



## **Role and Function of the Parish Pastoral Councils**

Canon Law provides for the formation of Parish Pastoral Councils in Canon 536 #1.

*"In every parish of the diocese, a Pastoral Council shall be established, if the diocesan Bishop, after consulting with the Council of Presbyters, so decides. The pastor presides over the Pastoral Council. The Pastoral Council is composed of members of the congregation together with those of the parish staff who have pastoral care by reason of their office. The Pastoral Council assists in promoting pastoral action in the parish."*

What constitutes parish staff will vary from parish to parish. Pastoral Team members are those who are involved in the day-to-day ministry of the parish. They may be full time, part time, or volunteers. The Pastoral Team generally has its own unique relationship with the pastor as it endeavors to carry out its responsibilities and ministry within the parish.

Pastoral Team members may be invited to attend some pastoral council meetings when their expertise or training may be of assistance to the council. It is recommended that where applicable an assistant pastor, by virtue of office, be a member of the council. Other ex officio members may be included at the discretion of the pastor. However, their presence should not dominate council meetings or stifle the voice of the general membership.

The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body, pastoral in nature, because it strives to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit among God's people in the parish. A Parish Pastoral Council gives its help to the pastor in fostering pastoral activity; it investigates, under the authority of the pastor, all those things which pertain to pastoral works to ponder them, and to propose practical conclusions about them. It is essential that Council meetings occur in the context of prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit, so that at all times the common good will prevail.

Specifically, the Parish Pastoral Council's purpose is to enhance the process of:

- pastoral planning
- developing pastoral programs
- improving pastoral services
- evaluating the pastoral effectiveness of various programs and services

Although the Council is not a body which makes binding decisions, the recommendations of the Pastoral Council are to be taken seriously when grounded in prayer, discernment and communal wisdom.

The pastor presides over the Parish Pastoral Council. The pastor is responsible for the final approval of Council 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 Parish Pastoral Council, 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 Council.

