
CONSTITUTION OF THE LONDON DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

The Diocesan Pastoral Council is a “*consultative*” body. As such, it is to seek the wisdom of the Spirit, who is continually present in the Church, as it is to be discovered in the lived experience of the Christian community and in the prophetic call rooted in the Gospel. This discernment of the Spirit through consultation acknowledges the variety of gifts to be found among the people of God, as well as the diversity of roles, and that all these are given for the building up of the body of Christ.

Consultation as it applies to the Diocesan Pastoral Council is established on the principle that the Diocesan Bishop is to seek the advice of those who are knowledgeable and concerned as represented in the membership of the council.¹

The Diocesan Pastoral Council of the Diocese of London is intended to be one means, among many, of giving concrete expression to the principle enunciated by the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* that all members of the faithful, by reason of their baptism and confirmation, have a part to play in the threefold mission of the universal Church to teach, to govern, and to sanctify, each in accord with his or her respective role.² This body within the diocesan structure is meant to give substance to the understanding of the shared responsibility of the people of God and to be representative of the organic reality of the Church of the Diocese of London.

The Council is to comprise of clergy, religious and lay people along with the Bishop. The role of the Council is to informally investigate and weigh matters bearing on pastoral activity and to communicate to the Bishop the lived reality of the people he shepherds.³

THE CODE OF CANON LAW OF 1983

The revised *Code of Canon Law* of 1983 incorporates the conciliar directive into the general law of the Church and implements it canonically.⁴ The canons, in effect, determine that the Diocesan Pastoral Council is designed to study and to deliberate on pastoral matters and make practical suggestions for the benefit of the particular Church (i.e., the Diocese of London).

¹ “The council has only a consultative voice; nevertheless, the bishop has great respect for its recommendations, for they offer his apostolic office the serious and settled cooperation of the ecclesiastical community.” *The Directory on the Pastoral Office of Bishops*, no. 204.

² See further canon 211.

³ Cf., *Christus Dominus*, no. 27.

⁴ See canons 511-514.

CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES

The legislation on the Diocesan Pastoral Council is founded on certain key principles, which of themselves delineate the particular character of this reflective body.

Service – the Diocesan Pastoral Council is established to serve the needs of the entire Diocese of London, which includes approximately 450 000 Catholics over 21 349 square kilometers from Windsor to Wingham, Sarnia to Simcoe and communities in between. Our area comprises the nine counties in the southwestern section of Ontario, namely, Middlesex, Elgin, Norfolk, Oxford, Perth, Huron, Lambton, Chatham-Kent and Essex counties.

Representation – the Diocesan Pastoral Council is a group which represents a cross-section of the whole diocese from different backgrounds and experiences; it is the fullest expression of shared responsibility within the Church. All members who are entitled to be present for the meeting have the right to speak and be heard

Co-responsibility – this Council is closely joined with the Bishop, sharing co-responsibility for the mission of the Church, over which he himself presides.

The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.⁵

Discernment – this Council will act as a set of advisors who will consider the Diocese’s pastoral life and offer reflections to the Bishop to assist him as he contemplates and implements his vision for the Church: being a mission-oriented Church that forms disciples of Jesus.

THE MEANING OF “PASTORAL”

By design the Diocesan Pastoral Council is to focus on “pastoral” concerns, as its name implies.

Pastoral care has come to mean the ‘care of souls’. We are called to care for the souls - the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional and social well-being and growth of our children and youth. Pastoral care is rooted in theological teaching and the findings of the sciences, especially of psychology and sociology. The objective of pastoral care is to bring the faithful to a more adequate and mature life of faith.⁶

The Second Vatican Council placed *pastoral* at the heart of apostolic succession, designating that the *pastoral function* includes teaching, governing, and sanctifying.⁷ *Pastoral* then is concerned with the fulfillment of the Church’s mission in the world: to proclaim the Good News; to care of God’s people and all of creation; and, to invite all to grow in relationship with

⁵ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 33.

⁶ Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 62.

⁷ Cf., *Lumen Gentium*, no.22.

