one priesthood of Christ and exercise, in their own proper way, his ministry of teaching, sanctifying, and governing.

Our Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council exists to support our Pastor in assessing all four areas above to promote effective evangelization in our parish and our community.

Approved by Pastor: Fr J Nudayara date: 28 Jan 2020

Approved by Chairperson: Michael King date: 28 Jan 2020