

# Mary Queen Pastoral Council - Roles and Expectations

## What the Pastoral Council is

A parish pastoral council is the chief consultative body to the pastor. Consultation is a sharing of wisdom that enables the parish to carry out its mission. The pastoral council discerns issues that impact the lives of parishioners; prays, studies, and discusses those issues; and recommends practical ways of addressing them. The Council consists in total of the ~9-12 members each who serve three-year terms. New members discern into the council each year joining those beginning their second and third years. The pastor participates in council meetings and may invite the parochial vicar and business manager to Participate.

For more information on the purpose of the pastoral council see the Norms for Mary Queen Pastoral Councils.

## Council Members

The roles, responsibilities, and guidelines outlined below are expected of each member of the council regardless of any additional duties they may have within the council.

A member of the Pastoral Council...

1. *Deepens their personal spiritual life so as to be more aware of and open to the voice and wisdom of God. (References 4.c)*
  - a. Participates in Council activities including retreats and prayers.
  - b. Regularly participates in the Sacraments, most notably Mass and Confession.
  - c. Prioritizes personal prayer, and particularly silence.
2. *Seeks out and actively listens to the joys and concerns of other parishioners. Respectfully shares what they have heard with the rest of the council. (References 2.c, 3.c, 4.a)*
  - a. Is willing to be uncomfortable and meet parishioners where they are, ensuring they know they are sought out.
  - b. Receives feedback and comments from parishioners with respect and gratitude, ensuring they know they are heard.
  - c. Prays with and studies feedback received and is prepared to share possible actions with the council for further discussion.
  - d. Seeks to understand the underlying needs when receiving negative or constructive feedback.
  - e. Boldly shares feedback received with the council and the Pastor, especially when the feedback is repeatedly received by many council members.

3. *Shares with parishioners the plans and initiatives taken up by the Pastor and responds to any questions or concerns they may have.*
  - a. Presents a united front with the Pastor and the rest of the council to encourage unity within the parish.
  - b. Empowers parishioners to get involved in parish ministries and communities to maximize the impact to them personally and the rest of the parish.
4. *Works with the Pastor and the rest of the council to create actionable plans to meet the needs of the Parish. (References 1.a, 2.b, 2.c, 3.a, 4.a)*
  - a. Is willing to share personal experience or expertise when it is relevant to a plan being discussed.
  - b. Remembers that the idea/plan is being critiqued, not the person who provided it.
  - c. Maintains a positive attitude and trusts that no difficulty is too great to overcome.

## Leadership Roles

The following positions are functional leadership roles that are taken on in addition to the responsibilities outlined above. They are meant to provide structure and allow the council to properly operate. **(References 4.d)**

### Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Pastoral Council...

1. *Facilitates council meetings, ensures a respectful atmosphere is maintained, and encourages open and honest communication amongst the members and between the members and the Pastor.*
  - a. Keeps the meeting on schedule and follows the agenda.
  - b. Intervenes if the code of conduct is not being followed. (See Appendix A)
  - c. Follows up with council members and/or the Pastor outside of the meeting if concerns arise.
2. *Solicits input from the Pastor and the council members well in advance of the monthly meeting to build the agenda.*
3. *Ensures the council is operating according to its norms.*
  - a. Regularly solicits feedback concerning the operation and effectiveness of the council from the Pastor and members of the council via an annual or semi-annual feedback session.
  - b. Works with council members to ensure they understand their role and are fully living it out.

### Vice-Chairperson/Co-Chairperson

The Vice-Chairperson/Co-Chairperson of the Pastoral Council...

1. *Assists the Chairperson in the execution of his/her duties.*
2. *Assumes the role of the Chairperson in the event of his/her absence.*

## Recorder

The Recorder of the Pastoral Council...

