

# Collaborators in Christ's Mission



Manual  
for Parish Pastoral & Finance Councils  
Orientation and Processes  
By Dr. Kate Wiskus

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## FORWARD

As a diocesan director for the Diocese of Madison from 1998 to 2006, I found that the individuals in the parish wanted to “do the right thing” but at times didn’t have a firm foundation in their faith. This was especially true of individuals who found themselves serving as members of pastoral and finance councils and the various commissions. They were hungry for faith formation. They were seeking, but there were so few resources made available to them in the parish.

As a fulltime professor of pastoral theology at Mundelein Seminary and University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, IL from 2006 to 2015 and adjunct faculty at the present time, I found that one of the primary requests from the seminarians in formation was for resources to use in the parishes in “growing disciples,” as we called it. We are blessed with the number of resources out there today for “growing disciples” in the Catholic Church. The dilemma isn’t so much a lack of resources as a lack of understanding of the centrality of discipleship within our faith and a lack of understanding that the essential task of the parish pastoral and finance councils is to work hand in hand with the parish pastoral leader and staff to “grow disciples” in the parishes.

The parish pastoral council members are mandated to assist the pastoral leader and staff in visioning for the implementation of Christ’s mission to “grow disciples” in their parish and then to realize that mission through every effort, program, process and service, through every liturgy, formation opportunity, community function, and outreach to parishioners and beyond. The members are commissioned to both develop their own discipleship and to work to assist others in embracing their baptismal commitment and participation in Christ’s ongoing mission.

The parish finance council members are mandated to assist the pastoral leader and staff in realizing Christ’s mission to “grow disciples” by stewarding the human, fiscal and temporal resources available to the parish. The members are commissioned to both develop their own sense of discipleship and to work to assist others in their growth as disciples by ensuring that provision are made for excellent liturgies, formation opportunities, community gatherings, and outreach.

I encourage every parish to recognize their role in “growing disciples.” I pray that every parish will provide needed formation in the faith beginning with an understanding of baptism, discipleship, and mission.

**While these materials are copyrighted by me (© 2016), you have my permission to use them and to adapt them to your own needs.** It is all one Church. I pray that these resources are helpful and that through their use, individuals may grow in their love of Christ, their faith in His word, and their hope in his promise.

Dr. Kate Wiskus

[kathleen.wiskus@yahoo.com](mailto:kathleen.wiskus@yahoo.com)

920-945-0082

# Orientation

## Councils as Collaborators in Christ's Mission

### **Christ's Mission:**

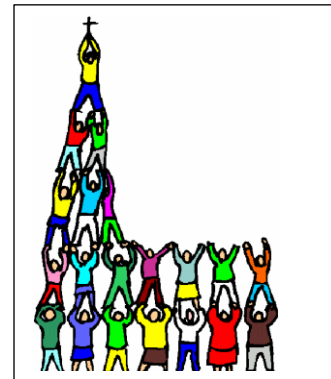
Every person, every community, and every institution that bears Christ's name within their identity (Christian), bears the responsibility of discipleship as mandated by our LORD, Jesus Christ: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."<sup>1</sup> Our LORD and Savior makes us his brothers and sisters and collaborators in his ongoing salvific mission through our baptism. Christ's mission continues on, and we as his disciples, are commissioned to collaborate with him, through him, in him, and for him for the salvation of all humanity.

### ***Questions:***

1. How do we collaborate in Christ's ongoing mission today?
2. Where does this collaboration occur?
3. Who is responsible for maintaining an awareness of the mission?
4. Where do we gain the necessary formation for the mission?

### **What Is A Parish?**

For most of us, the answers to the questions above center on the Church in our midst, on "The Parish." According to Canon Law, "A parish is a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor."<sup>2</sup> The emphasis of parish has shifted since the Second Vatican Council away from a "territorial" entity to a *People* centered in Christ and sustained by the Eucharist.



St. John Paul II stressed often in his homilies the essential role of the parish in the life of Catholics. He said, "The parish, as the fundamental community of the People of God and as an organic part of the Church, has its origin, in a certain sense, in the sacrament of baptism. It is, in fact, the community of the baptized."<sup>3</sup> Several years later in a subsequent homily, he added, "The meaning of the parish is precisely this: a family in which one seeks, one recognizes, one realizes one's vocation which the Lord has given to every human being. One could say that the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:19-20a.

<sup>2</sup> Canon 515§

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Homily*, April 22, 1979.

parish is truly a parish when it helps each and every individual to discover and realize his Christian vocation.”<sup>4</sup> Finally, when speaking on the identity of a parish and parishioners, he told the crowds to quote St. Paul and say, “We are in Christ Jesus.” Then he added. “Our ‘we’ as Christians is he, Christ. But if, as a parish, you are called to form one entity in Christ, you are bound to bear witness in your life to this community vocation. In other words, you must undertake to grow in Christ not only as individuals, but also as a parish.”<sup>5</sup>

Pope Francis speaks of the role of the parish in his apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*. He writes: “The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach.”<sup>6</sup>

As we can see, the parish today is meant to be a *Community of the People of God*, led by a pastoral leader under the authority of the local bishop, centered in Christ, who live fully their vocation as disciples and who reach out to others in Christ and for Christ through their worship, formation opportunities, community, and service.

### ***Questions:***

1. Do these explanations and descriptions of parish and parish life reflect your own understanding of parish and your role within that community?
2. Would these explanations and descriptions of parish and parish life resonate with the faithful of the parish in general? Do they see the parish in this way?
3. Do these explanations and descriptions of parish inspire you to want more from your parish and for a more vibrant parish life for yourself and others?
4. Would these passages inspire others in the parish to greater participation in the life of the Church and in the realization of Christ’s mission?

