

ON CONSULTATION  
IN THE PARISH AND DEANERY

Pastoral Letter  
Decrees  
Diocesan Norms

DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE

---

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pastoral Letter	2
Decree on Parish Pastoral Councils	17
Norms for Parish Pastoral Councils	18
Norms for Parish Finance Councils	23
Decree on Deanery Pastoral Councils	28
Norms for Deanery Pastoral Councils	29
Appendix A: Recommended Committees of Parish Pastoral Councils	33
Appendix B: Administrative Recourse	34

---

May 1, 1985  
Solemnity of Saint Joseph the Workman

ON CONSULTATION IN THE PARISH AND DEANERY

To Christ's Faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse:  
My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

**Introduction**

For nearly a year now we, the faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse, have been studying the structures for consultation in our parishes, in our deaneries, and in our diocese. The immediate inspiration of the study was the promulgation of *The Code of Canon Law*, the book of discipline of the Second Vatican Council. The ultimate inspiration and guide for the study, therefore, has been the profound teaching on the Church, which is the most characteristic fruit of the Second Vatican Council.

Following the promulgation of the Code, the need for a study on consultation in the parish and deanery was presented and discussed first at the meetings of the Presbyteral council of the Diocese. As a result of the discussions in the Presbyteral Council, a special committee, representative of clergy, members of institutes of the consecrated life, and laity, was formed under the chairmanship of Father Joseph Rafacz, Vicar General, Pastor of Saint Michael Church in Wausau and Dean of the Wausau Deanery.

The principal task of the committee was to recommend to me, as Diocesan Bishop, norms by which consultation could be fostered and guided in the parish pastoral councils of the Diocese. With the help of the Deans of the Diocese, especially, the results of its work were extended to norms for parish finance councils and deanery pastoral councils. The Code requires that I give such norms for the right ordering of pastoral life in the Diocese (Canons 536 §2 and 537). Throughout the same period of time, I have been providing renewed norms for the diocesan councils and commissions in order to promote consultation on the diocesan level, too.

The special committee worked through several revisions of proposed norms. Each proposal was brought before the Presbyteral Council and the Deans of the Diocese. In order to insure the greatest possible assistance in the serious work which the committee was assigned, it

---

submitted the proposed norms to the study of all the parishes of the Diocese and invited observations and suggestions. The final revision of the norms has benefited greatly from the observations made at the parish and deanery levels. At its last meeting, held on April 16<sup>th</sup>, the Presbyteral Council recommended to me the promulgation of the final revision of the proposed norms.

I am happy to accept the Presbyteral Council's recommendation. At the same time, in the name of all the faithful of the Diocese, I thank Father Rafacz and the special committee for their excellent work on behalf of us all.

The work of examining the means of consultation, employed at the parish and deanery levels, has called us all to reflect again on the nature of the Church and on our personal life in the Church. For the most part, I believe, the reflection has confirmed us in our efforts to participate generously in the life of the Church. At times, the reflection has uncovered fear about the direction of Church life today and about the safeguarding of each person's participation in Church life. The expression of such fear, also, has not been without its good effect. For, it seems to me, one of the outstanding results of the effort to make our parish and deanery consultative structures faithful representations of the Second Vatican Council's teaching and discipline is the recognition of the need to study and reflect more profoundly on our life in the Church. I am confident that the preparation and celebration of the Fourth Diocesan Synod will give additional impetus to our study and reflection.

Upon the recommendation of the Presbyteral Council and its special committee, to which I referred above, and in accord with my own pastoral judgment in so important a matter for the life of the Church in the Diocese, I am happy to present to you the norms for parish pastoral councils, parish finance councils, and deanery pastoral councils in the Diocese of La Crosse.

In giving you these norms, I first want to reflect with you at length on the understanding of our life together in the Church, which inspires them. In that context, I also want to draw attention carefully to certain features of the norms and address in some detail several questions which have been raised during the months of our study and discussion of consultation.

---

### *Consultation in the Church*

Our life together in the Church is rich in its aspects, as rich as the mission which Christ our Lord calls us to share with Him in the Church. We are called to worship God in spirit and truth, to have communion with Him in prayer. We are called to know God and to share our knowledge of Him with one another. We are called to serve God in the Church and in the word by our service of one another, especially of the poorest among us. The Second Vatican Council employed the Scriptural images of the People of God (*Jer 31, 31-34; 1 Pet 2, 9-10*) and the Body of Christ (*1 Cor 12, 12-13; Eph 1, 23; Col 1, 24*) to teach about the richness of our life in the Church.<sup>1</sup>

It is to the last aspect of our common life in the Church, which consultation belongs. Consultation is the service we give to our pastors in the Church to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities to God and to us all. Whether it be in the spiritual care, instruction, and guidance of the Christian community, or in the administration of the earthly goods which the Church uses for its apostolic activities, our pastors in the Church need the help and cooperation of all whom they are sent to serve. The Bishops at the Second Vatican Council spoke about the richness of our life in the Church, including the service of consultation, in the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*. Referring to the laity, they wrote: “Nourished by their active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they engage zealously in its apostolic works; they draw men towards the Church who have been perhaps very far away from it; they ardently cooperate in the spread of the Word of God, particularly by catechetical instruction; by their expert assistance they increase the efficacy of the care of souls as well as of the administration of the goods of the Church.”<sup>2</sup>

Consultation is nothing more and nothing less than the familial conversation between pastors and their people in striving to live the life of Christ more fully in the parish, the deanery, and the diocese. The necessity of consultation in the Church derives from the interdependence of pastors and parishioners upon one another in their response to God’s personal call in their lives. We need each other in the Church. Parishioners look to their pastor for spiritual nourishment, instruction, and guidance in the Christian life, and their pastor looks to them for the witness of Christian living in every aspect of secular life and for encouragement and qualified assistance in the fulfillment of his responsibilities for the Christian community.