1. *Takes minutes during each official council meeting.*
2. *Requests approval of minutes by the members of the council at least one week prior to the next meeting.*

## Pastor

The Pastoral Council invites the Pastor of Mary Queen to embrace the following roles and duties so that we may best assist him in his pastoral ministry. **(References 1.b, 2.a, 4.e)**

The Pastor of Mary Queen...

1. *Nourishes and enriches the spiritual life of the council as a whole and of each individual member to maintain our focus on Christ.*
  - a. Leads the council in prayer.
  - b. Participates in retreats and trainings.
  - c. Encourages council members to deepen their personal spiritual life.
2. *Invites the council to provide insight into the joys and needs of the parish community.*
  - a. Encourages council members to actively seek out insight through personal encounters with parishioners.
  - b. Takes time regularly to listen to the council share what it has heard from the parish community.
3. *Seeks the wisdom of the council for major decisions concerning pastoral initiatives in the parish.*
  - a. Brings new major pastoral initiatives and plans to the council to hear from their wisdom and expertise.
  - b. Seriously considers feedback provided by the council, especially in the case of consensus.
  - c. Tasks the council to investigate and provide practical solutions for major pastoral concerns and opportunities as is appropriate.
4. *Shares with the council the pastoral vision for the parish.*
  - a. Communicates to the council decisions made regarding the wisdom they provide.
  - b. Encourages council members to be ambassadors to the parish regarding his pastoral ministry.

## Parochial Vicar

In his role as the assistant to the Pastor in the ministry of Mary Queen the Pastoral Council invites the Parochial Vicar(s) to participate in their meetings. **(References 4.b)**

The Parochial Vicar...

1. *Assists the Pastor in the execution of his duties.*
2. *Assumes the role of the Pastor in the event of his absence.*

## What the Pastoral Council is not

To avoid confusion over what it means to serve on the pastoral council, the following characterizes things the pastoral council does not do.

The Pastoral Council is not...

1. An authority (**References 1.b, 2.a, 3.b, 4.e**)
  - a. It is a consultative body only and has no authority to approve or veto any action or plan of the Pastor.
  - b. It cannot force the Pastor, staff, or any other leadership position or body to take up a particular plan or action.
  - c. It has no authority to do anything of its own accord. All actions and plans, even if initiated and developed by the council, are to be shared with the parish by the Pastor or staff.
2. A council of 'doers' (**References 5.a, 6**)
  - a. While each member is encouraged to individually participate in various ministries at the parish, it is not for the Council as a body to execute any of the plans we work with the Pastor to create.

# Appendix A: MQ Pastoral Council Code of Conduct

Every member of the council shares the responsibility to promote effective and respectful interactions with one another. This code of conduct establishes the expectations for achieving that.

1. We are here to listen to each other and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit with a disposition of the heart that we all have something to learn.
2. Everyone's input is valued.
3. We should build relationships and exchange perspectives with each other.
4. Expect differing viewpoints and presume the goodwill of the other.
5. Listen with the intent to understand (Covey principle "Seek first to understand, then to be understood").
6. Ask for clarification if you do not understand.
7. Do not interrupt others. Permit one person to speak at a time and finish their point. Minimize side conversations.
8. Give everyone the opportunity to speak. Invite others to contribute.
9. Speak up so that others can hear you. Let others know if you cannot hear them.
10. Make eye contact.
11. When speaking use "I" instead of "we" or "they".
12. Be aware of your body language and read others' language.
13. Stay with the issue being discussed.
14. Always keep the mission of Jesus, the Church, and Mary Queen parish before us.

The chair and co-chair have an additional duty to ensure that:

- a. Everyone at the table has an opportunity to contribute.
- b. Meeting time is shared amongst all table members.
- c. Meeting and discussion stay on track with the agenda.

Additional behaviors are vital to effective meetings. Council members are expected to affirm that:

- A. I prepare for the meetings by studying the agenda.
- B. I arrive on time for meetings and do not leave early.
- C. I carry out any assignments and roles I have.
- D. I listen carefully to what others say.
- E. I allow people to express their ideas.
- F. I express my ideas on issues under discussion.
- G. I observe and respond to nonverbal cues from others.
- H. I help clarify the group's goals and questions.
- I. I contribute to discussion about priorities and decisions.
- J. I limit my remarks to the topic we are discussing.

