



# NORMS OF THE DIOCESE OF TYLER

## Parish Pastoral Councils

Revised: 13 September 2019

The *Code of Canon Law* directs that, “After the diocesan bishop has listened to the presbyteral council and if he judges it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish; the pastor presides over it, and through it the Christian faithful along with those who share in the pastoral care of the parish in virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity” (c. 536 §1).

### Particular Law

1. A pastoral council is to be established and operative in every parish (c. 536 §1) and quasi-parish (mission) in the diocese.
2. The pastor is to convoke, preside, set the agenda, consult on matters affecting the life of the parish, and respond appropriately to the collective wisdom or consensus of the council.
3. The total number of members depends on the size of the parish. The minimum number of members, not including the pastor, is five.
4. There must be at least four meetings annually. There can be more meetings according to the needs and discretion of the pastor.

### Guidelines on Parish Pastoral Councils

In accordance with and complementary to the universal and particular law, the following are established as normative guidelines for the Diocese of Tyler:

1. **Purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council.** The parish pastoral council’s basic purpose and objectives are:
  - a. Assist the pastor in assessing adequately the needs of the whole parish and its members, and to develop and implement a pastoral plan which will promote the common good of the parish.
  - b. Assist the pastor in fostering unity and a sense of community in the parish and in coordinating all parish activities in a manner that will best serve the interests of the parish.
  - c. Assist the pastor in promoting programs and activities recommended by the bishop, diocesan offices and agencies as well as the parish pastoral council itself.
2. **Membership.** The parish pastoral council is about the life of a community of faith and, as such, its members should be members of that community of faith. As in other matters, the pastor may use his discretion in the selection of qualified members from the parish community. If necessary, he may also decide to hold an election for some or all of the members. The pastor presides over the parish pastoral council. In the event of a change in pastors, the pastoral council and the existing members continue in existence until the new pastor confirms the existing

appointments or makes new appointments, preferably within three months of his appointment as pastor.

Members are to be appointed by the pastor for a term of three years, renewable. It may be helpful to stagger the terms so that there is continuity of service and no disruption in the functioning of the pastoral council. Removal of members is to be done in accord with the norms of canon law.

3. **Chair and Secretary.** From among the members, the pastor will designate a chairperson and a secretary.
4. **Role of Parish Employees.** Parish employees are not members of the parish pastoral council; they are staff who support parish ministry. Parish employees may attend meetings to answer questions regarding parish programs when requested by the pastor.
5. **Meetings.** Meeting minutes summarizing the items discussed and the decisions reached should be recorded in order to foster openness and accountability in its practices. Prepared agenda, distributed in advance, will keep meetings focused. The parish pastoral council should plan meetings in advance by developing an annual schedule of meeting dates and times. This will increase participation by members. The parish pastoral council may not validly meet without the pastor present; attempts to conduct business without the pastor present subject those involved to a just penalty.
6. **Recording of Meeting Minutes.** Minutes are to be recorded and archived as part of the parish permanent record.
7. **General Responsibilities.** The primary purpose of the parish pastoral council is not merely consultation but also pastoral planning, with the threefold task of investigating, considering, and recommending practical actions to the pastor. Since the faithful continue to be challenged by new needs in changing times and directives of the particular and universal Church, establishing an exhaustive list of the areas of responsibilities is not possible. However, the general responsibilities of the pastor defined in the *Code of Canon Law* serve as a guideline in directing the work of the parish pastoral council.

***Teaching Office (c. 528 §1)***

- Instruction in the full range of faith and catechetical formation
- Programs promoting gospel values, including issues of social justice
- Catholic education of children and young adults
- Outreach to fallen-away Catholics

- Ecumenism and evangelization

***Sanctifying Office (c. 528 §2)***

- Programs for sacramental life and preparation
- Promotion of Eucharistic devotion
- Enhancement programs for the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion
- Promotion of prayer life, especially within families
- Effective participation in the liturgy

***Governing Office (c. 529)***

- Methods of making acquaintance with parishioners, the welcoming of newcomers, home visits, efforts at building community
- Motivation of parishioners to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy
- Efforts toward special care for the sick and dying
- Tangible concern for the poor, the afflicted, the lonely, the exiled
- Fostering of solid Christian family life
- Promotion of the lay apostolate
- Strengthening of extra-parochial relationships with the bishop, diocesan and other pastoral programs, and with the universal Church

***Relationship with the Parish Finance Council***

- It must be clearly understood that these are two distinct parish councils; neither council is subordinate to the other. Each has a distinct purpose. Each relates directly to the pastor, not to the other parish council.
- Liaison between these councils can be achieved, e.g., by requiring exchange of minutes of meetings, perhaps by requiring a member of each council to serve on the other, by determining a “job description and terms of reference” for each council, by providing adequate formation of the members of both councils.

**Note:** The pastor is to listen to the advice of the parish pastoral council. Although the pastor is not obliged to follow the recommendations of the parish pastoral council, the pastor should not act against such advice, especially when there is consensus, unless there is an overriding reason. In other words, the prudent pastor would not ignore the advice of the parish pastoral council unless there were a serious reason to do so. When acting contrary to its recommendations, the pastor should provide an explanation.