

# *The Parish Pastoral Council*

Diocese  
of Edmundston

## The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC)

Before talking about the parish pastoral council, it is important to recall the mission of the Church

### **1. *The Church's Mission***

The Church perpetuates the mission of Christ. The Church is sent into the world today as both sign and instrument of the Reign of God.

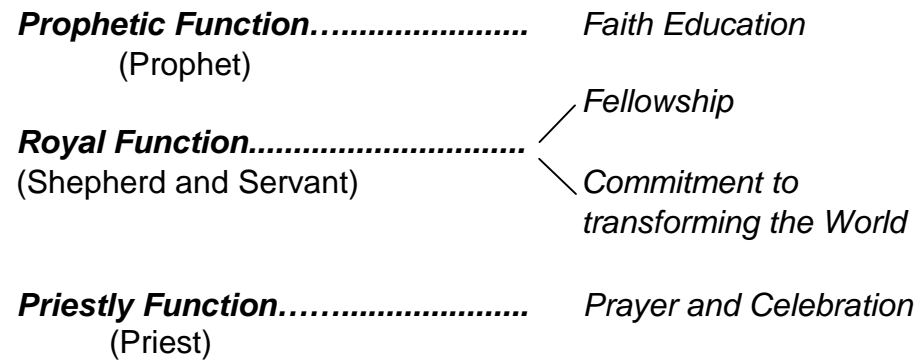
Specifically, the Church's mission is carried out through four (4) major dimensions called the "dimensions of Christian life", which we read about in the Acts of the Apostles; "They (the first Christians) devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... Those who believed shared all things in common; they would sell their property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each one's needs" (Acts 2:42, 44).

These dimensions illustrate the triple function of Christ, the Priest, Prophet, and king to whom we are all associated through baptism.

#### Abbreviations used:

- PPT – Parish Pastoral Team
- PPC – Parish Pastoral Council
- PEAC – Parish Economic Affairs Committee

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These four dimensions are faith education, fellowship, commitment to transforming the world, and prayer and celebration.

You will find explanations of these dimensions at the end of this document.

## **2. What is a Parish Pastoral Council?**

With the pastoral team, the parish pastoral council is composed of a group of Christians who share together a common concern for the Christian community.

The PPC must always keep in mind that the parish is a cell of the diocese and, therefore, concerned with the well-being of the other communities, open to the universal Church, and constantly attentive to the evangelization of the milieu.

According to the Code of Canon Law, “A pastoral council is to be established in each parish. In this council, which is presided over by the parish priest, Christ’s faithful, together with those who by virtue of their office are engaged in pastoral care in the parish, give their help in fostering pastoral activity” (canon 536, § 1). Canon 517 § 2 states that the moderator, though not a pastor, has “the power and faculties of a parish priest,” directs the pastoral care.

After consulting with the parishes concerned, there can be one PPC constituted for several parishes which are served by the same pastoral team. In this instance, care shall be taken to have representatives from each parish on the PPC, for fair representation of each.

## **3. Role of the Parish Pastoral Council**

The parish pastoral council is like the conscience a parish has, to evaluate the degree of fidelity to its mission, and to guide and direct the parish to greater fidelity to the Gospel. The PPC looks at the life of the community in order to discern the signs and actions of the Holy Spirit. It is first and foremost an organism for reflection, direction, and planning.

## **4. Responsibilities of the Parish Pastoral Council**

### **4.1. A Reflection of the Christian Community**

The PPC looks at the Christian community in order to identify new pastoral needs relative to the four dimensions of the Christian life. In harmony with the diocesan pastoral priorities, the PPC collaborates with the PPT in developing an action plan. This exercise is accomplished in collaboration with the parish pastoral team.

### **4.2. Conscience of the Community**

The PPC ensures that the pastoral action remains faithful to its mission. It reviews current practices and can review particular areas of pastoral concern, and make suggestions to bring vitality to the pastoral action, and direct it towards greater compliance with the Gospel.

### **4.3. “Spark Plug”**

The PPC can initiate new projects, For example, if it is aware that faithfulness to the Gospel requires the introduction of some action on behalf of teenagers or single-parent families, it can do so. It does not

have to take responsibility for this project but only to be its “spark plug.” Responsibility for the project can be given to the PPT or a committee. The PPC is not a task-oriented team, but neither is it a simple think-tank.

#### **4.4. Community Facilitation and Organization**

The PPC must stimulate the volunteers and promote a parish spirit. It promotes the flow of life by initiating or promoting initiatives and by supporting the persons involved in parish activities. As the need arises, the PPC may assume direction of some parish activities like, for instance, the launching of the pastoral year, a Volunteers’ Day celebration, etc. The PPC plays a vital role in preparing the annual parish meeting which is presided by the moderator and facilitated by the PPC chairperson.

