



**POLICY AND GUIDANCE
FOR**

**PASTORAL
COUNCILS**

2009

ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

Contents

Introduction

1. Pastoral Council in Every Parish	1
Key Elements of Pastoral Planning.....	1-2
2. Collaboration with the Pastor for Pastoral Planning.....	3
3. Consultative Body.....	4
4. Membership Reflects the Parish.....	5
Council Membership.....	5
Identifying Quality Council Members	6
Three Sample Ways to Select Council Members.....	6
Recommendations for Council Members	7
Organizing the Pastoral Council	8
Meetings of the Council.....	9
Development of Pastoral Councils.....	10
Archdiocese of Portland Pastoral Council Policy 2009	center pages
5. Foster Communion and Further Mission.....	11
6. Understanding the Mission	12
Universal Priorities.....	12-14
National Priorities.....	15
Local Priorities.....	15-16
7. Study, Reflection, Listening, Prayer, & Discernment.....	17
8. Relationship to the Parish Finance Council	18
9. Relationship of the Council to Other Pastoral Planning Bodies	19
Three Levels of Pastoral Planning.....	19-20
Pastoral Planning Meetings	20
10. Implementing and Monitoring the Pastoral Plan	21
11. Measuring the Pastoral Plan for Success	22
List of Resources to Aid Pastoral Councils.....	22
List of Resources Accompanying the 2009 Pastoral Council Policy...	back cover

Introduction

At a meeting between Area Vicars and Archdiocesan Pastoral Council regional representatives in February of 2008, it was recommended that the Archdiocese of Portland develop resources to help strengthen parish pastoral councils. As part of a plan to aid pastoral councils, it was suggested that an updated diocesan policy statement be prepared and issued. The restatement of Diocesan Policy on Pastoral Councils was promulgated by Archbishop Vlazny in August of 2009.

This booklet represents a continued effort to support and strengthen pastoral councils. It is intended to help parishes deepen their understanding of the nature and purpose of the pastoral council. It provides information to help with the formation and development of councils and it offers reflections to assist them in their work of pastoral planning.

The booklet is organized around the August 2009 statement of pastoral council policy. The policy presents eleven key elements, anchoring the principles and guidelines for pastoral council formation, activities, goals, and measurement of their success.

It is my hope that this restatement of policy will help to underscore the importance of parish pastoral councils in the life and mission of the church in western Oregon. ... It is helpful for pastoral councils to understand the important role that they play within the parish, the vicariate and the diocese.

—Letter from Archbishop Vlazny promulgating the updated policy on pastoral councils, addressed to Pastors and Parish Administrators, August 12, 2009

THE PRIMACY OF GRACE

If in the planning that awaits us we commit ourselves more confidently to a pastoral activity that gives personal and communal prayer its proper place, we shall be observing an essential principle of the Christian view of life: *the primacy of grace*. There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the Kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that “*without Christ we can do nothing*.”

—Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, John Paul II, 2001

1. Pastoral Council in Every Parish

Every parish shall have a pastoral council. The pastor, administrator or moderator, and pastoral administrator of a parish collaborates with it to investigate, consider and propose practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the parish. This collaboration is called “pastoral planning”. Parishes served by the same pastor are encouraged to have a joint pastoral council.

The Code of Canon Law gives the pastor who has been appointed by the bishop the overall responsibility for the pastoral care of a parish. It permits the bishop to require that parishes have pastoral councils to assist the pastor in planning for this pastoral care.

Today, there is a greater appreciation of the pastoral council’s role in the parish. Pastoral councils evidence a more collaborative way to carry out the mission of the Church. The pastoral council works together with the pastor to do pastoral planning. In so doing, the council participates in and supports the leadership role of the pastor. That is why pastoral councils are required in every parish in the Archdiocese of Portland. Pastors should value and fully embrace pastoral councils and encourage a fruitful exchange with the members so that the parish may benefit fully from the work of pastoral planning.

Where a single pastor or administrator is called upon to serve two parishes, a joint council can help to minimize the strain on the pastor.

The primary task of pastoral councils is to aid in the process of pastoral planning.

❖ Pastoral Planning

Pastoral planning is the prayerful process which turns parish vision into reality. It takes place through measured steps and involves understanding the mission of the parish, identifying pastoral priorities, setting goals and specifying objectives. It culminates in the writing of a pastoral plan.

Key Elements of Pastoral Planning: A Brief Outline

1. Understanding the Mission

The mission of a parish can be summarized using the concepts of word, worship, community, and service.

❖ Mission Statement

Brief, general statement which identifies and describes the purpose of the faith community.

2. Developing a Vision

The planning process involves a prayerful assessment of previous efforts of the parish, a determination of current needs, and a consideration of ways in which ongoing efforts might better foster communion and further the evangelizing mission of the Church.

❖ **Vision Statement**

Describes what the future will be like if the mission is achieved.

3. Setting Goals

The process of pastoral planning entails the establishing of pastoral priorities and setting goals.

❖ **Goal**

A clearly defined statement of desired direction or activity that is stated in general terms.

4. Outlining Objectives

Once goals are set, strategies or objectives are developed to accomplish the goals.