---

Since the Second Vatican Council, we have heard often the term, shared responsibility or co-responsibility in the Church. This term gives expression to the interdependence and necessary collaboration of pastors and their people in living the Christian life, in carrying out our Christian mission. Responsibility in the Church is shared by all in virtue of our common baptism; it is shared in a distinct manner by each member of the Church according to his or her state of life, personal gifts, and office in the Church.

Consultation is not meant to replace the work of the pastor in the Church. In fact, it is the pastor who must call forth consultation, and inspire and guide the manner in which it is given. For that reason, the Church’s law insists that the pastor must accept the service of presiding over pastoral and finance councils. Some mistakenly have concluded that the Second Vatican Council’s emphasis on shared responsibility is a response to the decline in vocations to the priesthood. Such is not the case. Shared responsibility is exactly what it says. It is the responsibility of both pastors and their people. If there were an abundance of priests available to serve as pastors, shared responsibility would be no less necessary for the fulfillment of the mission of the parish, deanery, and diocesan Church. Number thirty-seven of the Second Vatican Council’s *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* describes clearly the mutual assistance of pastors and their people in fulfilling their Christian vocation.

In understanding consultation, it is helpful for us to distinguish three kinds of responsibility, which are exercised in the Church.

There is the responsibility of pastoral authority, the responsibility of the one sent to act in Christ’s person as pastor or head of the Christian community. Then, there is, what I call, policy formation, the responsibility of those whom the pastor calls together for consultation in order to insure effective pastoral leadership in the particular Christian community. I deliberately use the term, policy formation, not policy-making. The pastor must accept the responsibility of making or legislating pastoral policies after they have been formed through the consultative process. Finally, there is administration, the responsibility of those, employed and volunteer, who carry out in practice or implement the pastoral policies and programs of the parish, the deanery, and the diocese. The careful distinction of these three kinds of responsibility will foster respect and harmony among all of us working together for the good of the Church.

---

Consultation takes place in many ways in the Church, some more formal and some informal. The Second Vatican Council wanted to give formal structure to the consultation necessary in the Church. Thus, after the Council, we were given norms for the development of pastoral councils and finance councils in our parishes and diocese, which *The Code of Canon Law* brings together. As a result, since the time of the Council the meeting of pastoral and finance councils has become a significant feature of Church life for all of us.

Clearly, it is important to realize that meeting for consultation has specific qualities, which distinguish it from other kinds of meeting. At meetings called for the purpose of consultation, the end in view is not a vote by which the majority can rule the minority, but rather a mutual exchange by which true understanding is achieved. True understanding will lead to solidarity in working for the Church. Many times, the process of consultation requires education or the deepening of knowledge about some aspect or aspects of Church life. The hard work of obtaining a more profound knowledge of a pastoral issue or a financial issue with pastoral implications enriches the Christian life of the person giving consultation and makes possible mutual agreement about what direction Church life should take in a given area.

Here, I emphasize again the importance of understanding the nature of consultation in the Church. When we meet to give consultation, our participation in the meeting must reflect the nature of the Church as God has called it into being in Christ. Our meetings for consultation in the Church are not like our meetings, for instance, in civil society. They are spiritual events, the occasion to fulfill a sacred duty for the good of all our brothers and sisters in Christ. Meetings of parish pastoral and finance councils, deanery pastoral councils, and diocesan councils and commissions always should begin with prayer. The awareness of God's presence with us, the fruit of prayer, should continue throughout the meeting. If the discussion which takes place is not done in prayer, is not inspired by the Holy Spirit, it will not lead to the building-up of Christ's Body. In all meetings or discussions for the purpose of consultation, we act as members of the Church, brothers and sisters of Christ and of each other, and we enjoy the pastoral leadership of the one Church, universal, diocesan, and parish.

You will note in the norms for the various consultative bodies the requirement of orientation for service on them. The requirement is not

---

intended to be a formality. It addresses the need of pastors and their people to renew often their understanding of consultation in the Church, and so, too, their appreciation of the mystery of the Church. Following the giving of the diocesan norms, my attention will be directed to insuring that on the deanery level, with the assistance of the Diocesan Offices, regular opportunities for an appropriate orientation on consultation are provided. If proper orientation is not provided, we jeopardize all our efforts to promote collaboration of pastors and their people in giving sound direction to Church life.

I recommend highly the pastoral letter of Bishop John R. Keating of Arlington, Virginia, *A Pastoral Letter on Consultation in the Parish*, published on September 17, 1984, for an excellent reflection on the meaning of consultation in the Church.<sup>3</sup> It has been read and studied throughout the Diocese. I hope that we continue to read and study it.

The norms which I give today are simple in content. They legislate only what is required for fidelity to universal Church discipline, for unity in the pastoral life of the Diocese, and for effective consultation. What is not legislated is left to the discretion of each parish according to its size and particular characteristics. Some parts of the norms merit particular comment.

### ***Norms for Parish Pastoral Councils***

The parish pastoral council is the principal consultative body in the parish. Numbers 1 and 6 of the Norms give clear indications of the fundamental importance of the pastoral council.

Regarding membership, you will note that two methods are used for choosing members: election by the whole parish, and appointment by the pastor. The reason for the dual system is to insure the fullest possible representation of the parish on the pastoral council. Election is not always an apt means for obtaining full representation. The appointment of one-third of the members provides an avenue for supplying additional representation on the council. The maximum number of members is set at twelve in order to guarantee the possibility of effective communication of all members on the pastoral council.

The reason for fixing a uniform term of office for the whole diocese is to coordinate the change of members on the parish pastoral council with the change of members on the deanery pastoral council. If individual

---

parishes are changing members at different times, it hinders the formation of strong deanery pastoral councils. Also, the uniform term of office provides for a common effort in the Diocese at the time of choosing new councils and at the time of the orientation on consultation for new members of councils. Individual parishes are free to use staggered terms, within the two-year limit, for the first members chosen.