Jesus. In effect, a *pastoral* focus entails consideration of what it is to be Church as it is in the world.⁸

Pastoral activity needs to bring out more clearly the fact that our relationship with the Father demands and encourages a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds⁹

The *pastoral activity* of the Church is aimed at all groups of persons, overlooking no sector or class of those who are to be evangelized or catechized.¹⁰ It requires the cooperation and coordination of all apostolic labourers, namely, priests, religious men and women, and the laity. Finally, it calls for a concerted effort in all sectors of the apostolate: namely, liturgical, catechetical, missionary, charitable, social, cultural, family, educational, under the authority and direction of the Diocesan Bishop; so that all the resources of the apostolate of the Diocese, whether personnel or institutions, are in an orderly way brought together in a corporate activity that aims at promoting the well-being and advantage of the whole diocese.¹¹

As a body created to assist the Diocesan Bishop in this task, the Diocesan Pastoral Council is to be concerned with pastoral issues and pastoral activities which affect the Diocese of London's life as the body of Christ,¹² as reflected in the Pastoral Plan of the Diocese.

EMBRACING A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE A PASTORAL PLAN FOR THE DIOCESE OF LONDON

FOR SURELY I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU, SAYS THE LORD, PLANS FOR YOUR WELFARE AND NOT FOR HARM, TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE WITH HOPE. (JEREMIAH 29:11)

Preamble

Called by Jesus through baptism into his passion, death and resurrection and anointed by the Spirit, we, the people of God in the Diocese of London, are to be living signs of Christ's presence in the world today. United in Christ, the Bread of Life, we commit ourselves to carrying out the mission of proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of God in our time. We embrace the Gospel – believing what we read, preaching what we believe, and practicing what we preach.

As a people of faith, trusting in the Spirit who leads us, we dedicate ourselves to the following goals:

Goal I: As living signs of Christ's presence, we will respond to the call to personal holiness given to all by committing ourselves to opportunities for ongoing conversion and spiritual renewal.

Goal II: Called by Christ, we will evangelize through the clear proclamation of the Gospel and the constant teaching of the Catholic faith, assuring that such proclamation and teaching is linked to the life

⁸ Cf., J. Provost, "Canon Law and the Role of Consultation," in *Origins* 18 (1989), p.798.

⁹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no 67.

¹⁰ See further V. Schurr, "Pastoral Ministry," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, volume 4, New York, Herder and Herder, 1969, pp. 359-363.

¹¹ Cf., *The Directory on the Pastoral Office of Bishops*, no. 104

¹² Cf. D. Ryan, "Parish Pastoral Council Roles," in *Origins* 20 (1991), p. 738.

experience of the people.

Goal III: With our sights set on the mission of Jesus, we will minister with justice and compassion to the wounded, the searching, the entrapped and those in material and spiritual need.

Goal IV: As the Body of Christ, formed by word and sacrament, we will make provision for meaningful liturgical celebrations in our parish communities to ensure full, conscious and active participation by all.

Goal V: Inviting all to co-responsible ministry, we will encourage and support the ongoing formation of laity, religious and ordained.

Goal VI: Imitating Christ the servant-leader, we will employ and model governance practices at all levels that seek to: meet the needs of God's people, support the Church's mission, ensure appropriate participation in decision-making by the laity, religious and ordained, uphold Gospel stewardship, and promote accountability and transparency.

In doing so, the Diocesan Pastoral Council will stay focused on all those things which pertain to the Church's life and ministry.