- K. I encourage and seek out other's perspectives.
- L. I confidently express my own opinions.
- M. I help generate alternative solutions to issues.
- N. I summarize progress made on issues.
- O. I help resolve conflicts or disputes.
- P. I show respect to every person in the group.
- Q. I discourage domination by individuals in the group.
- R. I block personal attacks and negative behavior.
- S. I refuse to engage in negative or hurtful attacks on others.
- T. I offer positive feedback to others.
- U. I encourage evaluation of our group's work.
- V. I accord positive intent to others.

(Source: Revisioning The Parish Pastoral Council A Workbook, Copyright 2001, Page 200).

## Appendix B: References

1. **Code Of Canon Law:** [https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib2-cann460-572\\_en.html#CHAPTER\\_V](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann460-572_en.html#CHAPTER_V)
  - a. Can. 511: *"In every diocese and to the extent that pastoral circumstances suggest it, a pastoral council is to be constituted which under the authority of the bishop investigates, considers, and proposes practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the diocese."*
  - b. Can. 514: *"A pastoral council possesses only a consultative vote. It belongs to the diocesan bishop alone to convoke it according to the needs of the apostolate and to preside over it; it also belongs to him alone to make public what has been done in the council."*
2. **Omnes Christifideles:** [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc\\_con\\_cclergy\\_doc\\_19730125\\_omnes-christifideles\\_it.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_19730125_omnes-christifideles_it.html)
  - a. 1915: *"The pastoral council "has only a consultative voice." (26) In fact, the advice and suggestions of the faithful which are proposed within the framework of ecclesiastical communion and in a spirit of true unity can be of no small benefit in arriving at a decision. The active obedience and respect which the faithful must show towards the sacred pastors, instead of impeding, rather encourage an open and sincere manifestation of what the good of the Church requires. The bishop, therefore, should take great account of the proposals and suggestions of the*

*council and give great weight to an opinion voted unanimously, (27) while safeguarding the freedom and authority which belong to him by divine right to shepherd the portion of the people of God entrusted to him.”*

- b. 1916: *“The task of the pastoral council is “to study and examine all that pertains to the works of the apostolate, in order to then propose practical conclusions, so as to promote conformity with the Gospel of the life and activity of the people of God”.(28) For its study, therefore, those questions can be entrusted which either indicated by the diocesan bishop or proposed by the members of the council and accepted by him, refer to the exercise of pastoral care within the diocese. However, the council does not have the competence to pronounce on general questions regarding faith, orthodoxy, moral principles or the laws of the universal Church; in fact, the master of the faith in the diocese is only the bishop, always - as is obvious - in communion with the head and members of the episcopal college.”*
- c. 1918: *“The pastoral council can therefore provide very useful assistance to the bishop, making proposals and giving suggestions regarding missionary, catechetical and apostolic initiatives within the diocese; regarding the promotion of doctrinal formation and the sacramental life of the faithful; regarding the assistance to be given to the pastoral action of priests in the various social spheres, or territorial areas of the diocese; regarding the way to increasingly sensitize public opinion on the problems that concern the church, etc. The pastoral council can also be very useful in carrying out a mutual exchange of experiences and in proposing initiatives of various kinds, so as to reveal more clearly to the bishop the concrete needs of the diocesan population and suggest to him the most suitable line of pastoral action.”*

**3. Ecclesiae Sanctae:** [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_motu-proprio\\_19660806\\_ecclesiae-sanctae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19660806_ecclesiae-sanctae.html)