The number of meetings per year will depend greatly upon the size and needs of the parish. I stress quality of meetings over quantity of meetings. Consultation, as I indicated above, requires serious study and reflection. In order to give study and reflection, time must be allowed for considering in advance of a meeting the agenda and any materials which will help in addressing the agenda. The requirement of an agenda and study materials is practical. Its observance will add greatly to the quality of consultation. On the other hand, an unplanned or poorly planned meeting shows little respect for the importance of consultation and can do little to promote the collaboration of pastor and parishioners in the Church's work.

As I mentioned above, the pastor has the responsibility of presidency of the pastoral council. The norms describe accurately what the meaning of presidency is in Church law. The presidency of the pastor is not to stifle the leadership of the members, but to enable their leadership to emerge in a genuinely ecclesial context and manner.

The responsibilities of the pastoral council extend to all aspects of pastoral life in the parish. The norms describe well the manner in which the pastoral council will achieve its challenging goals. You will note, too, the distinction made between policy formation and administration, to which I referred earlier.

The parish pastoral council and parish finance council are related to one another closely because an important ingredient in the pastoral life of the parish is the right use of the Church's temporal goods, its money, buildings, and grounds. The parish finance council exclusively directs itself to sound policies of management of the parish funds and plant. Receiving from the pastor the program of parish life, as it has been formed with the assistance of the pastoral council, it organizes the temporal goods of the parish for the implementation of the parish program. At the same time, it frees the pastoral council from the time-consuming and often technical concerns of developing sound financial

---

policies. The work of the parish finance council, however, remains spiritual. It is accomplished by members of the Church for the sake of the Church's mission.

The committee structure is meant to provide the necessary work groups to assist the parish pastoral council in its many concerns. The Agenda Committee has the responsibility of organizing the subjects to be discussed in the parish pastoral council and of gathering the materials needed for the full discussion of the individual subjects. Once the nature of consultation is understood, the importance of the Agenda Committee's work is obvious. The other four committees mentioned direct themselves to the four fundamental areas of pastoral life in the parish. In Appendix A to the norms, Recommended Committees of Parish Pastoral Councils, I indicate the concerns which belong to each of the four committees or work groups. It is my desire that these four committees, on Family Life, on Sacred Worship, on Catholic Education, and on Social Justice, be formed in each parish pastoral council. They will provide for the pastor and the pastoral council up-to-date information and recommendations concerning the essential areas of pastoral life, which the pastoral council needs in order to form sound pastoral policy and programs.

In small parishes, the pastoral council as a whole may direct itself to all or some of the four major areas of concern. Whatever, the major areas of concern must be addressed consistently for the sake of the Christian vitality of the parishes of our diocese.

The formation of the Catholic education committee of the parish pastoral council has raised particular questions for some. Especially, it has been asked whether the school-board structure is going to be discontinued, as a result. Historically, parish school boards predated in many places parish pastoral councils. The school boards have contributed greatly to the stability of Catholic schools. However, because of the name itself, school board, which called to mind so much the manner of operation of school boards in the public sector, and because sometimes school boards were not integrated with parish pastoral councils after the pastoral councils were formed, the school boards tended to be distinct from the parish pastoral council. In some cases, the school board functioned as a kind of second parish pastoral council.

---

With the new norms for parish pastoral councils, the concern for the Catholic school in a parish belongs to the Catholic education committee of the pastoral council. As a concern of the Catholic education committee, the Catholic school will be seen fully as the pastoral responsibility of the entire parish. Further, it will be seen in the proper context of the educational or prophetic mission of the Church in its various forms. The service provided previously by the school board now should be part of the service of the Catholic education committee of the pastoral council. The adaptation, therefore, should cause no great difficulty. With the concern for Catholic education, particularly the Catholic school, integrated with the essential pastoral concerns of the parish and identified with the prophetic mission of the parish, the stability and the growth of Catholic education in all forms, described in Appendix A, will be guaranteed.

Finally, the parish budget should include provision for the expenses incurred in the work of the pastoral council. As a stable structure of parish life, no matter how small its financial requirements, the pastoral council should have a distinct and secure place in the parish budget.

#### ***Norms for Parish Finance Councils***

The parish finance council assists the pastor in forming good policies for the administration of the parish's temporal goods, that is, its financial resources, and buildings and grounds. The kind of assistance offered by the finance council requires that its members have both dedication to the Church's mission and skill in dealing with financial matters. Financial matters in a parish are not the primary concern of the pastor and people. They require, however, constant attention and study, and can be quite time-consuming. Therefore, *The Code of Canon Law* wisely separates the work of the finance council from the work of the pastoral council in order to insure that the pastor receives full and qualified consultation regarding both pastoral questions and financial question.

The qualifications for membership are the same as those for the pastoral council, plus the special qualifications required by the work of the finance council. The number of members is less because of the limited scope of concerns of the finance council.

The members of the parish finance council are appointed, not elected, because of the specific qualifications required of its members. The

---

pastor is to make these appointments after a careful inquiry among the members of the parish.

Monthly meetings of the parish finance council are recommended in the norms. The reason for the recommendation is practical. The administration of the parish's temporal goods should be guided by an annual budget. Monthly meetings provide for the necessary regular check on the budget. Also, the periodic assessment of building and grounds and the response to any special needs of the parish plant can be accomplished easily by a monthly meeting.

In the parish finance council, also, the distinction of the responsibilities of pastoral authority, policy formation, and administration must be maintained. The pastor remains responsible for the right administration of the Church's temporal goods, but he will not be able to fulfill that responsibility without the help of qualified consultation. Due communication with those who assist in the day to day administration of the parish's temporal goods is necessary for effective consultation.

