

**Constitution and By-Laws  
of the  
Saint Cecilia Parish Pastoral Council**

A. Constitution of the St Cecilia Parish Pastoral Council

1. The Code of Canon Law states that:
  - a. “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” (Canon 536, par.1).
  - b. “This pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by norms determined by the diocesan bishop” (Canon 536, par. 2).
  - c. “Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard for the prescription of canon 532” (Canon 537).
2. Every parish in the Archdiocese of Boston is to establish a parish pastoral council.
3. Parishes with an existing parish council should make the necessary changes in their constitutions and by-laws to conform to the guidelines published by the Office of the Synod of the Archdiocese of Boston.

B. Purpose and Objectives of the Parish Pastoral Council

1. Purpose: To assist the pastor in his leadership role of planning, organizing, initiating, promoting, coordinating and reviewing the evangelization, worship, religious education and service activities within the parish.
2. Objectives:
  - a. To assess 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. To foster unity and a sense of community in the parish and to coordinate all parish activities in a manner that will best serve the interests of the parish.
  - c. To promote programs and activities recommended by the Archbishop, Archdiocesan offices and agencies as well as the pastoral council itself.

## C. Membership of the Parish Pastoral Council

1. Number of members.
  - a. The pastor, after consultation with the parish pastoral staff, shall determine the number of members of the PPC, and the number of those to be elected and appointed.
  - b. The appropriate total number of members depends on the size of the parish, and ordinarily, shall not be less than ten, nor more than twenty.
2. *Ex officio* members shall be the pastor, parochial vicars, assigned permanent deacons and pastoral associates, if any.
3. Elected and appointed members:
  - a. Qualifications. Each elected or appointed member of the PPC shall:
    - a) Be a Catholic who is registered and active in the parish.
    - b) Be a participant in the sacramental life of the Church.
  - b. Term of office. The elected and appointed members of the PPC shall serve staggered three-year terms, such that each year, one third of the elected and appointed membership shall be elected or appointed. One third of the initial elected and appointed members (Class A) shall be elected or appointed for a one-year term; one third (Class B) for a two-year term; and one third (Class C) for a three-year term. Thereafter, one third of the PPC shall be elected or appointed each year for a three-year term. If the number of elected or appointed members of the PPC is at any time enlarged or reduced, the enlargement or reduction shall be apportioned as evenly as possible among the three classes of members so as to maintain three approximately equal classes of elected and appointed members serving staggered three-year terms. Members may serve a maximum of two consecutive two- or three-year terms.
4. Selection process for elected members
  - a. The parish will ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the selection process.
  - b. At the first meeting of the PPC following Christmas, the pastor, with the advice of the PPC, shall appoint an Election Committee to receive written statements of candidacy from parish members and to organize and conduct an election to the PPC to be held no later than May 31. No candidate for election shall be a member of the Election Committee. Candidates for election must indicate their willingness to serve.
  - c. The number of Nominees equal to the number of open elective positions on the PPC who receive the highest number of votes cast by registered

parishioners shall be elected to the PPC to serve until the expiration of their terms and until their successors, if any, are elected and qualified.

d. If a member cannot or does not fulfill his/her term prior to six months before the end of the term, the pastor will appoint a member to finish said term.

e. The pastor, with the advice of the Election Committee and/or the PPC, may establish further regulations to carry out the election process whenever necessary.

5. Appointed members: The pastor may appoint members to the PPC. Since the election process may result in a membership not sufficiently representative of the total parish community, the pastor may appoint members to the council to achieve this goal. The number of appointed members is not to exceed twenty-five percent of the total number of members.

#### D. Organization of the Parish Pastoral Council

1. The pastor of the parish is chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council.
2. The members of the PPC elect a vice chairperson each year.
  - a. The vice chairperson meets with the pastor to prepare the agenda for each meeting.
  - b. At the pastor's discretion, the vice chairperson or another member of the PPC may moderate the meeting of the PPC.
  - c. In the event of the pastor's absence from a regularly scheduled meeting of the PPC, the vice chairperson moderates the meeting. In the pastor's absence, the Council may not undertake new business, or business which is not included on the agenda.
3. Meetings of the PPC
  - a. Only the pastor and, during a vacancy of the pastorate, the senior parochial vicar or the Archdiocesan-appointed administrator, may call a meeting of the PPC.
  - b. A minimum of five regularly scheduled meetings of the PPC occur during the year.
  - c. Meetings of the PPC are generally open to all parishioners. Public meeting times will be announced in advance via parish website and bulletin.
  - d. Parish staff who are not members of the PPC are encouraged to attend, particularly when their ministry is being discussed.