THE PROCESS OF "PASTORAL" REFLECTION

As a group constituted to undertake an ongoing reflection on the pastoral direction of the Diocese, the Diocesan Pastoral Council is to examine and study all matters relative to pastoral activity, weighing them carefully and proposing practical steps to be taken; they are to do so in order that whatever affects the needs of persons to be served by the Diocese of London may be realized. By its study and reflection, the council is to provide the judgements necessary to enable the diocesan community to plan its pastoral program systematically and to fulfill it effectively.¹³

In pursuing its pastoral mandate, the Diocesan Pastoral Council is to consider the life and activity of the people of God; that is, to research the needs, the ideas, the hopes of the faithful, their actions and their accomplishments.¹⁴ It is to do so by engaging and accompanying persons, offices, and commissions which specialize in the area under consideration.¹⁵

The Diocesan Pastoral Council is to develop and recommend diocesan pastoral initiatives and direction through a careful process of inquiry and research, prayerful deliberation, mutual dialogue, and shared wisdom, aiming at a common vision intended to benefit and build up the Church in the diocese and to promote the spread of the Gospel.

In occupying itself with the multiple areas of the Church's pastoral activity, it is not the task of the Diocesan Pastoral Council to direct, to enact, to regulate, or to authorize. Rather, the council is to cooperate in the ministry of governance by offering the Diocesan Bishop the services of

¹³ Cf., *The Directory on the Pastoral Office of Bishops*, no. 204.

¹⁴ Cf., J. Keating, "Consultation in the Parish," in *Origins* 14 (1984), pp. 264-265; see also B. Griffin, "The Parish and Lay Ministry," in *Chicago Studies*, 23 (1984), p. 58

¹⁵ Cf., *The Directory on the Pastoral Office of Bishops*, no. 204.

counsel flowing from the lived faith experience of the people of God in the Diocese of London, which it represents.

Thus it is proper to the Diocesan Pastoral Council, in keeping with its particular character:

- To identify pastoral needs;
- To study them, with prayer, discernment and dialogue; and
- To propose to the Diocesan Bishop a possible ways to answer those needs.¹⁶

II: STATUTE

1. NAME

1:1 The council shall be called: “The London Diocesan Pastoral Council”

2. MEMBERSHIP

2:1 “A pastoral council is composed of members of Christ’s faithful who are in full communion with the Catholic Church: clerics, members of institutes of consecrated life, and especially lay people.”¹⁷

2:2 “The Members of Christ’s faithful assigned to the pastoral council are to be selected in such a way that the council truly reflects the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the diocese taking account of the different regions of the diocese, of social conditions and professions and of the part played in the apostolate by the members, whether individually or in association with others.”¹⁸

2:3 The Diocesan Pastoral Council shall consist of *ex-officio* members and a maximum of nineteen appointed members.

2:4 The following shall be *ex-officio* members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council: the Diocesan Bishop, the Auxiliary Bishop, the Vicar(s) General, a designated member of the Pastoral Services Team and the Executive-Secretary of the council.

2:5 One member of the presbyterate, either diocesan or religious, is to be a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. He is to be by the Diocesan Bishop, who may consult with the Council of Priests as to a possible candidate. The member of the presbyterate appointed to the Diocesan Pastoral Council is not to be, at the same time, a member of the Council of Priests.

¹⁶ Cf., D. Ryan, *art. cit.*, pp. 738-739.

¹⁷ Canons 228 and 512.

¹⁸ Canon 512, 2.

- 2:6 One permanent deacon of the Diocese of London is to be a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. He is to be appointed by the Diocesan Bishop, who may choose to consult with the Diaconate Advisory Committee as to a possible candidate.
- 2:7 One member, representing all the duly-constituted non-clerical religious communities in the diocese, is to be members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. All the non-clerical religious communities are to be invited by the Executive-Secretary of the council to submit the name of one member for possible appointment. The Diocesan Bishop will then make the appointment of the designated member from the list of potential candidates recommended by the non-clerical religious communities.
- 2:8 Fourteen lay persons representing the laity of the Diocese shall also be members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Two lay representatives from each of the seven deaneries in the diocese shall be selected in accordance with the discernment process outlined in this Constitution and, accordingly appointed by the Diocesan Bishop to membership on the council for the designated term.
- 2:9 At the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop, two supplementary members may be appointed to the Diocesan Pastoral Council. These supplementary members may be drawn from any category of persons, whether ordained or non-ordained.

