

---

# **DIOCESAN NORMS**

---

## **PARISH PASTORAL and FINANCE COUNCILS**

---

# **DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK**

---

**February 26, 1998**

**Diocese of Little Rock  
2500 North Tyler Street  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72207**

**Tel: 501-664-0340**

**Fax: 501-664-9075**

## **PRAYER OF THE VATICAN COUNCIL FATHERS**

We are here before You, O Holy Spirit, conscious of our sinfulness, but united in a special way in Your Holy Name. Come and abide with us. Penetrate our hearts. Be the guide of our actions, indicate the path we should take, and show us what we must do so that, with Your help, our work may be pleasing to You in every way. May You be our only inspiration and the overseer of our intentions, for You alone possess a glorious name together with the Father and the Son. May You, who are infinite justice, never permit that we be disturbers of justice. Let not our ignorance induce us to evil, nor flattery sway us, nor moral and material interest corrupt us. But unite our hearts to You alone, and do it strongly, so that, with the gift of Your grace, we may be one in You and may in nothing depart from the truth. Amen.

It is believed that this prayer was composed by St. Isidore of Seville, to be used during the Second Provincial Council of Toledo, Spain, in 633. With this prayer the sessions of the First Vatican Council began, in 1869. It was again used before every meeting (in Latin) of the preparatory and conciliar commissions of The Second Vatican council (1962-1965).

## **PREFACE**

Canon 536 §1. 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 §2. This pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by norms determined by the diocesan bishop.

Canon 537 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.

*From the 1983 Code of Canon Law*

**Table of Contents**

NATURE AND PURPOSE.....4

STRUCTURE.....5

MEMBERSHIP.....5

ELECTIONS/APPOINTMENTS/TERMS OF OFFICE .....6

OFFICERS/CONSTITUTIONS/MEETINGS.....7

## **NATURE AND PURPOSE**

1. The pastoral council required by Bishop Andrew J. McDonald in accord with the 1983 Code of Canon Law (Canon 536) is a consultative body to the pastor who has ultimate responsibility for the pastoral care of the parish. The council uses prayer, discussion, and recommendations to assist the pastor in making and carrying out decisions regarding all aspects of parish life and the mission of the Church.
  
2. To adequately address the life of the parish and the mission of the Church, the pastoral council should be concerned with at least the following five ministry areas:
  - A. Liturgy
  - B. Education & Formation
  - C. Social Justice & Charitable Outreach
  - D. Parish Life
  - E. Finance & Administration
  
3. The finance council required by the 1983 Code of Canon Law (Canon 537) is a consultative body to the pastor who represents the parish in all juridic affairs and must see to it that the goods of the parish are properly administered (Canon 532). The finance council, like the pastoral council, uses prayer, discussion, and recommendations to assist the pastor in the administration of goods.
  
4. The finance council will act as a consultative body to the pastor in two areas: “extraordinary” acts of finance and administration and “ordinary” acts of finance and administration. For extraordinary acts of finance and administration, the pastor must consult with the finance council and the pastoral council with regard to taking action.
  
5. The following are defined as “extraordinary acts” of finance and administration for parishes in the Diocese of Little Rock:
  - A. Leasing real church property (whether as lessor or lessee).
  - B. Recommending actions to the Bishop with regard to the purchase or sale of real estate.
  - C. Any capital improvement, repair, or purchase exceeding \$2,000 or 1% of the annual parish revenue, whichever is greater. (Note: All renovation, repair and construction of any church property exceeding a dollar amount set by the Diocesan Building Commission also must be approved by that commission and the Bishop.)
  - D. The acceptance or change in status of gifts, bequests, or memorials offered to the parish which carry with them some restriction.
  - E. Giving large donations or parish goods to charitable causes.
  - F. Initiating or contesting a law suit.
  - G. Instituting financial campaigns, drives, special collections, or major fund raising events other than those required by the diocese.
  
6. “Ordinary acts” of finance and administration are those acts of finance and administration which

are not defined as “extraordinary acts” in Norm number 5 above. “Ordinary acts” may also be performed by the finance council. Some examples of ordinary acts of finance and administration are:

- A. Assisting with budget preparation and tracking
- B. Preparing of financial reports (monthly, quarterly, etc)
- C. Helping to see that parish buildings and property are properly maintained
- D. Evaluating insurance coverage needs
- E. Evaluating financial needs; etc.

### **STRUCTURE**

7. While the purpose of all pastoral and finance councils is essentially the same, the structure of these councils may vary somewhat from parish to parish with one exception: in the Diocese of Little Rock, the finance council will function as a committee of the pastoral council.