- e. The pastor may call for an executive session when appropriate.
4. It is the task of each PPC to adopt rules of order for the conduct of its meetings. These rules must reflect a true Christian spirit of concern for all the members of the PPC and the parish.
5. The PPC may elect from its members such other officers as are required to meet the needs of the Council, e.g., recording secretary, executive committee member.
6. The minutes of every public meeting of the PPC should be readily available to parishioners.
7. In the event that the pastor of the parish dies, resigns or is transferred, the primary function of the PPC, providing counsel to the pastor, ceases. However, during the vacancy of the pastorate, the PPC assists the senior parochial vicar or the Archdiocesan-appointed administrator with the preparation of the materials for the parish profile for the consultation meetings. The PPC also helps in the welcoming of the new pastor. After the new pastor has been installed, he shall reconvene the existing PPC within two months.

#### E. Scope and authority

1. As a consultative body, the PPC is responsible to the pastor, assisting and supporting him in his leadership role. It recognizes the varied gifts of the parish members and invites them to an active leadership role in the parish.
  - a. The PPC should be an important means by which the pastor will hear the voice of the parish.
  - b. Through its deliberations and consultation with the pastor, the PPC helps to unite the pastor and parishioners. Together they discern the pastoral needs of the parish and ways in which those needs can be addressed.
2. In the event that the pastor and the PPC develop serious and continuous conflict so that they cannot work together productively, the pastor must request the assistance of the vicar or regional bishop in facilitating a reconciliation. Should this not occur, the vice chairperson may make recourse to the same individuals.

#### F. Characteristics of the Parish Pastoral Council

1. *Prayerful.* The Council devotes time to reflective prayer at each meeting and makes provision at least once a year to have some special time or meetings spent together solely in prayer, reflection and spiritual sharing.
2. *Pastoral.* The Council is pastoral in the sense that its purpose is to assist in the development of an overall mission plan for the parish in order to make Christ evermore present to the parishioners and to the wider community.

3. *Representative.* The Council members represent the entire parish community and exercise their responsibility with a concern that includes all parishioners. Ideally, the Council will include representation from the Back Bay and Fenway neighborhoods.
4. *Discerning.* Through a prayerful consensus process, the Council merges the diverse experiences, skills and gifts of the council members, and having listened to the parishioners' needs and ideas, discerns recommendations concerning the direction and priorities of the parish.
5. *Responsive.* The Council has a responsibility to be sensitive to and cognizant of justice and peace issues at the local, national and international levels.
6. *Enabling.* In the spirit of God's love, the members of the PPC strive to recognize and support each other's gifts and seek ways in which each parishioner's gifts may surface, grow and flourish for the good of the Church.

#### G. Relationship With the Parish Finance Council

1. The responsibility for providing counsel to the pastor concerning the administration of the parish finances, budget, and property is vested in the Finance Council.
2. In order to assure good communication, a member of the Parish Finance Council is appointed to the PPC by the pastor, if such a person has not already been elected in the regular election process. Alternatively, a PPC member may be appointed to the Parish Finance Council.
3. Each year the Parish Finance Council assists the pastor in making a report to the PPC concerning the finances and property of the parish.

#### H. Relationship With Parish Commissions

1. General guidelines for the establishment of parish commissions are found in the Appendix.
2. The PPC must have a close working relationship with the parish commissions.
3. The PPC needs to be aware of all parish activities; however, it is not within the purview of the PPC to direct parish activities.
4. Commission reports should be a standard part of the PPC's agenda so that the work of the commissions can be evaluated, supported and developed.

#### I. Amendments

1. These By-laws may be amended by the PPC with the approval of the pastor.

#### Appendix: Parish Commissions

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1. Each commission will be established by the pastor, after consultation with the PPC, to assist the parish in carrying out various services for all its members. Each commission will concentrate on a certain area of parish life, for example liturgy, religious education, Christian service, justice and peace, pro-life, family life.
2. Commissions work as advisory bodies to the pastor and to the pastoral staff. Members of the PPC may also be members of particular parish commissions, but as members of the PPC their role is not as a representative of the particular commission.
3. When the pastor establishes a commission, he provides a statement of purpose for the commission. This statement should include:
  - a. The duties and term of the commission.
  - b. A statement of the value of the commission's work within the mission of the parish and the Church.
  - c. A reminder to the commission to use some of its time in prayer and spiritual reflection for the enrichment of its members and for attaining the purpose of the commission.
  - d. Any other matters relevant to the particular commission.
4. When a commission is established, basic regulations for the commission should be established, such as:
  - a. Number of commission members.
  - b. Length of term for members.
  - c. Method of election or appointment of members.
  - d. Method of appointment or election of a commission chairperson and a recording secretary.
  - e. Method of reporting on commission work to the pastor and the PPC, and through them to the parish.
5. The commission establishes its own internal rules, such as frequency and conduct of meetings, voting procedures and other rules for harmony within the commission.

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