### **Parish Pastoral & Finance Councils**

Canon law calls for the establishment of finance committee/council to help the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish for the well-being of the parish (See Canon 537). Canon law further states that “if after consulting the council of priests, the diocesan Bishop considers it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish” with the pastor joining together with Christ’s faithful who “give their help in fostering pastoral action” (See Canon 536). Canon law firmly establishes that the faithful have an obligation and right to make known to their pastors their views on matters relevant to the parish administration and well-being.

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<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Homily*, February 1, 1987.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Homily*, February 1, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis I, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28.

The Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium* or *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* proposes that parish pastors should be “willing to make use of the laity’s prudent advice.” It goes on to say, “Let them confidently assign duties to the laity in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let pastors encourage the laity so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative.”<sup>7</sup> The pastors in today’s parishes are formed “to recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, pastors and laity alike are encouraged to seek and recognize the benefits for the parish realized when the pastor and faithful collaborate for the sake of Christ’s Church in a particular time, a specific place, with the faithful present. Finally, pastors are “helped by the experience of the laity, are in a position to judge more clearly and more appropriately in spiritual as well as in temporal matters. Strengthened by all her members, the Church can thus more effectively fulfill her mission for the life of the world.”<sup>9</sup>

Pastors of today are faced with complex pastoral ministry in the parishes. Ministry is far more complex with far more expectations than a century ago. Yet, the pastors recognize through their formation that they are equipped by the Spirit for the tasks at hand because they are graced with the gifts of the laity to assist them. When Pope Benedict XVI was asked by a parish priest in an audience with clergy what parish pastors were to do today with all the expectations, he responded:

“The parish priest is no longer the only one to animate everything. Since we all form a parish together, we must all collaborate and help so that the parish priest is not left on his own mainly as a coordinator, but truly discovers that he is a pastor who is backed up in these common tasks in which together, the parish lives and is fulfilled.”<sup>10</sup>

At the top of the list of “helpers” and “collaborators” for a parish pastor today are the members of the parish pastoral council and finance council. These individuals, raised up by the members of their own community, bring much to the discussion of the parish vision and the realization of Christ’s mission in their specific situations and locations. These councils support the parish pastoral leader in realizing the potential of a fully alive Christian community, living out their discipleship and stewarding their gifts well.

### ***Questions:***

1. How has this explanation of the roles of pastor and laity in collaboration clarified your understanding of the roles of both the pastor and council members?
2. What are the primary benefits of collaboration between laity and pastor?
3. What responsibilities do each (pastor and lay council members) have in the ongoing mission of Christ?

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<sup>7</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 37

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, *Origins*, “Meeting with Clergy”, vol. 37, no. 11, p 190

# FORMATION FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Parish Pastoral and Finance Council members constitute the Church's critical framework for collaboration for the sake of the mission of the Church as well as for the sake of the members of the local Church and beyond. This critical and essential work requires formation of the individual disciple called to this service role as well as formation of councils as communities of disciples. The formation includes an orientation to the service such as outlined on previous pages. In addition, the formation includes an introduction to the primary work of the Church, her mission in Christ, namely to grow disciples. In order to better serve in their capacities as consultants and collaborators, the individual members need to be formed for and in their own personal discipleship. This begins with a recognition of the blessings as well as obligations of baptism.

When one comes to understand the life of a disciple and the need for the life-giving components of WORSHIP, WORD, COMMUNITY, and SERVICE in their own lives, they come to see the need for it in the life of every disciple in the local Church as well as the collective community of disciples. Every Catholic Christian community needs, likewise, a balance of the life-giving components of WORSHIP, WORD, COMMUNITY, and SERVICE as well. If Christ's mission will be ultimately realized, it requires that the individuals as well as the collective community come to LOVE, LEARN, and LIVE CHRIST day in and day out.

Formation worth considering for incoming members of the councils includes, of course, some instruction on Baptism and Discipleship. In addition, incoming members need to be orientated to the roles of prayer and ongoing formation in the "business" of the councils for the good of the Mission of Christ. Finally, it is good for council members to understand the optimum for efficient and productive council meetings. On the following pages are:

1. a possible instruction on Baptism and Discipleship,
2. rationale for incorporating prayer into the council meetings and year
3. sample plans for council retreats including opening prayer
4. guidelines for planning council prayer including a template
5. guidelines and resources for ongoing study/formation for council members
6. guidelines for council meetings

# Instruction on Baptism and Discipleship

## **Introduction:**

Discipleship is loving Christ, learning Christ and living Christ every day. Our faith is not something we create. In fact, to quote a favorite Christian songwriter, “I did not make it, no it is making me.”<sup>11</sup>

To quote Pope Francis’ words in *The Joy of the Gospel*, “It is a wonderful thing to be God’s faithful people. We achieve fulfillment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names.” You see, our mission is not impersonal – it’s not about numbers, profits, strategies or programs- on the contrary – it is essentially personal because it is relational. It is all about life made possible through our relationship with our loving Lord and using our lives to share that life with others so they, too, might have life. Our lives are a journey blessed by the love and presence of Jesus Christ and of so many others - of faces and names and stories of faith learned and lived out of love for Christ. For us as disciples, life should be all about loving Christ, learning Christ, and living Christ and accompanying others as they do the same.