❖ **Objective**

Planned action that directs efforts toward attaining a goal. In addition to describing a result, an objective also specifies what is to be done, who is to do it, and when it is to be accomplished.

5. Implementing the Plan

After the goals and objectives have been accepted, the work of inviting people to bring the pastoral plan to life begins.

❖ **Implementation:**

The work is undertaken to bring the plan to fruition. People give their time and expertise to a process of development that yields measurable progress towards the objectives of the plan.

2. Collaboration with the Pastor for Pastoral Planning

The pastoral council works together with the pastor and serves as the primary pastoral planning body for the parish. The pastoral council meets at least four times per year with the pastor/administrator. It shall always respect the requirements of civil, church and diocesan law as well as the Church norms for pastoring.

❖ Collaboration

The act of working together to achieve a common purpose is called collaboration. True collaboration requires mutual love and respect between those who are working together. Collaboration helps to build communion; it is at the same time an expression of communion. The pastoral council is called upon to support the pastor by working together with him to fulfill the evangelizing mission of the Church. By consulting with the pastoral council, the pastor exhibits a collaborative style of leadership which affirms the baptismal call of the laity to participate fully in the life of the Church.

A bishop, in virtue of his call by the Church, has what is called the *triplex munus*, or three-fold responsibility. A bishop is called to be a priest, a teacher, and a pastor (older models use the images of priest, prophet, and king). In each diocese, the bishop ordains priests to be his collaborators in giving a shepherd's care to the people of God. Priests exercise this function primarily as pastors of parishes. Pastoral councils are charged with helping the pastor to carry out these three primary areas of responsibility in his ministry.

1. As pertains to his sanctifying mission (priest), the pastoral council must help the pastor provide opportunities for the people of the parish to grow in holiness, especially through the sacraments, through devotions, and through prayer.
2. As pertains to his teaching mission (teacher), the pastoral council must make sure that parishioners have appropriate opportunities for education and faith formation, not only for children, but also for adults.
3. As pertains to his pastoral mission (pastor), the council provides input on the establishment of pastoral priorities and the allocation of resources.

3. Consultative Body

The authority of the pastoral council is consultative or advisory. While a council chair normally runs the meeting, the pastor/administrator presides at the council in the sense that he discusses with and consults the council about pastoral matters. Authority to make pastoral decisions ultimately rests with the pastor/administrator who has been appointed by the bishop. A pastor shall carefully consider the deliberations and recommendations of the council. If the pastor ever acts contrary to the recommendations of the council, he shall offer a proper explanation to the members. In the absence of the pastor, a council may discuss matters, but it does not make final determinations.

❖ Consultation

Consultation is the act of conferring with others in order to make a decision or assess a situation. The relationship between the pastor and the pastoral council is one of consultation. The pastor respects and trusts the judgment of his councilors and so he confers with them about pastoral matters. Likewise, the councilors respect the unique role of the pastor as canonical head of the parish and strive to offer sound advice.

4. Membership Reflects the Parish

The pastoral council includes people selected from the parish together with those who share in pastoral care of the people by virtue of their office. The method of selection rests with each parish. The membership of the pastoral council should reflect the overall membership of the parish. Members of the pastoral council should be baptized Catholics. Any member who may have a conflict of interest in a council matter under discussion would not normally participate in the discussion and recommendation. Such judgment is left to the pastor.

Council Membership

The purpose of the pastoral council is to collaborate with the pastor to do pastoral planning for the parish. The heart of the council is its members. Many factors contribute to good pastoral planning, but perhaps no factor is more important than having quality council members. Successful pastoral planning is best achieved with good members.

Canon law stipulates that pastoral council members should be Christians in full communion with the Catholic Church, and that they be outstanding in faith, morals, and prudence. An effective pastoral council reflects the interests of the larger community, deliberating and advising on behalf of the whole community rather than on behalf of any constituency groups within it. An important council responsibility is leadership within the larger faith community. Council members must be willing to give time to prepare for and attend meetings of the council as well as to solicit ideas and provide constructive input.

Because the primary focus of a council's work is pastoral planning, certain skills and expertise can be especially helpful, such as competency in planning, information gathering and presentation, organizational development, group process, hospitality and outreach, and human relations. Skills geared to the particular priorities of the parish are also important considerations. A good mix of members will bring a range of personal and professional capabilities and the council will benefit from persons with different perspectives and disciplines.

Pastoral council members should have the ability to study matters deeply, reflect on them thoroughly, and draw sound conclusions. Detecting these talents in an individual considering council membership takes skill, whether the process is undertaken by the pastor, a screening committee, or through a process of self-evaluation by the candidates. Careful discernment should be a key part of any method that is chosen to select council members. One way to assist evaluating potential members is through assessments of the unique characteristics of current or recent council members, examining qualities that contribute to their effectiveness in fulfilling the council's mission.

Identifying Quality Council Members

A pastoral council member should be:

In full communion with the Catholic Church (CCL 512)

One who exhibits good faith, morals, and prudence (CCL 512)

One who nourishes a deep prayer life and exhibits an active faith life.

One who is able to collaborate effectively with others.

One who values consensus, is open to new ideas, and can set aside personal agendas to listen.

One who can discern.

