Our Lady of Loretto Parish Pastoral Council

*Foundation Document*

Effective: August 1, 2022

**Preamble**

The Second Vatican Council (1963-65) emphasized the importance of the laity in the life of the Church. Canon Law, in the 1983 revision, introduced the idea of parish councils, where faithful Catholics could share their wisdom and experience as advisors to the pastor, to help in fostering pastoral activity.

Catholics, therefore, have the right and duty to express opinions on what pertains to the good of the Church. Pastors should willingly consult the people and listen to their prudent advice. By establishing this Pastoral Council, the pastor acknowledges the wisdom of his parishioners, and expresses his desire to benefit from their knowledge and life experience.

**Approach**

The Pastoral Council will conduct its work in three stages: First, the Council will study those matters assigned to it by the pastor. The Council will then reflect thoughtfully on the facts it has found. Finally, having achieved sufficient clarity on the matter, the Council will draw conclusions, which it will communicate to the pastor.

After the three tasks of the Council (study, reflection, conclusions) are complete, and after the pastor has accepted the recommendations of the Council, he will direct their implementation. Council members may assist him, but strictly speaking, implementation is the responsibility of the pastor, not the Council.

**Scope**

Apart from questions of faith, moral principles, or Church law (which are the responsibility of ordained clergy), the Pastoral Council may consider anything that affects the life of the parish; for example: caring for the faithful and for the poor, promoting the mission of the Church to the world and the local community, supporting the various parish programs as well as the parish school, and being good stewards of parish resources.

**Criteria for Membership**

Pastoral Council members will be chosen, above all, for their wisdom and prudence, and their ability to accomplish the work of study, reflection, and recommendation. They must be baptized Catholics, in good standing with the Church, who reflect the parish’s various social groups and ministries.

**Number of Members and Term of Office**

The Council consists of ten members, the pastor and nine others, chosen and invited by him. The Council will take office on August 1st of 2022, and will serve until September 1st of 2024. This two-year period is called a “planning cycle.” Vacancies that may occur during the planning cycle will be filled by the pastor at his sole discretion.

**Officers**

The pastor is, *ex officio*, a member of the Council, and he presides at the regular monthly meetings. The pastor will select a coordinator who will facilitate Council discussions, and also will monitor the work of the council between regular meetings. Another member will be chosen to take the minutes of each meeting.

**Operation**

The pastor defines the theme of the current planning cycle at the beginning of the two-year term. The Council then meets monthly from September through May. As appropriate, the Council will create subcommittees, solicit assistance from the parish, and (as directed by the pastor) issue reports, including an annual report at the end of each planning cycle.

At the end of the two-year planning cycle, this Council will cease. If appropriate, the pastor will convene a new Council, using a revised version of this document to govern the successor Council’s activities.

**Agendas**

As stated above, the pastor names his priorities for the coming two-year planning cycle. He also sets the agenda for each monthly meeting, with assistance from council members (as needed) . The monthly agenda states the items to be covered, and includes a review of the minutes from the previous meeting, and a status report of any ongoing projects.

**Relations with Parish Staff and with the Finance Council**

The pastor will, as a matter of course, rely upon his parish staff for their expertise in routine parish operations. As his discretion, the pastor may ask parish staff to attend Pastoral Council meetings from time to time, but a parish employee cannot serve on the Pastoral Council as a member. This applies to paid faculty and staff at OLL School who are also parish employees.

The pastor relies on the parish Finance Council to develop, monitor, and report on the parish budget. Finance Council members are, therefore, chosen for their technical skill in accounting and finance. The Pastoral Council, by contrast, offers practical wisdom on other matters. Therefore, a Council member cannot serve on the Finance Council at the same time. For similar reasons, Council members may not serve on the OLL School Board.

Other than the exceptions above, a member of the Pastoral Council may serve on any other parish organization while also serving on the Council.

**Amendments and Changes**

Amendments and changes to this document may be made at any time by the pastor, or by the Council with the pastor’s approval. The revised document will feature a “Revised on (calendar date)” in the lower right-hand corner of the last page.

**Approval**

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Pastor’s signature Date

Sources

Father David Pettingill, *Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils,*

*Archdiocese of San Francisco*, 1999

Pope Paul VI, *Christus Dominus (*The Pastoral Office of Bishops in the

Church) October 28, 1965

Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)

November 21, 1964

Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the

Laity) October 28, 1965

Pope John Paul II, *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges* (New Code of Canon Law),

January 25, 1983

Note: Council documents, and most official writings of the Church,

are written in Latin, then translated into bureaucratic English. This makes for slow reading, but such documents can be inspirational,

so it can be worth the effort.

You’ll find the sources above available on Amazon, but if you’d rather not spend the money, they’re available at no cost from the Vatican website ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)) They’ve got a vast online library of Papal and Conciliar documents, available in 10 languages.

Another useful website is [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. You’ll find daily mass readings, plus

the New American Bible (the one used at masses) and a searchable Catechism.