#### **4.5. Task Evaluation**

The PPC evaluates its team work and functioning, for further improvement. It must also evaluate its pastoral action plan, in the course of the year, especially at the conclusion of the pastoral year.

### **5. Composition of the Parish Pastoral Council**

The PPC is composed of six (6) to twelve (12) members besides the moderator and a few members of the pastoral team. Care shall be taken to ensure that the PPC is representative of the community or communities as a whole (youth and adults, men and women, different geographic sectors, etc.). The following are some of the criteria of discernment in choosing members:

- Having an active faith in Jesus Christ, and a life inspired by Gospel values
- Having a vision of the Church as communion
- Showing concern for the parish as a whole
- Being able to reflect, listen, and speak
- Accepting one’s baptismal responsibilities, and readiness to work with others
- Being available to attend PPC meetings.

### **6. Term of Office of PPC Members**

The term of office of a PPC member is three (3) years, renewable once, or of two (2) years, renewable twice. Consequently, a member could sit on council for six (6) consecutive years, with the possibility of coming back after a one-year hiatus.

### **7. PPC Council Meetings**

The PPC meets about five (5) times a year; however, there may be some who prefer meeting monthly. Some meetings could be half-days or even a whole day of study to reflect on a particular topic as, for example, reviewing one of the dimensions of the Christian life or an evaluation of the community’s needs. It is important to draw up a calendar of meetings at the beginning of the pastoral year so as to have the presence of all PPC members.

### **8. Specific Duties**

#### **8.1. PPC President**

The moderator (or pastoral team representative) presides the PPC (canon 536 § 1), in virtue of the pastoral charge given that person by the bishop.

Therefore:

- The president is responsible for the good functioning of the PPC.
- The president ensures that the PPC accomplishes its mandate and fulfills its responsibilities.
- The President convenes members of the PPC and fosters good relations with the PEAC, the pastoral team, and the different parish groups as well as with the pastoral zone and the diocese.
- The president must act in communion with all the PPC members.

## **8.2. PPC Chairperson**

A PPC member is elected by the PPC to chair the PPC meeting and is responsible with the moderator for the PPC's sustained enthusiasm and faithfulness in pursuing the proposed objectives, and for carrying out its responsibilities.

- The chairperson ensures the orderly functioning of the PPC and is jointly responsible with the moderator for its vitality and fidelity to carrying out the PPC objectives as well as his or her own responsibilities.
- The chairperson chairs the PPC meetings and ensures that everyone is free to express opinions in all honesty.
- He or she facilitates the PPC meetings and ensures that everyone is has the chance to freely and openly express opinions.
- The chairperson acts in communion with the other PPC, PEAC, and PPT members, the different groups in the parish, the pastoral zone, and the diocese.

## **8.3. Secretary**

The secretary plays a major role as a keeper of the group's memory.

The one in this position must carry out the following tasks:

- Prepare the minutes of PPC meetings and of the executive committee, if necessary.
- Convene PPC members
- Prepare documents needed for the meeting
- Keep minutes of PPC meetings and other documents, for the parish archives.

It is recommended that this position be assumed by the same person for a complete year, at least. The secretary can be appointed from the PPC membership or the outside.

## **9. PPC Renewal**

PPC members must take time for renewal and prayer, for improving their religious knowledge and deepening their faith.

**Period of Prayer:** Every meeting should have a time allotted to prayer.

**Renewal Time:** At meetings, a period of time can be consecrated to spiritual renewal.

It is important for PPC members to take part in parish or diocesan renewal sessions in order to sharpen their competence and be better witnesses of Jesus Christ in the Church and the world.

## **10. The PPC and its Partners**

### **10.1. Parish Meeting**

The parish meeting is an extension of the PPC in that it affords parishioners the possibility of making themselves heard for identifying new needs and concerns, proposing new projects, and for the well-being of the life of the community.

### **10.2. Parish Economic Affairs Committee (PEAC)**

The PPC must inform the PEAC of the parish's pastoral situation, so that the latter may take appropriate measures when preparing its budget estimates. In this manner the PEAC can better respond to the expectations and new concerns of the parish community. It is important, also, that the PPC know about the parish's financial situation. Both PPC and PEAC must collaborate together in solidarity and fraternity.

**10.3. The Parish Pastoral Team (PPT)**

The parish pastoral team is composed of people who have been given a mandate by the bishop, for pastoral service to the parish as a whole. Representatives of this pastoral team, among whom is the moderator, are full members of the PPC and form the necessary link between PPC and the PPT. The PPC collaborates with the PPT in elaborating a pastoral plan.