One who can study, reflect, and recommend practical conclusions

A baptized Catholic

A member of the parish

Pastoral Council membership may be arrived at by several means. Some members may be appointed by the pastor, and others may be nominated or volunteer for the position and then be elected by some means or accepted through a process of discernment.

Three Sample Ways to Select Council Members

A. Election

Elections are most often parish-wide events. They can help to ensure that the whole parish has an opportunity to offer input about who is selected for the council. Elected members are confirmed by the pastor.

B. Nomination and Appointment

Trusted colleagues of the pastor or parishioners at large can submit nominations. Or, a nominating committee can be formed to identify and nominate parishioners for council membership. Accepting nominations from the broadest base can help to ensure that capable candidates are not overlooked. The pastor can make appointments from the list of those nominated. Or, the council itself can discern and recommend members from the list of nominations.

C. Direct Invitation by the Pastor

The guidelines for many pastoral councils include a proviso that allows the pastor to directly appoint a limited number of members to the council. This ensures that the council membership is a balanced and representative voice for the entire parish. Direct appointments allow membership consideration for such factors as gender, race, age, apostolate, and even the time of Mass attendance.

Recommendations for Council Members

Many new council members ask “How can I be a good pastoral council member?” Here are some suggestions:

Holiness

Grow in holiness through prayer and devotion to the Sunday Eucharist.

Participate regularly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Go quarterly or even monthly.

Be attentive to the Word of God in the scriptures and share that word with others.

Read the Sunday scriptures before attending Mass.

Focus on living out that word during the week.

Develop a spirituality of communion by loving others as Christ has loved you and learning to see the good in every person.

Pray

Remember the people of the parish and the pastor in your daily prayers. Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide the parish in living out the call of the Gospel. Invoke the patron saint or the namesake of the parish.

Stay Active

Continue to be involved in the life and ministry of your parish.

Show Up

Attend the council meetings. Your attendance at council meetings is perhaps the best way to express your support and commitment to the work of the pastoral council.

Stay Informed

Read your parish bulletin weekly.

Read the Catholic Sentinel and the bishop’s column.

Visit your parish website regularly.

Talk to parishioners about their ongoing experience and involvement in the parish.

Learn

Learn about the nature and mission of the Catholic Church.

Know the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching as outlined by the U.S. Bishops.

Understand the three goals of Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States.

Speak and Listen

Don’t be afraid to share your own opinions, but be sure to listen and be open to the ideas of others.

Organizing the Pastoral Council

ROLES

The Pastoral council is headed by the pastor. Other pastoral leaders of the church, including parochial vicars and deacons would, by virtue of their office, contribute to the deliberations of the council. In addition, parish pastoral staff members whose work is relevant to the council's considerations and activities are also commonly participants, though they are not usually members proper. The primary role of the pastoral staff is to implement the directives of the pastor in serving the people of God.

A substantial portion of the council, usually at least half, should be comprised of lay members of the parish. Strictly speaking, council members are not representatives of particular groups or constituencies. They are present simply and importantly as living and active members of the body of Christ. This group of council members is sometimes designated as the "consensus body," that is, they are the members who are being asked to come to a consensus about recommendations to the pastor – with the assistance of clergy and pastoral staff. Each pastoral council should have its own guidelines that define the membership and activities of the Council.

SIZE

The size of the pastoral council will be determined by the pastor in consultation with parish members. Size of the parish is an important factor in establishing the size of the council. There is no ideal size, but a council that is too small may struggle to provide adequate expertise, diversity of views, and wide representation of the parish community. A council that is too large may have inadequate time for its members to be heard and may have greater difficulty reaching consensus. The parish council guidelines should specify a minimum and maximum size. Between five and twelve members is usually sufficient. Some councils find that nine members works well, along with a staggered, three year term. In this case, three members are replaced each year.

TERMS

Parishioners on the council serve a term that is also determined by the pastor in consultation with parish members. Although there is not an ideal length of term, most parishes opt for a three year term. One year terms are generally too short for consistency in pastoral planning. A term that is too long can lead to entrenchment of certain positions and inadequate input from new members who can bring fresh perspective and ideas. Normally, the members of the parish council serve staggered terms so that there will be continuity on the council from year to year. Sometimes, a single membership "seat" can be occupied by a married couple. Smaller parishes may need to have fewer members on the council due to lack of a sufficient number who are willing and capable of such service. Smaller parishes sometimes lengthen the term of office in order to maintain adequate council size. Oftentimes, parishes set a two or three consecutive term limit.

Meetings of the Council

Councils are required to meet at least four times per year to allow adequate time for pastoral planning. Most pastoral councils meet monthly. Meetings are often scheduled for an hour and a half to two hours. Councils who meet less frequently often schedule longer meetings. To minimize interruption by holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, scheduling meetings close to the beginning of each month is a useful practice. The monthly meeting of the entire pastoral council may be insufficient for dealing with the full range of pastoral planning activities, so groups are often formed to undertake deeper study and pursue further actions.

Normally, a chairperson or facilitator runs the meeting. A chair, or facilitator, can be voted on or otherwise selected by the councilors or may be appointed by the pastor. The term of a facilitator varies. It can be a one-year term that is renewable. A term of at least two years ensures some consistency in leadership.