We need to return to our baptisms where we were anointed priest, prophet and king to share in the ongoing salvific action of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and his priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to grace us and develop us so that we might be transformed through prayer, the sacraments and liturgy, that we might be receptive to the Word and take it in fully so we might proclaim it with conviction, and so that we might be people of community who reach out to others in loving service in the name of Jesus Christ. We must address it as whole persons of spirit, intellect, and body so that we might grow in holiness and journey with others. Baptism is the beginning of the mission but does not fulfill our obligation of being disciples. Discipleship is not a title bestowed but an office lived, and it must be informed and directed by the Spirit through prayer and the sacraments, through study, and through life in communion with our Lord and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We must consciously embrace our relationship with Christ initiated through our baptisms. As Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians, “it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us.”<sup>12</sup> Through our baptisms we become members of the Body of Christ, one body with many parts.<sup>13</sup> Paul also reminds us that it is through love lived out that we will bring about the kingdom here on earth, that we will grow the mystical body of Christ because love fulfills the law and surpasses it.<sup>14</sup> We are called as the baptized to bring Christ’s love for all humanity and our love of Christ to others so they might benefit from his love and learn to love him themselves and learning Christ, live Christ.

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<sup>11</sup> Lyrics from the song *Creed* written by Richard Mullins.

<sup>12</sup> Gal 2:19.

<sup>13</sup> Rom 12:38.

<sup>14</sup> Rom. 13: 8-10.



As the baptized who are cognizant of all that our baptism brings to us but also demands of us, we move individually and collectively from people who attend church to a community in, with and through Jesus Christ who are Church, His Church. We focus on our identity in Jesus Christ because of our relationship to Him.

Therefore, the first and foremost step into a lived discipleship is the realization that all is dependent upon a relationship with Christ. We can't be a people who just know about him and his teachings, we must move to being a people in *love* with Jesus Christ. Loving Him opens us to the wonderment of learning Him as the first disciples did. The first disciples encountered Christ and then followed him. Day to day they witnessed his works and took in his teachings, manifestations of Him as Son, sent by the Father<sup>15</sup>, filled and led by the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> Day to day the first disciples learned Christ as we *learn* or come to "know" another. As disciples in the modern era, we must also encounter the person Jesus Christ and not settle for merely knowing about Him but insist that we *learn* Him. Finally, when we *love* Christ and we *learn* Christ, we are compelled to *live* Christ.

An individual committed to *loving, learning, and living* Jesus Christ is that light on a hill.<sup>17</sup> An individual committed to *loving, learning, and living* Jesus Christ is that leavening agent that changes from within.<sup>18</sup> An individual committed to *loving, learning, and living* Jesus Christ is a missionary laboring in the field on the ultimate mission of He who came so that we might have life and have it more abundantly.<sup>19</sup> An individual committed to *loving, learning, and living* Jesus Christ is an instrument in the ongoing salvific action of Christ in the world.

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<sup>15</sup> John 3:17

<sup>16</sup> Luke 4:1

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 5:14

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 13:33

<sup>19</sup> John 10:10



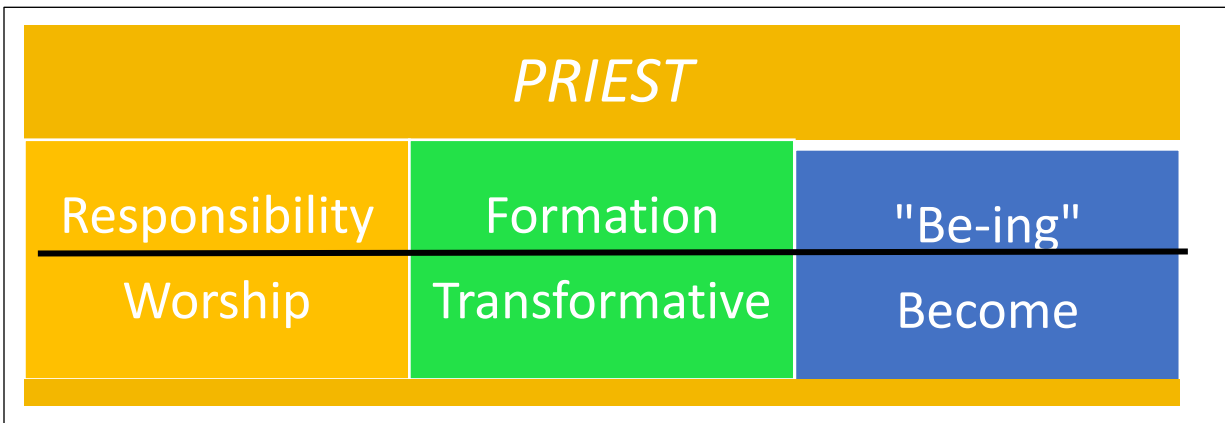
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# Baptism/Discipleship Graphic

## EXPOSITION OF PRIEST/PROPHET/KING

At our baptisms, we are anointed *PRIEST*, *PROPHET*, and *KING*. By our baptisms, we “are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God” and we “share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ.” The baptized are called by God and “being led by the spirit to the Gospel...contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they must manifest Christ to others.”<sup>20</sup>