Some, quoting the adage that who "holds the purse strings" of an organization controls the organization, have perceived the parish finance council as a low profile body which, in fact, will control parish life. The perception is mistaken. The finance council, like the pastoral council, is an organ for consultation. The pastor of the parish, who receives the consultation of both councils, remains responsible for the direction of parish life. The finance council will assist the pastor in managing the parish's finances and in caring for its buildings and grounds in the manner which serves best the pastoral program of the parish. If, as can happen, the parish's temporal resources are inadequate to the needs of the pastoral program, the difficulty must be resolved by the pastor with the assistance of both pastoral and finance councils. It is hoped that the social justice committee of the pastoral council will assist the pastor and the pastoral council in fostering the understanding and practice of stewardship, by which the temporal requirements of the parish's mission can be met.

The responsibilities of the finance council are described well in the norms. Attention to the right use of the Church's temporal goods, by careful attention to these responsibilities, is a requirement of justice and an indispensable aid in furthering the Church's mission.

---

I have addressed myself above to the relationship of the parish finance council to the parish pastoral council. Respect for the responsibilities of each council, as they are presented in the norms, guarantees proper attention to both pastoral and financial concerns and good collaboration between the councils.

The committee structure of the finance council, too, provides the necessary work groups to supply up-to-date information and recommendations to the finance council. The number of these committees will depend on the complexity of the temporal goods of the parish. In some parishes the finance council alone may be able to address itself to all the financial issues requiring consultation.

Finally, whatever finances are required for the policy forming work of the finance council as a stable parish structure should be reflected in an appropriate manner in the annual budget of the parish.

#### ***Norms for Deanery Pastoral Councils***

Through the inspiration and direction of my predecessor, Bishop Frederick Freking, our diocese has had a tradition of pastoral councils at the deanery level, also. The pastoral council is an especially apt means for accomplishing the purpose for which parishes are joined together into deaneries. The deanery pastoral council assists the dean and priests of the deanery in forming policies of cooperative pastoral action and pastoral planning.

The norms for the deanery pastoral councils, like the norms for the parish pastoral councils and parish finance councils, permit adaptation, according to the size and composition of the deanery. The membership brings together representatives of the parish pastoral councils of each parish of the deanery and of the priests serving in the deanery. To their number are added the deanery representatives to the diocesan councils and commissions. Thus, the deanery pastoral council is a meeting place for the Diocese and the parishes in forming policies favoring joint pastoral action and sound pastoral planning. The deanery pastoral council provides at once the means by which parish concerns can be presented to the Diocese, and diocesan policies and programs can reach each parish.

Several aspects of Church life are addressed most effectively at the deanery level. They are described in Number 6 of the norms. I

---

especially stress among them pastoral planning and Catholic education. Only through mutual and honest discussion and collaboration can satisfactory solutions be found to difficulties in meeting the pastoral needs of all the parishes in an area.

Likewise, at a time when Catholic education never has seemed more necessary and, yet, the sacrifices required to maintain and strengthen our Catholic elementary and secondary schools are very great, I ask the deanery pastoral councils to make Catholic education one of their first concerns and to seek means by which the blessing of a Catholic education can be extended to our young people.

In light of the important service to Catholic education, given fittingly by the deanery, I ask that the work of supporting and promoting our Catholic schools be organized more and more at the deanery level. With regard to diocesan high-school boards and area school boards, and their relationship to the deanery pastoral council, further study and discussion is required. Once the needed study and consultation in the matter has been completed, I will give special norms defining their relationship to the deanery pastoral council and providing for their governance as special consultative bodies.

As should be clear, the deanery pastoral council gives an essential service to the Diocese by providing a forum for consultation in the naturally united groupings of parishes in the Diocese.

#### ***Conflict and Recourse***

Frequently, even if not stated explicitly, there is the concern about what a pastor and pastoral or financial council should do when a conflict arises between them, which they alone are unable to resolve. Appendix B of the norms, Administrative Recourse, describes carefully the manner by which conflicts are resolved pastorally in our diocese. The procedure is coherent with universal Church law. There is no need for us to fear unduly possible conflicts. Our life in the Church provides for us the means to resolve conflicts in Christian charity.

#### ***Implementation of the Norms***

I give the norms today, but I realize that the work of putting them into practice will take some time. I ask that such organizing and planning be done over the next four months and that all the councils begin to meet by September 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.

---

Who should take responsibility for the implementation? The implementation should be done by the pastor and members of any already existing pastoral or finance council or by the pastor and representatives of the parish or deanery if there has not been pastoral or finance council up to now.

What does implementation involve? The first step of implementation is drawing up the parish or deanery mission statement, to which Number 1 of the Norms for Parish Pastoral Councils refers. If the parish or deanery already has a mission statement, it should be reviewed, and revised or confirmed. If not, a mission statement should be prepared.

Why the emphasis on the mission statement? The mission statement describes who we are as a parish or deanery today. The mission statement expresses the vocation of the People of God in the parish and deanery. It is based on the understanding of the parish and deanery in the universal Church, but it gives individual expression to the universal Church's understanding.<sup>4</sup> It is the expression of who we are in the Church in the particular circumstances of our parish and our deanery. In drawing up the mission statement, every effort must be made so that it really belongs to the parish or deanery, or, in contemporary terms, is "owned" by the parish or deanery.

There is no need to draw up a constitution of the parish pastoral council, parish finance council, or deanery pastoral council. Neither would it be appropriate to do so. The norms given in *The Code of Canon Law* and these diocesan norms, which I now give, are the constitution of every parish or deanery council in the Diocese. What each parish and deanery must add to these norms are its mission statement and the determination of those matter left to the decisions of the individual parish or deanery. Those determinations can be expressed in a simple list of parish or deanery norms which adapt appropriately the diocesan norms.