Meeting Agenda

The agenda should include substantial time for prayer together. When a council is growing in faith together, it serves as a leaven for the entire parish community. Consider including several minutes at the beginning of the meeting for socializing or allow time for a personal check-in amongst members. Growing in communion is one of the objectives of pastoral planning. When council members get to know each other better, they are building communion within the parish and are already achieving one of their goals as a council.

In times past agendas often appeared as follows:

- Opening prayer
- Secretary's report
- Approval of minutes
- Old business
- New business
- Adjournment

Today, an agenda might look more like this:

- Gathering prayer or ritual
- Brief check-in by council members
- Study and reflection
- Dialogue about long range goals
- Listening to the pastor's concerns
- Identifying next steps
- Sharing announcements,
- Sending forth prayer.

Any style of agenda which facilitates pastoral planning in your parish can be used.

Development of Pastoral Councils

An important aim of the materials presented here is to aid the development of pastoral councils. Since the first modern parish councils were formed after the Second Vatican Council, there has been a clear evolution. Earlier approaches have given way to newer approaches that reflect the wisdom and insights gained over the years.

The direction of change was well depicted by the Diocese of Oakland in its 2006 Suggestions for Pastoral Councils:

MOVEMENTS

FROM:

Parish Council
Board of Directors
Representatives
Coordinating Ministries
Crisis Management
Doing Activities
Business and Politics
Competition
Voting on Issues
Committee Reporting
Elected by Popularity
Constitutions/By-laws

TO:

▶ *Pastoral Council*
▶ *Spiritual Directors*
▶ *A Visioning Body*
▶ *Articulating the Mission*
▶ *Pastoral Planning and Goals*
▶ *Empowering Parishioners*
▶ *Prayer and Discernment*
▶ *Collaboration*
▶ *Building Consensus*
▶ *Active Listening*
▶ *Selecting by Gifts (Charisms)*
▶ *Guidelines*

ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND

PASTORAL COUNCIL POLICY 2009

1. Pastoral Council in Every Parish

Every parish shall have a pastoral council. The pastor, administrator or moderator and pastoral administrator of a parish collaborates with it to investigate, consider and propose practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the parish. This collaboration is called “pastoral planning”. Parishes served by the same pastor are encouraged to have a joint pastoral council.

2. Collaboration with the Pastor for Pastoral Planning

The pastoral council works together with the pastor and serves as the primary pastoral planning body for the parish. The pastoral council meets at least four times per year with the pastor/administrator. It shall always respect the requirements of civil, church and diocesan law as well as the Church norms for pastoring.

3. Consultative Body

The authority of the pastoral council is consultative or advisory. While a council chair normally runs the meeting, the pastor/administrator presides at the council in the sense that he discusses with and consults the council about pastoral matters. Authority to make pastoral decisions ultimately rests with the pastor/administrator who has been appointed by the bishop. A pastor shall carefully consider the deliberations and recommendations of the council. If the pastor ever acts contrary to the recommendations of the council, he shall offer a proper explanation to the members. In the absence of the pastor, a council may discuss matters, but it does not make final determinations.

4. Membership Reflects the Parish

The pastoral council includes people selected from the parish together with those who share in pastoral care of the people by virtue of their office. The method of selection rests with each parish. The membership of the pastoral council should reflect the overall membership of the parish. Members of the pastoral council should be baptized Catholics. Any member who may have a conflict of interest in a council matter under discussion would not normally participate in the discussion and recommendation. Such judgment is left to the pastor.

5. Foster Communion and Further Mission

The purpose of the pastoral council is to advise the pastor on practical matters; especially those matters which pertain to advancing the faith life of the parish and furthering the mission of the Church. To this end, the pastoral council develops and recommends pastoral plans. Whenever possible, pastoral plans take written form. The pastoral plan is shared with the entire parish and is made available to the diocese.

6. Understanding the Mission

All pastoral planning is done in light of the Scriptures – especially the Gospels, and in light of Church documents which expound the mission of the Church. Even those documents yet to be published, which re-state or give renewed insight into the communion and mission of the Church can also be considered and consulted during the pastoral planning process. (See list of recommended documents.)

7. Study, Reflection, Listening, Prayer & Discernment

Pastoral councils study and reflect on the life and mission of the Church. They also study and reflect on the circumstances of the members of the parish and the community in which the parish is located. Through prayer and discernment they determine how communion and mission can be lived more fully at this particular time in this particular parish. Special attention is paid to the poor. Pastoral planning flows as a result of this process. To the extent possible, reaching a consensus on recommendations for a pastoral plan is the goal.

8. Relationship to the Parish Finance Council.

Canon Law requires a finance council in every parish to advise the pastor and the parish on parish finances, property and other resources. The finance council is independent from the pastoral council, but the two councils should collaborate when necessary to insure that the pastoral plan is within the means of the parish and the budget reflects the pastoral priorities of the parish.