- a. 16.1: *“It is the function of the pastoral council to investigate everything pertaining to pastoral activities, to weigh them carefully and to set forth practical conclusions concerning them so as to promote conformity of the life and actions of the People of God with the Gospel.”*
- b. 16.2: *“The pastoral council, which has a consultative vote only, can be set up in various ways. Ordinarily, although by its nature it is a permanent institution, with regard to members and activity it can be temporary and perform its function as the occasion demands. The bishop will be able to convoke it whenever it seems opportune to him.”*

- c. 16.4: *“That the purpose of this council actually be accomplished, it is expedient that advance study precede the common effort using the assistance, if the case warrants it, of institutes or offices which work to this end.”*

#### **4. Archdiocesan Norms:**

<https://files.ecatholic.com/36258/documents/2024/7/normsprshpstrl-1.pdf?t=1720807869000>

- a. Nature and Purpose: *“The Pastoral Council is to be a representative body of the faithful whose focus is on the whole community - its beliefs, its hopes, its joys, its needs, its sorrows, its concerns, its gifts and its pursuit of the mission of the Church. The Council provides a means for uniting the parish community in expressing its collective wisdom concerning pastoral plans and activities. By reason of its existence, the Pastoral Council must read and reflect the “signs-of-the-times” to those planning or implementing pastoral activities in the parish. By the fact that it is convoked by the pastor, the Pastoral Council must respond to his call and questions and offer the best consultation possible. The Pastoral Council’s task is counsel and consultation. Thus, the members of this group, along with the pastor, are called to reflect and consider pastoral issues for the common good and for the future. Their role is to understand, to reflect carefully and prayerfully and to seek consensus. Although, there will be times when circumstances will prevent the Council from reaching a consensus.”*
- b. Inclusion of the Parochial Vicar: *“It is important that the parochial vicar participate in Pastoral Council meetings. His role is distinct from that of parish staff persons employed by the pastor due to his appointment by the Bishop to serve as “co-worker with the pastor in common counsel and endeavor with him and also under his authority (13).” The parochial vicar shares in the pastoral care of the parish and assists the pastor in his pastoral duties.”*
- c. Spiritual Growth of Members: *“Each Council must take time to develop spiritually so as to be more keenly aware of the Spirit’s presence and functioning within the Council and within the whole parish community.”*
- d. Council Leadership: *“Each Council should determine its leadership by an appropriate process. Such leadership should include a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Recorder.”*
- e. Pastor’s Reception of Counsel: *“Normally the pastor should not act contrary to the counsel given, especially when there is a consensus. However, in matters that violate Church teaching or discipline, or in matters contrary to diocesan policy, the pastor, after appropriate explanation to the Council, must withhold acceptance. In cases of non-acceptance of counsel, for whatever reason, appeals may be made to the diocesan bishop or his designee for clarification, consideration or arbitration.”*

**5. USCCB Executive Report on Pastoral Council Research:**

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/research-and-resources-pastoral-councils-and>

Success of Pastoral Councils: *“PCs are most successful when they are true to their nature as established by canon law. PCs work best when consulted by diocesan bishops and eparchs on issues central to Church life where broad input is essential, such as Catholic education, evangelization, or lay ministry development. The PC gives relatively little attention to matters for which other consultative bodies exist, or for which specialized competence is required, such as financial issues.”*

**6. Pastoral Council Essential Information:**

[www.ArchGH.org/pastoralplan](http://www.ArchGH.org/pastoralplan)

From GH Archdiocese handout for prospective PC members.

How will the pastoral council succeed?

This consultative body will succeed by assisting the pastor and the community in the development of a mission-focused parish, rather than a programmatic or finance-driven one. This does attempt to put at the heart of the parish a consciousness of and zeal of the mission of Jesus Christ. The following table illustrates the movement:

<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Parish Council	Pastoral Council
Group of Leaders	Leadership Body
Coordinating Ministries	Articulating the Mission
Crisis Management	Pastoral Planning
Doing Activities	Empowerment & Oversight
Business and Politics	Prayer and Discernment
Competition	Collaboration