Who should make these determinations? As I stated above, they should be made by the pastor or dean in consultation with the existing councils or representative groups of the faithful.

In a few weeks, I will send an evaluation instrument to each pastor and dean, by which he can monitor the correct implementation of the diocesan norms. The same instrument can be used by us periodically to

---

insure the ongoing renewal and the vitality of our consultative activity in the Church.

In the whole work of implementation, I urge the careful study of this letter, with attention to the nature and language of Church consultation. The language and manner of proceeding proper to civil structures of governance by representation should be avoided in Church consultative bodies. They can cloud too readily the vision and reality of Church consultation. What the implementation most should strive to achieve is the expression of our life in the Church through consultation.

### ***Conclusion***

I have written at great length. I have wanted to respect in my letter on consultation all of the intense study and discussion which have taken place in the Diocese over the past several months. Further, I wanted to point out with clarity and sensitivity the foundations of consultation in the parish and deanery. Consultation is not the first or most important aspect of our mission in Christ, but it can offer so much assistance to the effective exercise of all the other aspects of our Christian life. I am praying that our common study and reflection on consultation will be followed in the days ahead by a true working-together with one another in renewing or in forming for the first time strong and effective councils in the parish and the deanery.

May the just and obedient Saint Joseph the Workman help us by his prayer and example so that we together become more and more faithful and generous members of the Church which he loves with tender affection. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of God and mother of the Church, may our meeting together for consultation in the Church be the cause of our growth in the Christian life.

With gratitude to God our Father for your unity and solidarity with me in carrying out the mission of Christ in the parishes and deaneries of our diocese, I ask God's special blessing on the faithful of the Diocese on this our patronal feast.

In the Risen Lord,

+ John J. Paul  
Bishop of La Crosse



---

<sup>1</sup>Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, Chapters II and III.

<sup>2</sup>Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*, No. 10a, in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1975, p. 777.

<sup>3</sup>John R. Keating, *A Pastoral Letter on Consultation in the Parish*, Arlington: Diocese of Arlington, Office of Communications, 1984.

<sup>4</sup>In drawing up a parish mission statement, the following texts provide material for reflection: Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Nos. 41-42; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*, Nos. 9 and 10; *The Code of Canon Law*, Canons 515 §1; 518; 519; 526; 528; and 529; Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation*, “*On Catechesis in Our Time*” (October 16, 1979), No. 67; Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation*, “*On the Family*” (December 15, 1981), No. 70; Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter “Redeemer of Man”* (March 4, 1979), No. 21; Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter “Rich in Mercy”* (November 30, 1980), Nos. 13-14; National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Plan of Pastoral Action for Family Ministry: A Vision and Strategy* (1978), pp. 6-10, and 15-19; National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States* (1979), Nos. 60d and 67.

---

## DECREE

Having heard the prudent counsel of the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese, in accord with my pastoral judgment, I hereby establish in each parish of the Diocese of La Crosse a parish pastoral council, effective September 1, 1985, in accord with the norm of Canon 536 §1 of *The Code of Canon Law*.

Given at La Crosse on the first day of May, 1985, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph the Workman, patron of the Diocese of La Crosse.

S E A L

+ John Paul

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bishop of La Crosse

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fr. John Nilles

Chancellor

---

**DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE**  
**NORMS FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS**

**1. Introduction**

§1 After the family, the parish is the most important form of community within the diocese. In the parish Christ's faithful are gathered together into one, under the headship of the pastor, who represents the bishop among them, to fulfill their Christian mission. Each parish, then, truly represents the diocese and, therefore, the Catholic Church throughout the world. Christ's faithful live the life of Christ, prophet, priest, and king, in the parish. According to their particular gifts, their state of life, and their office in the Church, they worship God in spirit and in truth, they proclaim the Gospel and care for the needs of their brothers and sisters in charity, and they assist the pastor in the pastoral care of God's people and in the administration of the temporal goods of the Church (Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, No. 37; *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*, No. 10; *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 42).

§2 In order to foster the unity of pastor and Christ's faithful of the parish in carrying out Christ's mission, *The Code of Canon Law* legislates that, after consultation with the Presbyteral Council and in accord with his pastoral judgment, the Diocesan Bishop is to establish a pastoral council in each parish of the diocese (Canon 536 §1). The parish pastoral council is to take its direction from and be governed by norms given by the Diocesan Bishop (Canon 536 §2). The diocesan norms, then, are to be adapted to the particular circumstances of each parish according to the parish's mission statement.

§3 In accord, then, with universal Church law, and after consultation with the Presbyteral Council and Christ's faithful of the Diocese, I give the following norms for the governance of parish pastoral councils in the Diocese of La Crosse, to be adapted to the circumstances of each parish.

**2. Membership**

§1 Members of the parish pastoral council are to be members of the parish in full communion with the Catholic Church. All members will

---

participate in a program of orientation for service on parish consultative bodies.

§2 The suggested number of members is from six to twelve.

§3 Of the total membership, two-thirds of the members are to be elected.

§4 After appropriate consultation, one-third of the total membership is to be appointed by the pastor with special attention to the representation of the different aspects of pastoral work in the parish, and of the different states of life, and social and professional conditions of the parishioners.

§5 The membership of the parish pastoral council shall be made known to all parishioners.

**3. Term of Membership**

§1 All members shall serve a two-year term which can be renewed twice.

§2 In the case of a vacant pastorate, the members under the previous pastor will assist the Dean and the Diocesan Bishop during the interim. The new pastor is to reconvene a parish pastoral council as soon as possible after his appointment to the parish.

§3 Any vacancy on the parish pastoral council is filled as soon as possible through appointment by the parish pastoral council and the pastor.

**4. Meetings**

§1 It is recommended that the parish pastoral council meet every two months.

§2 An agenda and study materials are communicated before the meeting.

---

§3 The pastor and a majority of the members constitute a quorum for consultation.