9. Relationship of the Council to other Pastoral Planning Bodies

There are three levels of pastoral planning in the Archdiocese of Portland: parish, vicariate and diocese. Pastoral planning on all three levels should take into account and influence the planning done at each of the other levels. Every year, the pastoral council chairpersons and the pastoral council members participate in an Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils. Every three years, the pastoral council chairperson and a delegate from each parish council attend an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly. At the assembly, members are elected by vicariates to serve on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council.

10. Implementing and Monitoring the Pastoral Plan

Once it has been developed and put in written form, the pastoral plan for the parish should be monitored and evaluated as it is administered and as it unfolds. It is the responsibility of the pastor, professional staff and volunteers to implement the pastoral plan. At the direction of the pastor, council members can assist in its implementation. Because unforeseen needs sometimes arise and times and situations change, the pastoral plan should be continually updated by the pastoral council.

11. Measuring the Pastoral Plan for Success

Although times and people change, the mission of the Church is always the same. It is the mission of Christ: to bring all people to know, love and serve God the Father and one another. Pastoral planning is successful to the extent that it encourages and helps us to grow in love for God and live our lives for others.

5. Foster Communion and Further Mission

The purpose of the pastoral council is to advise the pastor on practical matters; especially those matters which pertain to advancing the faith life of the parish and furthering the mission of the Church. To this end, the pastoral council develops and recommends pastoral plans. Whenever possible, pastoral plans take written form. The pastoral plan is shared with the entire parish and is made available to the diocese.

Pastoral council deliberations and activities should be pursued with awareness of the need for communion. The Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* points to this universal call:

Communion must be cultivated and extended day by day and at every level in the structures of each Church's life. There, relations...must all be clearly characterized by communion. ...To this end...the Pastoral Council must be ever more highly valued. The theology and spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between pastors and faithful.... While the wisdom of the law, by providing precise rules for participation, attests to the hierarchical structure of the Church...the spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul.

Fostering communion is essential for successfully carrying out the mission of evangelization. As part of building communion, the work of pastoral planning should seek to engage the entire parish. Parishioners should be informed about the ongoing work of the pastoral council through pulpit announcements, bulletin inserts and other means of communication. For the success of pastoral planning, it is important that the parish understand what the pastoral council is and what it does. A written pastoral plan should be provided to the parish when it is completed.

6. Understanding the Mission

All pastoral planning is done in light of the Scriptures – especially the Gospels, and in light of Church documents which expound the mission of the Church. Even those documents yet to be published, which re-state or give renewed insight into the communion and mission of the Church can also be considered and consulted during the pastoral planning process. (See the attached appendix for a list of recommended documents.)

In order to successfully accomplish its task of pastoral planning, the pastoral council must grow in its understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. Pastoral planning always takes into account scriptural imperatives, the teachings of the Church, and national, local, and regional pastoral initiatives. All of this provides a context for planning at the parish level.

Now is the time for each local Church to assess its fervor and find fresh enthusiasm for its spiritual and pastoral responsibilities, by reflecting on what the Spirit has been saying to the People of God.... I therefore earnestly exhort the Pastors of the particular Churches, with the help of all sectors of God's People, confidently to plan the stages of the journey ahead, harmonizing the choices of each diocesan community with those of neighboring Churches and of the universal Church..... What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization — a work involving all of us.

—Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, John Paul II, 2001

Universal Priorities

The following Universal Church goals, outlined by Pope John Paul II in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, provide an excellent context from which to begin the pastoral planning process:

Growing in holiness

...I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness. Novo Millennio, 30

Chapter five of the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium* is dedicated to the “universal call to holiness”. The call to holiness is an intrinsic and essential aspect of the Christian Life.

Deepening our life of prayer

It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key point of all pastoral planning. Novo Millennio, 34

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, our Christian communities must become genuine “schools” of prayer.... Novo Millennio, 33

Being devoted to the Sunday Eucharist

...I therefore wish to insist that sharing in the Eucharist should really be the heart of Sunday for every baptized person. The Sunday Eucharist...is the privileged place where communion is ceaselessly proclaimed and nurtured. Novo Millennio, 36

Commitment to the Sacrament of Reconciliation

I am also asking for renewed pastoral courage in ensuring that the day-to-day teaching of Christian communities persuasively and effectively presents the practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Novo Millennio, 37

Listening to the Word of God and Studying It

There is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed listening to the word of God. Novo Millennio, 39

Proclaiming the Word

To nourish ourselves with the word in order to be “servants of the word” in the work of evangelization; this is surely a priority for the Church at the dawn of the new millennium. ...Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. Novo Millennio, 40

Youth and Young Adult Ministry

In making these recommendations, I am thinking especially of the pastoral care of young people. Novo Millennio, 40

Being Witnesses to Love

“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). If we have truly contemplated the face of Christ, dear Brothers and Sisters, our pastoral planning will necessarily be inspired by the “new commandment” which he gave us: “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34.) Novo Millennio, 42

Communion

This is the other important area in which there has to be commitment and planning...the domain of communion (koinonia). Novo Millennio, 42

The Church is a communion of love. Pastoral planning is always faithful to the will of God when it seeks to make the Church a place of communion. The essence of the Church is revealed to the extent that it is in communion with God and with neighbor.

“Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion.” Novo Millennio, 43

Wherever anyone is formed in the Christian faith, developing a spirituality of communion should be the guiding principle. A spirituality of communion is fostered and formed whenever a heart contemplates the mystery of the Trinity dwelling within us. To the extent that we recognize the face of God in each of our brothers and sisters, we are living out a spirituality of communion. When we truly understand and appreciate that every person is united together in a profound unity to form the mystical body of Christ, we participate more deeply in the spirituality of communion.

The Diversity of Vocations

The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. It is the reality of many members joined in a single body, the one Body of Christ. Novo Millennio, 46

All of the baptized and confirmed are called to understand their responsibility in the life of the Church. All have a part to play in fulfilling the ministries and charitable works that sustain and contribute to the building up of the community. Each person must be encouraged to listen and respond to God's unique call.

Promotion of Forms of Association

Promote hospitality and build community:

...ecclesial movements...continue to give the Church a vitality that is God's gift.... Novo, 46

Pastoral Care of the Family

...special attention must also be given to the pastoral care of the family.... Novo, 47

Ecumenism

Strengthening our relations with other faith communities:

And what should we say of the urgent task of fostering communion in the delicate area of ecumenism? Novo, 48

Charity and Concern for the Poor

Beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity of its nature opens out into a service that is universal; it inspires in us a commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being. This too is an aspect which must clearly mark the Christian life, the Church's whole activity and her pastoral planning. The century and the millennium now beginning will need to see, and hopefully with still greater clarity, to what length of dedication the Christian community can go in charity towards the poorest. If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me: (Mt. 25:35-37). This Gospel text is not a simple invitation to charity: it is a page of Christology which sheds a ray of light on the mystery of Christ. By these words, no less than by the orthodoxy of her doctrine, the Church measures her fidelity as the Bride of Christ. Novo, 49

Environmental Concerns

...how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an ecological crisis...? Novo, 51

Respect for the Life of Every Human Being

A special commitment is needed with regard to certain aspects of the Gospel's radical message which are often less well understood, even to the point of making the Church's presence unpopular, but which nevertheless must be a part of her mission of charity. I am speaking of the duty to be committed to respect for the life of every human being, from conception until natural death. Novo Millennio, 51

National Priorities

Many pastoral resources result from the collaboration of bishops in the United States. The two presented here are invaluable for understanding the nature and mission of the Church.

Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the U.S. – approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992. This document on evangelization presents three goals for the Catholic Church in the United States.

Goal I: To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.

Goal II: To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic Faith.

Goal III: To foster Gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.

Catholic social teaching contains many principles which form the basis for Christian living in the world. These principles have been summarized by the U. S. bishops in order to serve as a starting point for better understanding and appreciating the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching.

Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person
2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation
3. Rights and Responsibilities
4. Option for the poor and vulnerable
5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
6. Solidarity
7. Care for God's Creation

Local Priorities

Many of the pastoral priorities outlined by the universal Church, as well as those emphasized on the national level, are reflected in the pastoral planning that has been done by the Archdiocese of Portland. These local priorities were recommended to the Archbishop by the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) after a process that involved input from the parishes and vicariates. The Archbishop has formally adopted these priorities for the Archdiocese of Portland.

I. Faith Formation at All Levels

That is Eucharist-centered

That Facilitates a Personal Encounter with Christ

Catholics of all age groups are hungry for their faith. They are seeking a deeper relationship with God and a better understanding of their Catholic faith. It is the aim of the Church to help foster and fulfill these desires and to walk with all baptized believers on the path to holiness. It is the grace of the Eucharist that empowers us to live the faith in our daily lives.

Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan – 2004-2006

II. Youth & Young Adult Ministry

That helps young adults develop a mature faith

That helps youth remain connected to Church as they transition to young adulthood

When youth catch on fire with their faith, they provide a profound energy and inspiring presence that is a leaven for the entire community. Youth and young adult ministry is seen as a major component of faith formation at all levels. One of the fruits of successful youth and young adult ministry will be an increase of vocations. With help from their families and guided by the wisdom of the Church, youth and young adults will grow strong in their faith and become a sure source of hope for all.

Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan – 2004-2006

III. Multicultural Ministry

That develops a vision of what we can become together

That develops multi-cultural leadership

...we face an important and timely opportunity, not only to meet pastoral needs, but especially to embrace the diverse gifts and spiritual heritages brought to us by peoples of different languages, cultures and regions. ...As a community of believers, we must develop a vision of what we can become together.

Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan – 2004-2006

In addition to the above priorities, the 2006 – 2009 APC recommended the following three pastoral priorities, which the Archbishop has also accepted:

I. Evangelization

That is rooted in a personal encounter with Christ

That trains Catholics to be evangelizers

II. Social Justice Ministry/Catholic Social Teaching

That is integrated into the fabric of parish life

That is understood to include pro-life activities

III. Immigration

That addresses immigration concerns from a Catholic perspective

Every pastoral plan should be seen in the context of communion with the larger Church and in light of the Church's overall mission of evangelization. While adopting priorities does not exclude the many other pastoral needs which require ongoing attention, the process is intended to offer points of special focus, funding and unity for our life and work together.