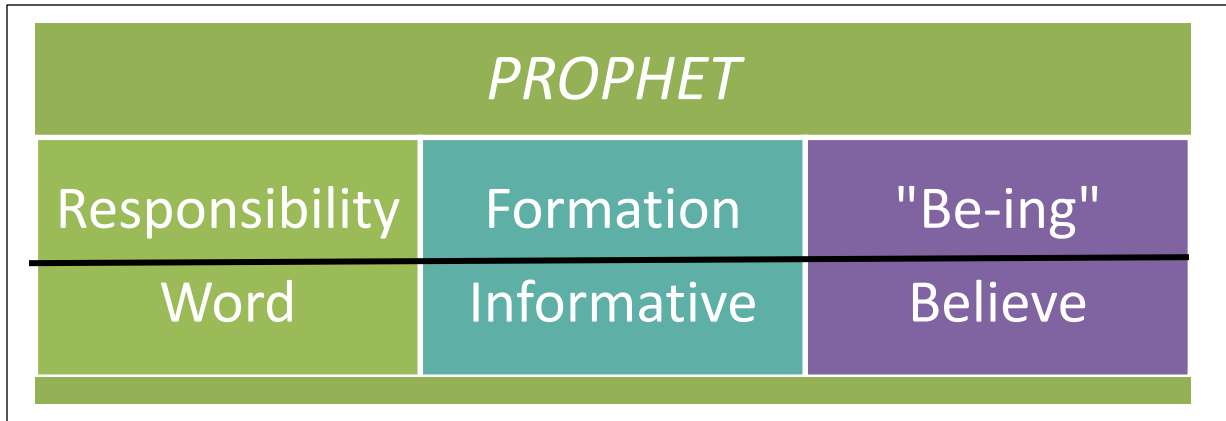
How do we do that? Let’s take one office at a time beginning with *PRIEST*. Let us look specifically at the primary function/responsibility of each office. Secondly, let us look at the primary impact of the office and its function to our lifelong formation. Thirdly, let us consider ourselves as human beings, made in the image and likeness of our LORD whose very name means “Being” (I AM), and the contribution of the office to our own “Be-ing”.



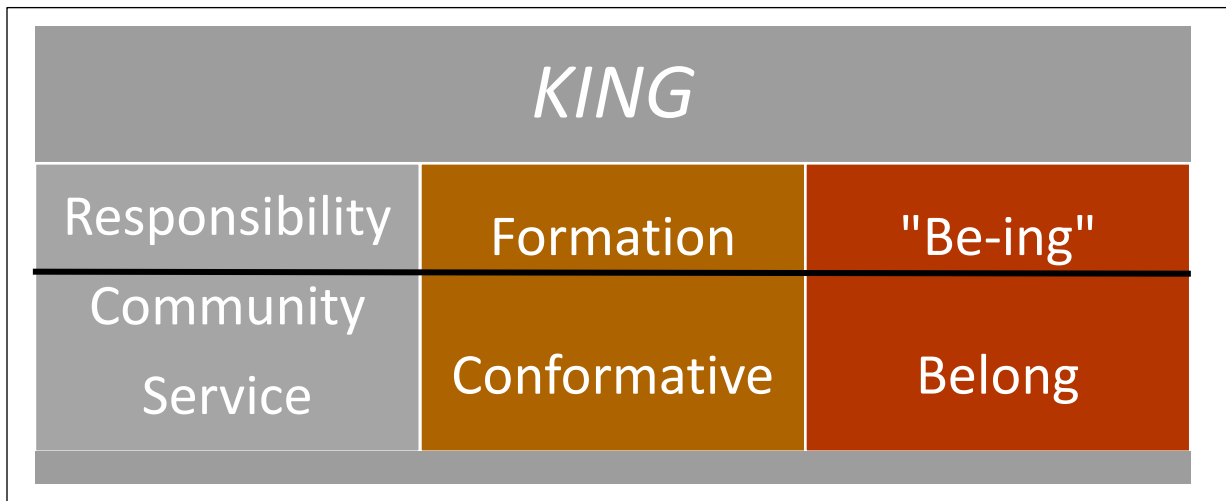
The primary responsibility and function of the *PRIEST* is **worship**. We know from our history that from the beginning, the priest of the community was a person of prayer who led others to and in prayer. Today we live this office out by being people of prayer, by participating fully in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, by receiving the sacraments and seeking to live them and cooperate with the graces bestowed through them, by daily offering our own personal prayer, and by joining with the community in prayer. The especially **transformative** nature of prayer contributes to our life long formation. And through the graces of worship and prayer, we **become**. For example, through the graces of baptism, we become *Children of God*. Through the graces of Eucharist, we become *a member of the living Body of Christ*. Through the graces of confirmation, we become *Temples of the Holy Spirit*. Through the graces of reconciliation, we become *Reconciled to God and one another*.

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<sup>20</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 31.



The primary responsibility and function of *PROPHET* is **word**. We live this office out by being people of the scriptures, reading them, learning them, living them, proclaiming them. We also participate in the office when we seek to be further informed by the teachings of the Church, the writings of Church leaders, and even by listening to homilies at Mass. We receive the Word and we proclaim the Word to others. The especially informative nature of word whether scripture, writings, or homilies contributes to our life long formation. And through the graces of the word received, “chewed” and digested, we believe.



The primary responsibility and function of *KING* are two-fold. The first focuses on the building up of the kingdom and the second on the welfare of everyone within the kingdom. We emphasize community and we emphasize service. We live this office out by being people of community, of hospitality, of inclusion, of unity. We live this office by reaching out to others, by serving others charitably and without expectation of return. We live this office by being self-less as our redeemer king showed us in his encounters and in his ultimate self-less act of service, his death for our sins. The especially conformative nature of community and service contributes to

our life long formation. And through the graces of community and service, we **belong** first to Christ and secondly to one another.