## **5. Officers and Their Duties**

§1 The pastor of the parish presides over the parish pastoral council (Canon 536 §1). He may designate another member to act as chairperson.

1° The pastor is to maintain an openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit at all meetings of the parish pastoral council and to foster consultation by seeking the counsel of all the members, by encouraging an understanding hearing of each member, and by responding, according to his pastoral judgment, to the expressed counsel of the members.

2° The pastor is to maintain the necessary communication between the parish pastoral council, and its committees, the parish finance council and other parish organizations.

§2 The parish pastoral council shall elect one member to the office of assistant to the president, who helps the pastor in his responsibilities for the parish pastoral council.

§3 The parish pastoral council shall elect one member to the office of secretary.

1° The secretary is responsible for maintaining accurate minutes of the meetings of the parish pastoral council and for preparing a summary of the discussions at each meeting, to be published in the parish bulletin. If feasible, a recording secretary, who is not a member of the parish pastoral council, can be appointed.

2° The secretary is to prepare the operating budget of the parish pastoral council for inclusion in the general parish budget and to maintain a record of income and expenditures.

---

## **6. Responsibilities**

§1 The parish pastoral council is a consultative body (Canon 536 §2) by which the Christian faithful of a parish, together with those who have pastoral authority in the parish, “give their help in fostering pastoral activity” (Canon 536 §1). Its work is to be informed and inspired by the vision of the Church, exemplified in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

§2 The ways by which it fulfills its shared responsibility are: the spiritual enrichment and growth of its members; the study of the Christian life of the People of God with special attention to their Christian vision, needs and hopes; the discernment of the relationship of the pastoral activity of the parish to the legitimate needs and hope of the parish community; the help in establishing priorities among the various aspects of the pastoral activity of the parish; and the formation of policy and the development of programs of pastoral activity.

§3 The clear distinction between policy formation, the proper work of the parish pastoral council, and administration, the proper work of the pastor and parish staff, should be maintained. At the same time, members of the parish staff should offer to the pastoral council their knowledge and judgment regarding questions under discussion.

## **7. Relationship to the Parish Finance Council**

§1 The parish pastoral council and the parish finance council are distinct bodies by virtue of their distinct purposes, their distinct responsibilities, and the distinct qualifications for membership on each.

§2 To facilitate the communication between the two parish councils, it is recommended that one member of each council attend the meetings of the other council.

## **8. Committees**

§1 It is suggested that the following be the permanent committees of the parish pastoral council: the Agenda Committee, the Family Life

---

Committee, the Sacred Worship Committee, the Catholic Education Committee, and the Social Justice Committee.

§2 The Agenda Committee shall consist of the pastor, the assistant to the president, and the secretary. It is the responsibility of the Agenda Committee to prepare the agenda and study materials for each meeting.

§3 Other committees directed to the pastoral work of the parish can be formed.

## 9. Finances

An operating budget of the parish pastoral council shall be prepared each year for inclusion in the general parish budget.

Given at La Crosse on the first day of May, 1985, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph the Workman, patron of the Diocese of La Crosse.

*S E A L*

+ John Paul

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bishop of La Crosse

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fr. John Nilles

Chancellor

---

## DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE NORMS FOR PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS

### 1. Introduction

§1 In the parish Christ's faithful are gathered into one, under the headship of the pastor, to fulfill their mission in Christ, prophet, priest, and king. The kingly mission includes the assistance which Christ's faithful, according to their gifts, their office in the Church, and their state of life, give to the pastor in the administration of the temporal goods of the Church (Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*, No. 10).

§2 In order to give form and stability to the assistance offered by Christ's faithful to their pastor in the administration of the parish's temporal goods, *The Code of Canon Law* requires that each parish in a diocese have a parish finance council (Canon 537). The parish finance council is to be governed by universal Church law and by norms given by the Diocesan Bishop (Canon 537). Accordingly, after consultation with the Presbyteral Council and Christ's faithful of the Diocese, I give the following norms by which parish finance councils are to be governed in the Diocese of La Crosse. The norms are to be adapted to the particular circumstances of each parish.

### 2. Membership

§1 members of the parish finance council are to be members of the parish in full communion with the Catholic Church, and known for their ability and integrity in the administration of temporal goods. All members will participate in a program of orientation for service on parish consultative bodies.

§2 The suggested number of members is from two to six.

### 3. Appointment of Members

§1 Because of the particular qualities required of the members of the parish finance council, the members are to be appointed by the pastor

---

after careful inquiry regarding who among the faithful are best qualified for appointment. The names of candidates for appointment, however, should be kept in confidence lest, if they are not appointed, any questions be raised publicly regarding their good character or competence in temporal matters.

§2 All close relatives of the pastor are excluded from appointment to the parish finance council.

§3 The membership of the parish finance council shall be made known to all parishioners.

#### **4. Term of Appointment**

§1 The members of the parish finance council are appointed to a two-year term which can be renewed twice.

§2 In the case of a vacant pastorate, the members under the previous pastor will assist the Dean and the Diocesan Bishop during the interim. The new pastor is to reconvene a parish finance council as soon as possible after his appointment to the parish.

§3 Any vacancy on the parish finance council is filled as soon as possible through appointment by the pastor, after consultation with the remaining members.

#### **5. Meetings**

§1 It is recommended that the parish finance council meet monthly. It is to meet at least quarterly.

§2 An agenda and study materials are communicated before the meeting.

§3 The pastor and a majority of the members constitute a quorum for consultation.

---

#### **6. Officers and Their Duties**

§1 The pastor of the parish presides over the parish finance council in virtue of his pastoral responsibility to administer the temporal goods of the parish (Canon 532). He may designate a member to act as chairperson and to assist him in his responsibilities for the finance council.

1° The pastor is to prepare the agenda of each meeting and communicate the agenda to the members before the meeting.