7. Study, Reflection, Listening, Prayer & Discernment

Pastoral councils study and reflect on the life and mission of the Church. They also study and reflect on the circumstances of the members of the parish and the community in which the parish is located. Through prayer and discernment they determine how communion and mission can be lived more fully at this particular time in this particular parish. Special attention is paid to the poor. Pastoral planning flows as a result of this process. To the extent possible, reaching a consensus on recommendations for a pastoral plan is the goal.

❖ Discernment

Discernment is a formal process permeated by prayer which seeks to discover what is the will of God in a particular situation or decision. Discernment always involves study, or information gathering, listening to others, reflection and prayer.

❖ Consensus

In the work of pastoral planning, consensus plays a critical role. Consensus is a way of coming to agreement about pastoral planning efforts and decisions. It is understood to be derived from guidance by the Holy Spirit. The council strives to reach substantial, but not necessarily unanimous agreement on matters of overall direction. It is important for the pastor to know the sense of common good behind any recommendations made by the council. The purpose of the council is to discern the pastoral needs of the community and communicate those needs to the pastor. While voting can be used as a tool during the discernment process, reaching a consensus is the ultimate goal. Members should be open to hearing and responding to the various opinions expressed, with an intention to gradually narrow the considerations to a commonly accepted proposal. At times, reaching a consensus means that members will have to trust the judgment of the group, even when it does not correspond with their own opinion on a matter. In such cases, the members who do not agree with the determination should still be willing to help make the pastoral initiative successful.

Take pains to reconcile your individual interests after careful consideration and a genuinely mutual agreement. If these interests seem for the moment to be divergent, why not weigh them again in the light of a strong and lively faith, keeping the supernatural motives of the unity and catholicity of the Church ever before your eyes?

—Pope Pius XII, *Fidei Donum* (70)

8. Relationship to the Parish Finance Council

Canon Law requires a finance council in every parish to advise the pastor and the parish on parish finances, property and other resources. The finance council is independent from the pastoral council, but the two councils should collaborate when necessary to insure that the pastoral plan is within the means of the parish and the budget reflects the pastoral priorities of the parish.

In the process of pastoral planning, the Pastoral Council benefits by having knowledge and understanding of the financial status of the Parish. The Finance Council keeps track of parish finances and maintains a record of parish resources and existing commitments of funds and resources. The Finance Council may give advice on availability of funds and potential resources for additional funds, but does not determine how monies will be spent or how resources will be allocated and utilized; those actions are decided by the Pastor with the advice of the Pastoral Council.

9. Relationship of the Council to Other Pastoral Planning Bodies

There are three levels of pastoral planning in the Archdiocese of Portland: parish, vicariate and diocese. Pastoral planning on all three levels should take into account and influence the planning done at each of the other levels. Every year, the pastoral council chairpersons and the pastoral council members participate in an Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils. Every three years, the pastoral council chairperson and a delegate from each parish council attend an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly. At the assembly, members are elected by vicariates to serve on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC).

Three Levels of Pastoral Planning

There are three levels of pastoral planning in the Archdiocese of Portland.

1. Diocesan

The diocese is considered the “local church”. It is served by a bishop who has been appointed by the Pope to provide for the pastoral care of the people. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council assists the bishop in this task. The Archbishop meets at least four times per year with the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council. The APC is a microcosm of the Church. It is made up of lay regional representatives (currently, thirteen), two priests, a deacon, two religious and several appointed members. The archbishop and the vicar general participate by virtue of their office. The APC is served by diocesan staff.

2. Vicariate

“We who are pastors and professional church workers need to learn how to work collaboratively with our parishioners in determining strategies for carrying out our evangelizing mission. But parishes themselves cannot operate in splendid isolation. In fact, when they do, many potential avenues of service are eliminated. But collaboration between parishes offers greater potential for serving the diverse needs of our people.”

Archbishop Vlazny, Growing in holiness – a priority? Catholic Sentinel, July 1, 2005

The diocese is divided into regions called area vicariates. Each area vicariate comprises a grouping of parishes. Currently, there are nineteen area vicariates in the Archdiocese of Portland. The archbishop appoints a vicar to serve each vicariate. The vicar convenes the priests and other pastoral leaders, including pastoral council members, from within the vicariate to do pastoral planning on a regional level. Some vicariates meet on a monthly basis; others meet quarterly. Once each year, normally during the springtime, the vicar works together with the APC representative for the vicariate to organize the Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils.

Pastoral planning on the regional level is important for many reasons. Sometimes the region is facing pastoral issues that are particular to it. In some cases, one parish alone may not be able to effectively meet some of the needs of its people. Working together can help to address those areas. Such collaboration fosters greater communion. Ultimately, the evangelizing mission of the Church is more effectively served when parishes work together.

3. Parish

The diocese is currently comprised of 124 parishes. The archbishop appoints a pastor or administrator to provide for the pastoral care of the people in the parish. Each parish is required by diocesan policy to have a pastoral council. The parish pastoral council assists the pastor and participates in the pastoral leadership of the parish through pastoral planning. The council recommends pastoral priorities to the pastor and helps in the development of a pastoral plan. The pastoral work of the parish serves as a foundational building block for fostering communion and furthering mission within the local church, or diocese.

