

All Saints Pastoral Council

The pastoral council is an elective body which means it is put in place by the archbishop, after consulting with the Priests' Council, to assist the pastor with fostering pastoral activity. All parishes or clusters of parishes must have a pastoral council. Clustered parishes may share a single pastoral council.

The council is a consultative body (c. 536.2). As such, it exists as a wisdom group commissioned to discern, proclaim, and make visible the presence and action of the Spirit within the community. Its very nature is to provide counsel. The prudent pastor should welcome the advice of the Council, especially when there is consensus, and act upon it.

Historically, the term “consultative” refers to the bringing together of appropriate, informed parties to identify the best possible resolution of issues and to set a direction for the future. This type of consultative process has been evident throughout church history and is traceable to the time of the apostles and the upper room. Beginning with the Council of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles, there have been numerous regional, national, and universal gatherings of church leadership.

Today the pastoral council continues this ancient tradition by consulting on how best to carry out the mission of the church in a particular place. Council members need to be open to different viewpoints and be as effective at listening as at articulating one's own opinion.

The pastoral council is governed by the norms determined by the bishop (c. 536.2). Every parish and cluster follows the same norms. Some norms allow for choices and these are specified in the parish or cluster appendix to the norms. The norms themselves can only be changed by the bishop. The appendix can be revised as needed by the consensus of the pastoral council.

The pastor of a parish is appointed by the bishop to shepherd (Latin word for shepherd is “pastor”) the faithful in that particular area of the diocese. The pastor is responsible and accountable for all pastoral activity in the parish. Pastoral activity is so great at all parishes that the pastor needs to hire staff to assist with specific areas of ministry. These staff members are accountable to and supervised by the pastor. They participate in the commissions or committees of the council as specified in their job descriptions and serve as ex officio members.

All the pastoral activity in a parish is organized under the pastoral council structure. The council serves as the wisdom group from the community which forms the parish. The council provides the means for the pastor to consult on important parish issues as well as set a direction for the community and have the capability to implement it. The most effective parishes have effective pastoral councils.