2° The pastor is to maintain an openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit at all meetings of the parish finance council, and to foster consultation by seeking the counsel of all the members, by encouraging an understanding hearing of each member, and by responding, according to his pastoral judgment, to the expressed counsel of the members.

3° The pastor is to maintain the necessary communication between the parish finance council, and its committees, the parish pastoral council and other parish organizations.

§2 The parish finance council shall choose one of its members to keep a journal of its discussions.

#### **7. Responsibilities**

§1 The parish finance council is a consultative body which helps the pastor to act justly and prudently in the administration of the parish's temporal goods. Its work is to be informed and inspired by the vision of the Church, exemplified in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

§2 The ways by which it fulfills its shared responsibility are: the spiritual enrichment and growth of the members; formation of financial policies, including the devising and regular monitoring of a parish budget, and of policies for the proper maintenance of the buildings and grounds of the parish; long-range financial planning; preparation of an annual financial report; and attention to civil law pertaining to the administration of the temporal goods of the parish.



---

## DECREE

Having heard the prudent counsel of the Presbyteral Council and of the College of Deans of the Diocese, in accord with my pastoral judgment, I hereby establish in each deanery of the Diocese of La Crosse a deanery pastoral council, effective September 1, 1985.

Given at La Crosse on the first day of May, 1985, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph the Workman, patron of the Diocese of La Crosse.

*S E A L*

+ John Paul  
Bishop of La Crosse

Fr. John Nilles  
Chancellor

---

## DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE NORMS FOR DEANERY PASTORAL COUNCILS

### 1. Introduction

§1 Parishes of a diocese are gathered into deaneries in order to promote joint pastoral action and the best possible distribution of ministry, and to provide for the pastoral care of the priests serving in each area of the diocese (Canon 555). The care of the deanery is confided by the Diocesan Bishop, after consultation with the priests of the deanery, to one of the priests ministering in the deanery (Canon 554).

§2 In order to foster joint pastoral action and good pastoral planning, in particular, the dean will need the assistance of all the faithful of the deanery. The deanery pastoral council is the stable representative body through which, by means of consultation, such assistance can be provided to the dean. The members of the deanery pastoral council, together with and under the headship of the dean, form the policies and programs which will help toward the best possible ministry in the deanery.

§3 After consultation with the Presbyteral Council and the College of Deans of the Diocese, I give the following norms for the governance of deanery pastoral councils in the Diocese of La Crosse.

### 2. Membership

The membership shall be determined according to one of the following options. The deanery priests' council of each deanery is to determine which option is to be used for its deanery.

1° The membership shall consist of the following: three representatives of the clergy serving in the deanery, who are to be elected by the deanery priests' council; one member of the laity from each parish in the deanery, who is to be elected by the parish pastoral council from among its member; one representative of the members of institutes of the consecrated life, serving in the deanery, who is to be elected by the deanery priests' council; and the deanery representatives on the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the commissions of the Diocesan Bishop.

---

2° The membership shall consist of the following: the clergy serving in the deanery; two members of the laity from each parish in the deanery, who are to be elected by the parish pastoral council and one of whom, at least, is to be a member of the parish pastoral council; one representative of the members of the institutes of the consecrated life, serving in the deanery, who is elected by the deanery priests' council; and the deanery representatives on the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the commissions of the Diocesan Bishop.

### **3. Term of Office**

It is recommended that elected members serve for a two-year term which can be renewed.

### **4. Meetings**

§1 The deanery pastoral council is to meet at least three times yearly.

§2 An agenda and study materials are communicated before each meeting.

§3 The dean and a majority of the members constitute a quorum for consultation.

### **5. Officers and Their Duties**

§1 The dean of the deanery presides over the deanery pastoral council. He may designate another member to act as chairperson.

1° The dean, together with the Agenda Committee, is responsible for the preparation of the agenda of each meeting and its communication to the members.

2° It is the dean's responsibility to foster consultation on the deanery pastoral council by seeking the counsel of all the members, by encouraging an understanding hearing of each member, and by responding, according to his pastoral judgment, to the expressed counsel of the members.

---

3° The dean is to maintain the necessary communication between the deanery pastoral council, and other diocesan and parish consultative bodies.

§2 The dean, after consultation with the deanery pastoral council, shall appoint one member to the office of assistant to the president, who helps the dean in his responsibilities for the deanery pastoral council.

§3 The dean, after consultation with the deanery pastoral council, shall appoint one member to the office of secretary. The secretary is responsible for maintaining accurate minutes of the meetings of the deanery pastoral council and for preparing, at the direction of the dean, a summary of the discussions at each meeting, to be forwarded to the Diocesan Bishop. If feasible, a recording secretary, who is not a member of the deanery pastoral council, can be appointed.

§4 The dean, after consultation with the deanery pastoral council, shall appoint one member to the office of treasurer. The treasurer is to prepare the annual budget of the deanery pastoral council. The treasurer shall maintain an accurate record of all income and expenditures.

### **6. Responsibilities**

§1 The deanery pastoral council is a consultative body by means of which the faithful of a deanery, together with those who have pastoral authority in the deanery, give their assistance to the dean in promoting joint pastoral action and the best possible distribution of ministry.

§2 In accord with the principle of subsidiarity, the deanery pastoral council is to be concerned with those aspects of the pastoral activity of the Church, which are best served at the deanery level. Among its chief concerns are: pastoral planning; good communication between the diocesan offices and commissions, and the parishes of the deanery; family life; Catholic education, especially the Catholic high school, if there be one in the deanery; Catholic health care; the assistance and support of parish consultative structures; and deanery-wide prayer and liturgical celebrations.





