

ST. BEDE THE VENERABLE CATHOLIC CHURCH PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL GUIDELINES

The Mission of St. Bede Catholic Church

St. Bede exists to form and lead its Catholic faithful into a deep life-giving communion with the Heart of Jesus Christ. The heart and pulse of the community is synonymous with that of the Lord Himself, who lives within our hearts and remains present to us Eucharistically. Every act of faith, hope and love flows from our Eucharistic Worship. It is the Eucharist that is the source and summit of who we are, the People of God. As a family of faith we embrace all men and women of good will who long to hear the voice of the Word made flesh and desire to know Him more perfectly, follow Him faithfully and serve Him with selfless love.

The Parish

"A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop" (Canon 515). Clergy, religious and laity together form a parish, a portion of God's people that can continue the mission of Jesus here on earth. The People of God have different gifts, roles and responsibilities, yet all are under one head, Christ Jesus.

Duties of the Pastor

A pastor has responsibilities which are uniquely his, arising from his ordination and appointment to the pastorate by the Bishop (Canon 519). When a priest accepts a pastorate, he becomes the appointed leader of the parish, the bond of communion, the designated head and the father in the faith to this community of believers. He is also called to be a servant of the people. Consultation with parishioners, as individuals and as a community, is essential for a pastor to carry out his duties responsibly.

Purpose and Scope of the Parish Pastoral Council

All members of the Church, according to their proper charisms and roles, work together in fulfilling the Church's mission. The Second Vatican Council urged active involvement in the life of the Church by emphasizing the principles of collaboration, consultation and lay participation. The Code of Canon Law insists on consultation at every level of decision making among all God's people (Canon 536). The Code also makes it clear that pastors have certain responsibilities which are theirs alone (Canon 519).

The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) is an advisory or consultative body for the pastor. The members meet with the pastor and offer him the wisdom of the community and strive to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit among God's people in the parish. The scope of the council is pastoral matters.

These matters may include everything that pertains to the pastor's ministries of proclaiming God's word, celebrating the sacraments, caring for the faithful, promoting the mission of the Church to the world and being a good steward of parish resources. The scope includes all the practical matters of parish life. There is, in short, nothing about which the pastor may not consult the council, apart from faith, orthodoxy, moral principles or laws of the universal Church.

The PPC does not manage parish operations or acts of administration. Acts of administration that concern the daily operations of the parish, including the implementation of the pastoral plan and policies, parish programming, budgeting, parish staff and personnel matters are the responsibility of the pastor.

On December 30, 1988, Pope John Paul II, referring to the ecclesiology of communion, said, "The [Second Vatican] Council's mention of examining and solving pastoral problems 'by general discussion' ought to find its adequate and structured development through a more convinced, extensive and decided appreciation for 'Parish Pastoral Councils,' on which the Synod Fathers have rightly insisted."

Duties of the Parish Pastoral Council

The work of the PPC embraces all the pastoral dimensions of the parish. Specifically, the PPC enhances the work of:

- long-range planning;
- pastoral planning;
- developing pastoral programs;
- improving pastoral services;
- evaluating the pastoral effectiveness of various programs and services; and
- other concerns the pastor deems necessary.

The PPC **investigates**, under the authority of the pastor, all those things which pertain to pastoral works; **ponders** them; and **proposes** practical recommendations. Although the PPC is not a body which makes binding decisions, the recommendations of the PPC are to be taken seriously when grounded in prayer, discernment and communal wisdom. It is essential that PPC's meetings occur in the context of prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit, so that at all times the common good will prevail.

Although the PPC is a consultative body for the pastor, he participates and fully collaborates in its workings. The pastor presides over meetings, but does not facilitate or chair them. Together with the PPC the pastor leads the parish in the ongoing discernment and realization of its mission.

The pastor is responsible for the final approval of the PPC's recommendations concerning pastoral planning, programs, and services for the parish, as well as for their implementation. While the pastor is not obliged to follow the recommendations of the PPC, it is understood that he ought to do so unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise. If there is such a reason, the pastor should share this with the PPC. This collaborative parish structure enables clergy and laity to build a vibrant parish community with a shared responsibility for the mission of the Church.

If a liturgy committee, a school advisory commission, or other parish ministry committees exist, the relationship between PPC and other existing bodies should be clearly understood, and carefully delineated if necessary. It is suggested that the Pastor schedule a joint annual meeting for the Parish Finance Council and the PPC for dialogue purposes during the parish budget preparation period and prior to the budget being finalized.

Parish Pastoral Council Membership

Members are baptized Catholics, in good standing with the Church and are parishioners noted for their faith, good morals, and prudence. A member is not precisely nor officially a representative for a particular neighborhood, age bracket, special interest group or organization. However regard should be given to the cultural, ethnic, and generational diversity of the community when choosing members. Membership at a minimum will be fifteen members, who will serve three-year terms. The pastor will appoint members based on PPC nominations or recommendations.

It is recommended that a parochial vicar, by virtue of office, be an ex-officio member of the council. Other ex officio members may be included at the discretion of the pastor. However, their presence should not dominate meetings or stifle the voice of the general membership.

There will be three officers within the PPC:

- **President.** The president facilitates council discussions, monitors the work of the members between meetings, and works with the Pastor to develop an agenda.
- **Vice-president.** The vice-president assists the president and facilitates meetings in the president's absence.
- **Secretary.** The secretary keeps records of discussion during the meeting as well as distributes the minutes, agenda, and other documents one week prior to the meeting.

Meetings/Agenda

The pastor is the primary selector of the PPC's agenda as the presider. However, any member may raise items for the agenda. Staff members may be invited to attend some pastoral council meetings when their expertise or training may be of assistance to the Council.

The PPC meets on the third Tuesday of each month, with no meetings in July or December. Meetings are one hour in length. Members are expected to attend all meetings unless the President has been informed otherwise. Three absences in one year will be grounds for termination from the PPC. Between monthly meetings, members are expected to follow up on requested actions from the previous meeting and prepare for the next.

Vacancy of the Office of Pastor

When a parish becomes vacant due to death, resignation, or transfer of the pastor, the PPC ceases. In the interest of continuity in the parish's work and mission, the new pastor/parochial administrator/parish steward will establish the PPC within two months of the date of installation.

Amending the Guidelines

Amendments to the Guidelines can be proposed by any member of the PPC. The draft will be reviewed by the PPC and presented to the Pastor. The Pastor accepts or declines the amendment. The PPC Guidelines shall be reviewed every five years.