3. PERIOD OF MEMBERSHIP

- 3:1 The period of membership for appointed members shall be four years. No member shall serve more than one full four-year-term.
- 3:2 At the inaugural meeting of the council, lots shall be drawn by all the appointed members to determine which shall serve a two-year term and which shall serve a full four-year term. Thereafter every two years half of the appointed members, having completed the full four-year term, would leave the council and the same number of new members would be appointed to replace them for a four-year-term.
- 3:3 Any member failing to attend two consecutive meetings, without reasonable explanation to the Executive-Secretary of the council, shall be deemed to have resigned.
- 3:3 Vacancies shall be filled by the Diocesan Bishop for the remainder of the period in the same manner as the initial process of selection.
- 3:4 When the seat is vacant, the London Diocesan Pastoral Council lapses.¹⁹ The new Diocesan Bishop shall be free to reappoint the suspended council or to appoint an entirely new council.

¹⁹ Cf., canon 513, 2.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4:1 The Diocesan Bishop shall appoint an Executive-Secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. In this capacity the Executive-Secretary will act as chairperson of the council.

4:2 The Executive-Secretary of the council shall, at the end of the meeting, with input from all members, prepare an agenda for the next meeting.

4:3 Between meetings, the Executive-Secretary shall discern the “signs of the times” and edit the agenda as needed, with input from:

- Two lay people
- One deacon
- One priest
- One representative from a religious order

This group shall be referred to as the Executive.

4:4 The Executive (cf. 4:2) shall be selected by the full membership of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, approved by the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and approved by the Diocesan Bishop for a term of one year renewable once.

4:5 The Diocesan Bishop, working with the Executive-Secretary, shall appoint a permanent Recording-Secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

- Minutes are to be distributed to members within two weeks of each meeting.
- After the minutes have been accepted by the Diocesan Pastoral Council, a version must be posted electronically.

4:6 It is the responsibility of the Executive to communicate the period of membership to ensure attraction and retention.

5. MEETINGS

5:1 The Diocesan Pastoral Council shall meet at least four times yearly, prior to the meetings of the Council of Priests.

5:2 The agenda and related materials shall be distributed to the members of the council at least one week in advance of the scheduled meeting.

5:3 The Diocesan Bishop shall be present at *all* meetings of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

5:4 Because of the unique nature of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, a short period of each meeting should be given over to prayer and reflection on the Word of God, in order to discern the movement and will of the Holy Spirit.

- 5:5 The Diocesan Pastoral Council may, from time to time, need to work in co-ordination with other consultative bodies within the diocesan government, such as the Council of Priests and the Parish Pastoral Councils, carefully defining and observing respective competencies, by setting up joint meetings when this is advantageous and warranted, and through other forms of collaboration.²⁰

6. SUB-COMMITTEES AND DIOCESAN COMMISSIONS

- 6:1 The Diocesan Pastoral Council may set up *ad hoc* committees to advise it on matters and questions of special pastoral concern.
- 6:2 No standing committees shall be formed or maintained.
- 6:3 The Directors of Diocesan Commissions, the Chairpersons of Diocesan Committees, and the Directors of Diocesan Offices may be called upon to offer input, to dialogue and to advise the Diocesan Pastoral Council. They are not by virtue of their position members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

7. ONGOING FORMATION OF MEMBERS

- 7:1 All members of the council shall be invited to participate in an orientation session prior to assuming their place on the Diocesan Pastoral Council. This orientation session will be arranged by the Executive of the council.
- 7:2 Study, reflection, and in-service education on the nature and mission of the Church is of paramount importance for every member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.
- 7:3 The Executive-Secretary of the council shall arrange for the full membership a day of recollection as the new year begins for the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

8. AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

- 8:1 An amendment to the Constitution of the London Diocesan Pastoral Council may be offered by any member of the council in a written notice to the full council by means of the Executive-Secretary. The proposed amendment shall be discussed and accepted by the full membership, and shall be subject to the approval of the Diocesan Bishop.

Approved and enacted on this _____ day of _____ in the year 20__

²⁰ Cf., J. Coriden et al., *op cit.*, p. 410; see further *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, I, nos. 16-17.