**11. Parish Groups**

There are several groups, organizations, and service committees in a parish. In this way, many volunteers contribute to transforming their milieu, by their commitment.

The PPC ensures:

- that good relations exist among all parish groups. The PPC is attentive, also, to the work of these groups
- that the groups are made aware of the community’s pastoral priorities
- communion between the different groups by disseminating information and organizing activities which create bonds and solidarity among them.

**THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF THE MISSION**

Following Christ	The Church Is Given the Mission	Dimension of the Mission (Pastoral Ministry Aspect)
<p><b>PROPHETIC FUNCTION</b></p> <p><i>“I have made known to you all that I heard from my Father.”</i> Jn 15:15</p>	<p><b>TO EVANGELISE</b></p>	<p><b>FAITH EDUCATION</b></p> <p>This area groups together the practices that foster the search for meaning in the light of the Gospel. It is concerned with the proclamation of Jesus Christ, with a deepening of the faith and an understanding of the Gospel requirements. It fosters learning of Christian attitudes and practices. Among others, this dimension includes family- and parish-based catechesis, evangelization... It leads to discerning the traces of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in everyday life.</p>
<p><b>ROYAL FUNCTION (Shepherd &amp; Servant)</b></p> <p><i>“I pray that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, I pray that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”</i> Jn 17:21</p>	<p><b>TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY</b></p>	<p><b>FELLOWSHIP</b></p> <p>This dimension concerns our way of living in community. It calls for living together in a way where each one in the community is welcomed and has his or her place. Special care is given to the weaker and the needy members. Every occasion must be taken to gather together – anniversaries, mourning, and other occasions – in celebration or for service. Fraternity, charity, joy, and sharing must be attitudes to cultivate, for community-building.</p>
<p><i>“The blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the Good News preached to them.”</i> Lk 7:22</p>	<p><b>TO WORK AT HUMANISING AND LIBERATING THE WORLD</b></p>	<p><b>COMMITMENT TO TRANSFORMING THE WORLD</b></p> <p>This transformation affects all of society's transformation practices in order to bring about a better world according to the Gospel. It aims at the quality of the family in our community. It promotes justice, peace, solidarity, respect, and the dignity of everyone as children of God. It calls on the believers to get involved in social issues such as poverty, violence, etc... it aims not only at changing mentalities but also structures.</p>
<p><b>PRIESTLY FUNCTION</b></p> <p>“Then, taking bread and giving thanks... Do this in memory of me.” Lk 22 :19</p> <p>“Hen you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name.” Lk 11:2</p>	<p><b>TO CELEBRATE</b></p>	<p><b>PRAYER AND CELEBRATION</b></p> <p>This dimension touches all activities that nourish one’s spirituality, develops one’s prayer life, helps one encounter God and celebrate Him, either alone or in the company of others. This dimension is about liturgical and sacramental celebrations, celebrations of the Word, prayer meetings; it also affects our day-to-day commitments.</p> <p>“I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship.” Rm 12:1</p>

Concrete Examples
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FAITH EDUCATION</b></p> <p>Family- and parish-based religious education – catechist training – baptism and sacramental preparation and Profession of Faith – adult faith education – sessions – courses – preaching – parish mission – Gospel sharing – organizations – marriage preparation – youth ministry.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FELLOWSHIP</b></p> <p>charitable organizations and movements – grief ministry – welcome of newcomers to the parish – social activities – celebrations, get-togethers, and parties – community meals – post-funeral meals – ministry to the sick and shut-ins – anniversaries – volunteer recognition and celebration.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMMITMENT TO TRANSFORMING THE WORLD</b></p> <p>Catholic Action – Development and Peace – youth ministry – family ministry – social justice ministry – unions and salary equity – political and community commitment – food drives – clothing depot – Walk for Peace – Committee for Justice and Solidarity – food bank – social action groups.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRAYER AND CELEBRATION</b></p> <p>Gatherings for prayer (liturgy of the hours services, morning, midday, and evening prayer, ecumenical prayer services...) – prayer groups – liturgy committee (ministers of communion, lectors, altar servers...) – choirs – liturgies of the Word – celebrations of the sacraments – Sunday Eucharists.</p>

This chart has been inspired by that of the Diocese of Nicolet, Québec.

## Conclusion

"This is our challenge: to create in our communities parish pastoral councils that are moved by the joys, sorrows, and hopes of their community and the world of today, and that strive to identify new forms for the Gospel to touch the hearts and grow in our lives." (Gilles Routhier)

An effective parish pastoral team is certainly an essential component of the life of the Christian communities and of its commitment to carrying out the mission of Christ.



*Document Prepared by  
Diocesan Pastoral Ministry Coordinators  
Diocesan Centre  
Edmundston, NB  
E3V 3K1  
506.735.5578*