A disciple of Christ is one who lives these offices moment to moment, day to day. A disciple of Christ is one who lives a balance of the offices including worship/prayer, word/education, community, and service every day. And a community of disciples is marked by a community life that includes worship, word, community, and service. In fact, as we look at our sacraments, at our formation, at our community, and at our outreach in the name of Christ and his love, we find that while each component has a primary function, each component has one area of impact that is highlighted, and each component contributes more heavily to one area of our well “be-ing”, each component is present and operative to some extent is the other components.

A first example of this would be the Eucharistic celebration. While it is primarily considered an act of worship that brings with its worthwhile celebration transformation and accomplishing our “becoming what it is that we receive – the Body of Christ,” it is also true that the Mass also features the proclamation of the Word, the gathering of the community, and service to the community present but also to the world beyond. While we may say that the Mass is most especially transformative, we must also admit that it is highly informative of our intellect as well as our spirit and conformative to Christ. Likewise, while we may stress the “becoming” aspect, we must acknowledge that within the context of the Eucharistic celebration, there is “believing” as we listen to the Word and the Eucharistic prayer and creed with faith and there is “belonging” as we gather together in harmony, recite our creed, seek reconciliation with our LORD and one another.

A second example of this balance and blending can be illustrated with the faith formation processes in our parishes. While the primary function is education and the purpose is to inform our minds, hearts and spirits, a program without prayer, community, or action would be lacking. Balance is struck in the formation programs by including prayer, building community, and living out what is being learned. Parents may send their children to formation for the sacrament because they want them to “become” Catholic. But in the process, they are also seeking to underscore what it is we “believe.” And as the process unfolds, the individual preparing as well as the family celebrating this moment of blessings and grace recognize that this is also about “belonging.” This is about being Christian, belonging to Christ...being Catholic, belonging to the Church.

To live into our discipleship, we must strike that balance. We must continue to follow (as a disciple, a follower) our Lord’s example and join with him in his mission, his ongoing salvific action in our world. We must be people who *Love, Learn and Live Christ* today, tomorrow and always.

*Prayer changes things  
because it changes us.*

## Introduction to Prayer for Council Members

Prayer is essential. Prayer changes things. Prayer changes us. Prayer is necessary before, throughout and after all of our activity in, with and through Christ.

Too often in our world, prayer is dropped in a slot or pulled out of a hat. Prayer needs to be seen, instead, as the foundation of our efforts, placing us together and deserving of preparation beforehand. Prayer at a parish pastoral council meeting is a means of establishing the relational axis for the council. On the one hand, the prayer centers the diverse group on the Lord, whom they came to serve. Focused on the Lord rather than themselves or tasks, the individual members are drawn out to the fuller mission of Christ and to relationships with others inherent in the building up of the Body of Christ. The prayer, in this environment, is viewed as the foundational ingredient for the work and relationships of the council team. This situation evokes feelings of harmony, of love enlarging, and of animation.

This evokes the image of blood flowing into and out of the beating heart. The blood enters into the heart, the core of the body, and from there is sent to every region of the body to provide life giving oxygen and nourishment. The heart provides the power needed to deliver this life. Building upon the just mentioned image of the blood entering into and being sent forth from the heart, the council members represent the blood. The heart, of course, represents Christ. Without entering into Christ and being sent forth from Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, the council team, though rich with gifts, would lack the true power to give and sustain life. This image is supported by the documents of Vatican II, most especially by *Lumen gentium*. "All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and towards whom our whole life is directed."<sup>21</sup> "The Church – that is, the kingdom of Christ, already present in mystery – grows visibly through the power of God in the world."<sup>22</sup> "As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 3. I am using the following translation for the documents of Vatican Council II: *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Study Edition* ed. Austin Flannery, OP (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 8

Beginning with prayer sets the council members up for the holy work they are called to perform. An additional benefit within the prayers offered is that of providing an opportunity to share their faith after silent reflection. It is not mandatory that anyone or everyone speak/share. But allowing time for this allows for the individual disciples to proclaim their faith. Our faith was not given us to hoard. It was given us to share. As Pope Francis writes: "In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 28) Samples of prayer can be found in the handout "A Year of Prayer."

Setting time aside annually for council renewal through retreat is critical as well. The time spent in prayer, reflection, discussion, and visioning set the tone for the coming year.

# Developing Prayer for Councils and Parish Groups

Prayers for the Pastoral Council or any group that gathers in the parish to further the mission of Christ through their particular activities are easily developed.

One option that is always there for such gatherings is the *Liturgy of the Hours*, using the appropriate prayer for the hour of the day when the meeting is occurring. These can be found in the one or four volume edition of the *Liturgy of the Hours*. They can also be found on the internet at sites such as

- Universalis (<http://www.universalis.com/>)
- eBreviary (<http://www.ebreviary.com/ebreviary/ebreviary.nsf/pphome.html>)

A second option is creating your own prayer format or template. It is recommended that you design a template and then change out the components from month to month. A resource for such prayers is the *Liturgy of the Hours*. You can reference them and use portions of the prayers as deemed appropriate for the season or the group. Additional resources exist that one can draw from to create prayers for meetings such as:

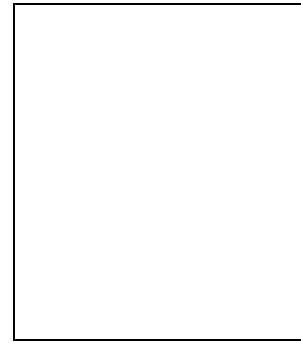
- *Let's Begin With a Prayer: 101 Prayers for Meetings* by Sally Macke
- *Prayers for Parish Groups: Preparing and Leading Prayer for Group Meetings* by Donal Harrington
- *Meeting Prayers* by Philip A. Verhalen
- Catholics Online website: <http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=554>

On the following page, I have provided a template for the monthly prayer for meetings. When developing the prayers, I recommend considering the *Liturgy of the Hours* as a resource for the opening prayer, responsorial, and intercessions/petitions. One can allow for silent reflection, and if possible, faith sharing within the context of the prayer. Song can be incorporated into the prayer. I traditionally do not do that because of uncertainty about the group's ability to "carry a tune" if no one is present with a music background that can lead.





