

## **Consultative Bodies at Work**

### **Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils and their Roles in a Parish**

*“I am the Vine, and you are the branches. Those who live in me and I in them will produce abundantly.” (John 15:5a)*



The Gospel image of the vine and branches portrays the intimate communion of Jesus with his disciples. It suggests a healthy and fruitful relationship that is sustained through mutual sharing and full-hearted giving. Early church teaching repeatedly referred to the image of the vine. According to Cyril of Jerusalem, by Baptism the Christian becomes a “*partaker of the holy vine. If you abide in the vine, you will grow as a fruitful branch*”.<sup>i</sup>

#### ***Parish Consultative Bodies***

As we learned in an earlier educational document, “*What is Our Identity?*,” we are all called to share in the mission of the Church and there are many ways to do this. One way that lay people are called to be a part of this fruitful relationship is by sharing their many talents (and time) as members of the Parish Pastoral Council and the Finance Council. These bodies allow clergy and laity to work collaboratively in leading the Church at the parish level. The gifts lay people bring to this collaboration deeply enrich the knowledge and wisdom of these Councils. Both the Parish Council and Finance Council are “consultative,” which means that they make recommendations to the Pastor and the Pastor presides over them. The Pastoral Council is recommended by Canon Law (Canon 536) and the Finance Council is mandated by Canon Law (Canon 537). The policy of the Diocese of Cleveland is that every parish is to have these Councils. While both Councils are related in their concern for the life and mission of the parish, each has distinct work.

#### ***Parish Pastoral Council***

The primary concern of the Parish Pastoral Council is the spiritual growth of the parish community. In order to contribute to this ongoing spiritual renewal, Council members need to commit themselves to regular times of prayer and study centered on Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church. They should strive to build a Christian community with mutual trust and understanding among members. Ideally, they form a group which serves as a model of prayer, cooperation, celebration and service.

Parish Council is also the pastoral planning body of the parish. It is responsible for determining how the parish can most effectively fulfill its total mission. The Council discerns what needs to be supported, changed, or developed to make the parish more faithful to God’s call.

The Parish Pastoral Council looks to the Finance Council for sound financial guidance and planning regarding the resources needed to develop and implement parish plans, programs and policies.<sup>ii</sup>

#### ***Parish Finance Council***

The Parish Finance Council unites laity and clergy in a community of prayer, leadership, service, and financial planning. Members of the Finance Council are selected for their expertise in finances, investment and law. Council members provide expertise and consultation through sound financial analysis, planning and policy development to aid the Pastor in the best possible stewardship of parish goods: parish financial resources, buildings and grounds.

The Finance Council looks to the Parish Pastoral Council for a statement of the mission of the parish, a pastoral plan and parish priorities.<sup>iii</sup>

**Going Deeper:**

1. Why do you think these councils are recommended/mandated by Canon Law?
2. Why do Parish Pastoral Council members need to be people who “regularly commit themselves to times of prayer and study centered on Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church”?
3. Why do the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Council need to have a collaborative working relationship?

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<sup>i</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechesis I; “An Introductory Discourse to the Candidates of Baptism,” The Works of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, vol. 1, Catholic University of America Press, 1969, p. 93

<sup>ii</sup> Christ Calls Us Together, Parish Pastoral Council Policy; Diocese of Cleveland, 1990

<sup>iii</sup> Parish Finance Council Policy; Diocese of Cleveland, 1991