8. Recommended council structures and procedures can be found in the manual: Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils: Implementation Guide. Pastors and councils are strongly encouraged to follow these recommendations as much as possible. *[Note: The Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils: Implementation Guide is no longer available. 10-8-2015 MAG]*

### **MEMBERSHIP**

9. The pastor is not a member of the pastoral council or the finance council but presides over them. The pastor presides by:

- A. Working with the councils to set the meeting agendas.
- B. Being present and participating at all council meetings.
- C. Making certain that the councils remain aware of all aspects of the parish and the Church’s mission.
- D. Helping the councils build an atmosphere of Christian community and trust based on prayer.

10. “Pastoral administrators” officially appointed by the Bishop have the same relationship to the pastoral and finance councils as do pastors, i.e., they are not members of the councils and the councils are consultative to the administrators.

11. Other priests and deacons assigned to the parish are not members of the pastoral or the finance councils but should be present at the council meetings as needed or as directed by the pastor. Paid or volunteer staff members are not members of the pastoral or the finance councils but should be present at the council meetings as needed or as directed by the pastor. Paid staff members should not be appointed by the pastor to serve on either council but they may run for election to the pastoral council provided the parish pastoral council constitution specifically allows them to do so.

12. Besides actively practicing their Catholic faith, Council members must be at least eighteen years old and be registered members of the parish.
13. Pastoral councils should be no smaller than three members and no larger than twelve members.
14. Finance councils should be made up of at least three (3) members.
15. No presidents or leaders of organizations or boards will automatically have seats on the either council.

### **ELECTIONS/APPOINTMENTS / TERMS OF OFFICE**

16. Members of the pastoral council will be chosen through at-large parish elections or by appointment of the pastor. Members appointed by the pastor may not equal more than one-third of the total members of the council.
17. The pastor will appoint all the members of the finance council.
18. Because the finance council functions as a committee of the pastoral council, the pastor must ensure that at least one member of the finance council is a member of the pastoral council. This may be accomplished either by the pastor appointing at least one member of the finance council to the pastoral council or by the pastor designating one or more members of the pastoral council to serve on the finance council.
19. Members of both councils should serve staggered terms of no more than three years and normally may only be renewed for one additional term. On an individual basis, the pastor may allow a member to serve longer due to pastoral reasons or because of special needed expertise.
20. In consultation with the pastoral council, the pastor should ensure that any vacancies on the pastoral council are filled for the remainder of the term.
21. The election process for new pastoral council members and the appointment of new finance council members shall be completed annually. Each parish shall select the month in which election/appointments are to occur each year. Parishes are strongly encouraged to specify the time for election/appointments in their Parish Pastoral/Finance Council Constitution.

The Diocesan Lay Ministry Office is responsible for providing workshops for new council members on an area wide basis during each calendar quarter. Pastors are to ensure that all new council members attend the workshop as soon as possible following their election/appointment. *[Note: The Lay Ministry Office is no longer in existence and workshops are no longer available. 10-8-2015 MAG]*

### **OFFICERS/CONSTITUTIONS/MEETINGS**

22. For every pastoral council, three officers will be established. A chair, vice-chair, and secretary should be selected by the council from among its members. A “recording secretary” who is not a member of the council may also be used to help with the secretarial duties. One of the main responsibilities of the officers is to work with the pastor to set each meeting’s agenda. The chair normally conducts the council meetings over which the pastor presides.

23. The finance council may be chaired either by the pastor or by a finance council member. If a member is appointed by the pastor as chair, that person should work with the pastor to schedule meetings, prepare agendas, send out notices and minutes, and other duties designated by the pastor.

24. Pastoral councils’ constitutions should reflect the Diocesan Norms for Pastoral and Finance Council.

25. For Finance councils, formal constitutions and by-laws are not required. The finance council should be governed by the Code of Canon Law, the Diocesan Norms, and those parts of the pastoral council constitution which apply to the finance council.

26. Pastoral councils should meet at least quarterly, normally monthly.

27. Since the purpose of the councils is to provide consultation to the pastor on those matters he brings before them, the councils should not meet without the pastor. On those rare occasions when the pastor cannot be present due to other pressing needs, i.e., personal emergency, death of parishioner, etc., the councils may meet with the approval of the pastor.

28. Every council meeting will open with some form of communal prayer.

29. In the matter of parish schools, the pastoral and finance councils do not have any authority over the school or school board. However, the pastor must consult both councils in regards to the following three actions pertaining to the parish school:

A. Recommending to the Bishop that the parish open or close a school.

B. Construction projects pertaining to the school.

C. Decisions regarding the amount of subsidy the parish allocates to the school each year.

All other matters pertaining to the school and its operation (policies, textbooks, teachers, etc.) must be addressed through the principal, pastor and school board.