# Gathering Prayer



## ***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: We begin by gathering in prayer,  
marking ourselves with the sign of the cross.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## ***Opening Prayer***

Leader:

All: Amen.

## ***Reading:***

.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

## ***Time for Silent Reflection (followed by optional faith sharing)***

## ***Responsorial:***

Right:

Left:

Right:

Left:

## ***Intercessions:***

**Leader:**

ALL:

**Leader:**

ALL:

**Leader:**

ALL:

**Leader:**

ALL:

**Leader:** (closing prayer)

ALL: Amen.

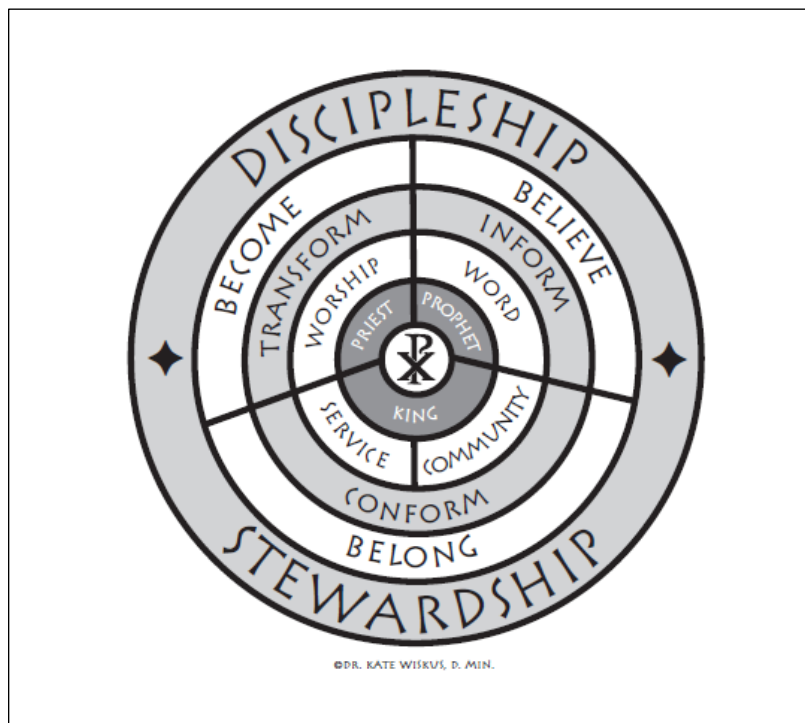
## ***Our Father***

## Sample #1 of an Annual Retreat for Parish Pastoral Council Members

PRIOR TO RETREAT: Distribute the USCCB document *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*. Ask the members of the council(s) to read this very short (27 pages) document prior to the retreat so as to be able to join in a meaningful discussion of it. The books can be ordered by the USCCB for \$4-\$6.

### THE DAY OF THE RETREAT:

- Gather with coffee and rolls or a brunch buffet. Take time for community.
- Call the group together to begin with prayer. Use a developed and printed prayer to launch the retreat. Be sure to allow for faith sharing after silent reflection in the middle of the prayer.
- Following the gathering/opening prayer, turn to Scripture – Ephesians 4:1-16
  - Read the text of Ephesians 4:1-16 aloud. If possible have handouts of the reading for everyone so they might focus on the words more deeply.
  - Speak of “to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received”
    - What does that mean to the individuals?
    - What call have they received? Baptismal? Call to serve in council?
  - Turn to our Baptismal Call to participate in the ongoing mission of Christ as “Priest, Prophet, and King”



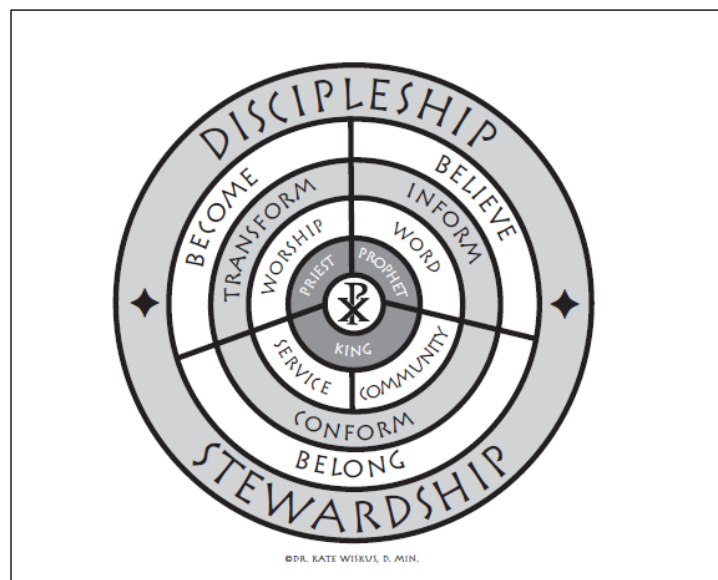
- Speak of the unity and diversity of the Body of Christ
- Speak of the ultimate goal – “Living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love.”
- Summarize and lead discussion *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*
  - Stress universal call to holiness
  - Stress living out baptismal call as disciples
  - Stress growing disciples at the parish level through liturgy, catechesis, parish life, community, service to others, mentorship, etc.
- Return to Scripture – Hebrews 10:19-24
  - Discuss the passage and the call contained within
  - How do we “rouse one another to love and good works”?
- Engage in visioning as group on carrying these understandings forward
  - Engaging other lay leadership
  - Establishing parish focus on evangelization and growing disciples
  - Maintaining focus for councils, commissions, and parish membership on active discipleship and growth in relationship with our Lord and one another as we realize the mission of Christ
- Close with a prayer.