---

#### 4. Social Justice Committee

The Social Justice Committee is to assist the parish pastoral council in fostering pastoral concern and action for justice in the world, especially in all areas of parish life. Its concerns include: promotion of the respect for all human life; the pastoral care of the afflicted, the needy, and the imprisoned; the pastoral care of migrants and refugees; just structures in the parish; stewardship; and the greater understanding of the Church's teaching on social justice.

### APPENDIX B ADMINISTRATIVE RECOURSE

#### 1. Introduction

§1 The Church is at once a divine and human society. It is at once mystical and earthly (Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, No. 8). As a result, in the exercise of their mission in Christ the members of the Church sometimes find themselves in conflict with one another because of human failing.

§2 In calling together the Church by His preaching and ministry, the Lord Jesus recognized the possibility of conflict between members of His Body. In the *Gospel according to Matthew*, the Lord Jesus instructs His disciples regarding the fitting manner of resolving such difficulties (*Mt 18, 15-18*). He teaches that, first, the brother or sister with whom one is in conflict should be confronted. If reconciliation is not achieved in this way, then the brother or sister should be confronted together with other fellow believers. Finally, if reconciliation is still not achieved, the matter is to be brought before the Church. The teaching of the Lord regarding the resolution of conflicts in the Church reflects the nature of the Church itself, a communion of brothers and sisters under the pastoral care and guidance of Christ the Head. For this reason, too, Saint Paul stressed that conflicts in the Church are to be reconciled in the Church and are not to be taken to the civil forum (*I Cor 6, 1-11*).

§3 The Church today strives to embody the Gospel teaching in the manner by which she resolves conflicts between her members. In the

---

Diocese of La Crosse, administrative recourse is the accepted manner for the resolution of conflicts between members of the Church.

#### 2. Administrative Recourse

§1 In *The Code of Canon Law* two kinds of procedures by which Christ's faithful vindicate their rights in the Church are recognized. The first kind is the contentious, judicial process. It is a process to be used when all other methods of reconciling difficulties have failed. In fact, throughout the contentious proceeding the judge is to seek a reconciliation of the parties by means of a charitable conversation between them (Canon 1446 §§1-3). Above all, as Saint Paul teaches, contentions among the faithful are to be settled within the communion of the Church and not before the civil forum (*I Cor 6, 1-11*; Canon 1733 §1).

§2 The second kind of process is administrative and is recommended for the resolution of conflicts between individuals in the Church, particularly between persons exercising pastoral authority and those whom they are sent to serve (Canon 1733§1).

§3 The administrative process consists of a recourse to the authorities of the Church against the decision or action of a pastor or other person exercising administration in the Church. The prerequisite of recourse is that the person who judges himself injured first must have sought to resolve directly the difficulty with the person in authority (Canon 1734 §1). *The Code of Canon Law* details the steps to be followed in administrative recourse.

§4 The process fundamentally consists of a successive appeal, as necessary, to the various levels of pastoral authority in the Church. The appeal is made for the purpose of reconciling the difference or healing the division. The principle of subsidiarity is to be observed fully; the appeal must be made first to the most local pastoral authority who best is able to know the circumstances and persons, and suggest a way to reconciliation. The ultimate appeal is to the Roman Curia and the Holy Father. The same process adapted at the diocesan level assures effective means for the vindication of rights, which reflects fully the Church's nature.

---

### 3. Procedure

§1 When one of Christ's faithful judges himself or herself injured by the decision or action of a person in pastoral authority or administration in the Diocese, he or she, first, is to confront the person in question with the grievance and seek reconciliation with the person.

§2 If the party which judges itself injured has not been able to achieve reconciliation by conversation with the authority involved, he or she may present the grievance to the pastors of the Church, in the following manner.

1° If the grievance is against an authority in the parish, the appeal first is to be made to the pastor who is to seek to reconcile the two parties. At this level and at the successive levels, the pastor may seek the assistance of others, especially those respected for their ability to reconcile, but in the end the pastoral authority remains responsible for seeking the resolution of the conflict. No consultative body as such or members of consultative bodies, in virtue of their membership, should be given the administrative responsibility of resolving such conflicts. The consultative body, e.g., the parish pastoral council, has the responsibility for assisting the pastor in drawing up good policies for the pastoral activity of the parish and for assisting the pastor in clarifying policies in cases of conflict of interpretation. It does not, however, engage in the administration of the policies, e.g., judge conflicts between persons.

2° If reconciliation is not achieved with the pastor's help or if the grievance is against the pastor himself, the appeal is to be made to the local dean who by office has special responsibility for promoting harmony of pastoral action and unity in his deanery (Canon 555 §1, 1°; §2, 2°). If the grievance is against the pastor, and the pastor is the local dean, then the appeal is to be made to the dean of the closest neighboring deanery, with the consent of the Diocesan Bishop.

3° If the conflict is not resolved on the deanery level, or if the grievance is against the dean in his office of dean, then the appeal is to be made to the Diocesan Bishop directly. The Diocesan Bishop may do the work of reconciliation himself or he may name another to act for him in the matter.

---

4° If the grievance is against the Diocesan Bishop, the legislation in *The Code of Canon Law* is to be followed (Canons 1732-1739).

§3 It should be kept in mind that *The Code of Canon Law* requires a special procedure to be followed by the Diocesan Bishop in the case of the removal of a pastor (Canons 1740-1747) or the transfer of a pastor unwilling to be transferred (Canons 1749-1752).

### 4. Conclusion

The canonical institution of administrative recourse is pastoral in its purpose. It seeks to foster the reconciliation and peace which Christ won for His Body, the Church, in a manner altogether consonant with the nature of the Church. It should be employed in the spirit of the Christian dialogue which leads to reconciliation.

Approved, in accord with the norm of Canon 1733 §2 of *The Code of Canon Law*, at La Crosse on the first day of May, 1985, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph the Workman, patron of the Diocese of La Crosse.

SEAL

+ John Paul

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bishop of La Crosse

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fr. John Nilles

Chancellor