Pastoral Planning Meetings

Regular Meetings of Pastoral Councils

Pastoral planning within the Archdiocese occurs on a regular basis at parish pastoral council meetings, at vicariate meetings and at Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meetings. Pastoral planning within the Archdiocese is also facilitated by the Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils and the tri-annual Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly.

Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils

Once each year, the vicariate hosts an Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils. This meeting gathers the priests, pastoral council members and other pastoral leaders from every parish within the vicariate. The vicar and the APC representative from the vicariate work together to plan the agenda. In addition to facilitating pastoral planning on a regional level, the Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils allows the opportunity for true pastoral planning dialogue. At this meeting, pastors, parish pastoral council members and pastoral leaders have the opportunity to share their pastoral planning efforts with the APC representative. In turn, the APC representative shares the ongoing pastoral planning work of the Archdiocese.

Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly

Every three years, there is an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly. The assembly gathers together the pastor and two parish pastoral council delegates from each parish. The purpose of this gathering is to elect new members to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and to aid in pastoral planning on the diocesan level. Since delegates to the assembly are members of their own pastoral councils, those elected to the APC will be actively involved in pastoral planning at the parish level. This ensures a direct connection between pastoral planning on the parish level and on the diocesan level.

10. Implementing and Monitoring the Pastoral Plan

Once it has been developed and put in written form, the pastoral plan for the parish should be monitored and evaluated as it is administered and as it unfolds. It is the responsibility of the pastor, professional staff and volunteers to implement the pastoral plan. At the direction of the pastor, council members can assist in its implementation. Because unforeseen needs sometimes arise and times and situations change, the pastoral plan should be continually updated by the pastoral council.

Once a Pastoral Plan has been adopted, the process of implementing it begins. As it is being implemented, it should be monitored to ensure its successful accomplishment over time. If issues develop or other priorities arise, the plan can be altered to meet the changing needs. One method for monitoring the progress of the pastoral plan is to establish a tracking team. This group will compare the plan details with what has been implemented to date and will inform the pastoral council of its findings.

11. Measuring the Pastoral Plan for Success

Although times and people change, the mission of the Church is always the same. It is the mission of Christ: to bring all people to know, love and serve God the Father and one another. Pastoral planning is successful to the extent that it encourages and helps us to grow in love for God and live our lives for others.

The plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition is the same as ever... But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community.

—Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 29, John Paul II, 2001

*Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work. Did we not celebrate the Jubilee Year in order to refresh our contact with this living source of our hope? Now, the Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope “which does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5). *Novo Millennio*, 58*

List of Resources to Aid Pastoral Councils

1. **A Concise Guide to Pastoral Planning**, William L. Pickett, Ave Maria Press, 2007.
2. **Developing a Vibrant Parish Pastoral Council**, edited by Arthur Deegan, Paulist Press, 1995.
3. **Four Ways to Build More Effective Parish Councils: A Pastoral Approach**, edited by Mark Fischer and Mary Margaret Raley, Twenty-Third Publications, 2002.
4. **Suggestions for Pastoral Councils: Guiding the Parish Moved by the Spirit**, Office for Pastoral Planning, Diocese of Oakland, 2006.
<http://www.oakdiocese.org/Councils/Publications/SuggestPC.pdf>
En Español: <http://www.oakdiocese.org/Councils/Publications/SuggestSPC.pdf>
5. **Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council**, Mary Ann Gubish and Susan Jenny, S.C. with Arlene McGannon, Paulist Press, 2001.
6. <http://www.pastoralcouncils.com/> Mark F. Fischer is one of the foremost experts on pastoral councils in the United States. His website on pastoral councils is an excellent resource.

List of Resources to Help Pastoral Councils to Develop a Deeper Understanding of the Nature and Mission of the Catholic Church

1. *Novo Millennio Ineunte – At the Beginning of the New Millennium*

In this Apostolic Letter, John Paul II outlines the pastoral priorities for the Catholic Church in the third millennium.

2. *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*

A powerful instrument for opening wide the doors of Christ, this document identifies three goals of evangelization.

3. *The Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*

A summary of some of the key themes at the heart of the Catholic social tradition. <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/excerpt.shtml>

4. *Collaboration in Western Oregon*

Archbishop Vlazny's column on diocesan church structure appeared in the Catholic Sentinel on September 12, 2008. <http://www.sentinel.org/node/9403>

5. *Lumen Gentium*

The dogmatic constitution on the Church is one of the principal documents of Vatican II. It describes the Church as the people of God and highlights the universal call to holiness.

6. *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish*

7. *Co-Workers in the Vineyard: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*

Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord offers pastoral and theological reflections on the reality of lay ecclesial ministry, affirmation of those who serve in this way, and a synthesis of best thinking and practice. It is a resource for diocesan bishops and for all who are responsible for guiding the development of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States.

8. *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*

This pastoral letter challenges the faithful to take up the twin mantles of discipleship and stewardship.

Resources may be obtained through:

USCCB Publishing • 3211 Fourth Street, NE • Washington, DC 20017

Toll free: 800-235-8722 • Fax: 202-722-8709 • Customer Service: CSS@usccb.org

Or, for assistance in obtaining resources, contact the Pastoral Center at 503-234-5334.