## Sample #2 of an Annual Retreat for Parish Pastoral Council Members

PRIOR TO RETREAT: Distribute Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel*. Ask the members of the council(s) to read the introductory section and chapter 1 (25 pages) prior to the retreat so as to be able to join in a meaningful discussion of it. The books can be ordered from the USCCB or from Amazon (\$13 but with volume discount may apply). Document is also available online at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

### THE DAY OF THE RETREAT:

- Gather with coffee and rolls or a brunch buffet. Take time for community.
- Call the group together to begin with prayer. Use a developed and printed prayer to launch the retreat. Be sure to allow for faith sharing after silent reflection in the middle of the prayer.
  - Following the gathering/opening prayer, turn to Scripture
  - Read the text of Colossians 1: 9-14 aloud. If possible have handouts of the reading for everyone so they might focus on the words more deeply.
    - Speak of *"to live in a manner worthy of the Lord"* What does that mean to the individuals?
    - How does this reading tie into our baptisms, both the blessings and responsibilities of our *"inheritance of the holy ones in light"*?
  - Turn to our Baptismal Call to participate in the ongoing mission of Christ as "Priest, Prophet, and King" (use baptismal graphic)



- Discuss the good that can be accomplished when we live our baptismal discipleship through worship, word, community, and service.

- Summarize and lead discussion *The Joy of the Gospel*
  - Stress the call for all of us to take part in realizing the mission of evangelization.
  - Look especially at “An Ecclesial Renewal Which Cannot Be Deferred”. What is this calling the parish leadership to undertake and to ensure?
  - Can individuals see the connection between growing disciples at the parish level and the parish liturgy, catechesis, parish life, community, and service to others?
- Return to Scripture – Philippians 4: 4-9
  - Discuss the passage and the mandate for living the faith well contained within
  - How do we as leaders bring this “Joy of the Gospel” to our parish community?
- Engage in visioning as group on carrying these understandings forward
  - Engaging other lay leadership
  - Establishing parish focus on evangelization and growing disciples
  - Maintaining focus for councils, commissions, and parish membership on active discipleship and growth in relationship with our Lord and one another as we realize the mission of Christ
- Close with a prayer.

# Gathering Prayer For Council Annual Retreat



## ***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: We begin by gathering in prayer,  
marking ourselves with the sign of the cross.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## ***Opening Prayer<sup>24</sup>***

Leader: Almighty and ever-living LORD, source of all truth and love and life,  
You have revealed to us your love throughout all ages. Give us attentive hearts and minds so we  
might hear your word fully and discern your will truly.  
Unite us in spirit and truth and enable us to be living signs of your transformative love. We ask  
this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

## ***Reading:***

Reader #1: A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians (4:15-16)

Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into Him who is the head, Christ,  
from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the  
proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love.

The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

## ***Time for Silent Reflection (followed by optional faith sharing)***

### ***Responsorial (Psalm 16: 7-9, 11)***

All: I bless the LORD who counsels me;  
even in the night my heart exhorts me.  
I set the LORD ever before me;  
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.  
Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,  
my body, too, abides in confidence.  
You will show me the path to life,  
fullness of joys in your presence,  
the delights at your right hand forever.

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<sup>24</sup> From *The Liturgy of the Hours According to the Roman Rite*, Vol. III, Ordinary Time Weeks 1-17 (New York; Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1975)..

### ***Petitions***

Leader: Let us turn to our Saving Lord with our needs.

Reader #2 That the leaders of the universal Church, most especially our Pope, Francis, our bishop and our pastor, that they may give tireless witness to the good news of Jesus Christ in its fullness, we pray.

ALL *Assist us, Lord, as we pray.*

Reader #2 That the faithful of our parish will reach out in Christ's name to the poor, the sick and the marginalized in our neighborhoods, our parish, our communities, and our world, we pray.

ALL: *Assist us, Lord, as we pray.*

Reader #2 That compelled by the truth of your love, we may be your disciples, doers of your word and messengers of your hope in our daily activities, we pray.

ALL: *Assist us, Lord, as we pray.*

Leader: Most loving God, your presence is constant. Renew our strength and commitment so that our lives will continue to praise your name. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in union with the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

ALL: *Amen.*

Leader: Let us join our voices together and pray in the words our Savior taught us.

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven....

Leader: As we end our prayer, let's exchange a sign of Christ's peace with one another.



## Ongoing Formation through Study

**Just as it is essential that parish pastoral councils spend time at every meeting in prayer, it is also essential that the council spend time in study and discussion.** The ideal would be to get a copy of relevant and informing texts such as Francis I *Evangelii Gaudium* or the USCCB booklet *Disciples Called to Witness* and to break it up into study segments for each month. The entire text could be digested in one year.

The benefit of doing it within the context of the meeting is that it will exponentially escalate the enthusiasm of the individuals for their faith discussing it within the context of their role as servant. It is essential, too, that it not be just read independently by the members but that it is studied and discussed together. We know from Edgar Dale's Cone of Learning that we remember only 10% of what we read but 70% of what we say. Participating in a discussion about the text maximizes its impact and retention.

Council meetings should be limited to 90 minutes: 15 minutes for prayer, 15- 30 minutes for group discussion of study material, 45 – 60 minutes on parish business. When leaders understand the mission and their roles as disciples, business actually takes less time and the business of the parish is mission focused.

Documents that could be considered for study by the pastoral and even possibly finance councils include papal writings and exhortations and USCCB documents and resources. Below are three possible options with a summary of possible areas to highlight.

*The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* an apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis

This document is perhaps the best to use as an introduction to discipleship, its scope, its importance to the individual, and its connection to the realization of Christ's mission. While I would highly recommend the entire book, if one is limited to the amount of time available for study, I would recommend the first chapter, "The Church's Missionary Transformation." This clearly spells out the individual's responsibility to engage their faith and to participate in the ongoing salvific action of Christ in our world and in our day. I would also recommend the third chapter "The Proclamation of the Gospel". Finally, I would recommend the final chapter, "Spirit Filled Evangelizers." This final chapter speaks of the very real need for a personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus. As we all know, one is not a disciple because of what one knows but because of who one knows.

This text is available in paperback from \$8.50 at Amazon to \$14 at the USCCB site. It can be accessed online at the Vatican website. Individuals can access it to read online or to print one copy for personal use. Use the following link:

[https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)



### *Disciples Called to Witness* by the USCCB

This document is phenomenal in that it is “digestible” in length (27 pages), it is affordable (usually \$6 or less on Amazon or through USCCB store), it is an easy read, and it gives numerous examples and strategies for implementing the new evangelization at the parish level. This is an especially good resource for councils and for commission members in that it points to real ways that the parish can undertake the mission for its own families, for the individual and for the whole community. This would be an excellent 2<sup>nd</sup> step for parish lay leadership in that it gives concrete ways to bring the mission of Christ and lived discipleship to the forefront.

This document can be accessed at the USCCB website as a PDF and can be read online or individuals could access it and print it for their personal use. The link at USCCB is

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/disciples-called-to-witness/>

This book is also available through the USCCB store

<http://store.usccb.org/SearchResults.asp?Search=disciples+called+to+witness&Submit=>

### *Lumen Gentium* - Second Vatican Council Document – *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*

This document from the Second Vatican Council is foundational to a modern understanding of discipleship especially as it relates to the laity. While the whole document has merit, as a resource for laity on their discipleship, chapter IV “The Laity” is especially important. It is here that our baptismal anointing to a sharing in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices is highlighted. It is here that we learn of the laity’s manifestation of these offices through worship, word, community, and service. A second chapter that is beneficial for the laity’s understanding of discipleship is chapter V “The Call to Holiness.”

This document is available online at <http://www.vatican.va/archive>. Look for *Lumen Gentium* by name in the search or you can go to it directly with the following link: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

This document is available through Amazon for under \$4. It is also available through Pauline Books and Media for slightly more. See <http://store.pauline.org/>

## Guidelines for Council Meetings

**Meeting Frequency:** monthly to maintain open and appropriate communication as well as engagement of the members with the pastor and staff.

**Meeting Length:** 90 minutes

- 15 minutes for prayer
- 20-30 minutes for ongoing formation through study and discussion
- 45 minutes for business items

**Reports:** As you might imagine, these time line suggestions do not allow for oral reports. Council members should never waste their time together doing what they can do alone. Members need to prepare and submit reports to secretary in advance to go out with minutes and agenda. At the beginning of the business sections, after minutes are approved, the chair asks if there are any questions concerning the reports.

**Preferred method of reaching decisions:** Consensus is the preferred method of reaching a decision. When councils rely on consensus, the discussion is richer and the options more plentiful. When councils rely on consensus, they can avoid “winners and losers” from emerging. However, consensus does demand conversation and each member of the council sharing their understanding, concerns, hopes, etc. So, part of the role of the chair will be to seek out the position/opinion of each member. These can and should be brief. But it is only through this type of open dialogue that councils can reach binding decisions that each member will support after the meeting is over.

**Areas for Councils to Consider:**

- Worship
- Word
- Community
- Service
- Stewardship
- Lived Discipleship

**Pastoral Council Commissions/Committees:**

- Worship/Liturgy
- Word/Education through life-long formation
- Community/Parish Life
- Service/Outreach/Social Justice

NOTE: the pastoral council has primary responsibility for both stewardship and lived discipleship. These should not be relegated to a commission because they factor into every facet of parish life and are therefore the concern and indeed true focus of the pastoral council.

**Finance Council Commissions/Committees:**

- Budget
- Building and Grounds
- Cemetery

NOTE: the finance council serves as the stewards of resources. The pastoral council works to promote stewardship; the finance council stewards the fiscal/temporal resources generated.

**Joint meetings of Pastoral & Finance Councils:**

First of all, it is appropriate to suggest that the pastoral and finance council share the annual retreat.

Secondly, the two councils should plan on meeting 2 times a year:

1. To discuss the vision and thrust that the pastoral council has discerned that needs funding
2. To discuss the proposed application of the resources to realize the vision and thrust.

**Officers:**

Traditionally, the councils have chairs, vice chairs and secretaries. The pastor does not serve in either of these capacities. The pastor serves in the capacity of pastor.