

## PASTORAL & FINANCE COUNCILS WORKSHOP

On Saturday, March 4, 2017, Deacon Ron Walker, Chancellor, Director of Diaconal Ministry, conducted a combined workshop for the Saint Stephen Pastoral and Finance Councils. Because of the unique positions these two councils hold in the parish structure, Fr. Jude felt it was important that a senior member of the Austin Diocese be invited to Saint Stephen to conduct this workshop:

### **Pastoral Council and Finance Council Norms**

#### **Policy on the Pastoral Council Effective 2005**

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

*A Pastoral Council is to be established and is to be operative in every parish and mission in the Diocese of Austin.*

#### **Policy on the Finance Council Effective 2005**

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

*A Finance Council is to be established and is to be operative in every parish and mission in the Diocese of Austin.*

Source: *Diocese of Austin, Pastoral Manual*

### **Workshop Content**

The workshop was more than a formation tune-up. It indeed provided council members an opportunity to reflect on the fundamentals typical of the following: What is the mission of our Councils? Their purpose? How should meetings be structured and decisions made? What does it mean to be a consultative body? What are the proper relationships between the Pastoral Council and Finance Council? These questions and others were explored.

**Vatican II – The Laity in Ministry:** *..the laity have an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness.* **[Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 10]** Vatican Council II urged active involvement in the life of the Church by emphasizing the principles of collaborative responsibility, consultation and lay participation. **Our Common Call to Ministry**

**Canon Law Cooperation & Responsibility:** Canon 208: All have responsibility to work together in the building up of the Body of Christ. *In virtue of their rebirth in Christ there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality with regard to dignity and activity whereby all cooperate in the building of the Body of Christ in accord with each one's own condition and function.* (c.208)

**Diversity of Membership:** Membership of the councils should be representative of the entire parish, especially the Pastoral Council that reflects the parish's diversity

**Operation: Build Consensus:** The Pastoral Council is solely a consultative body in one area: Pastoral concerns. The Finance Council is also primarily consultative but, canonically, the

Pastor must consult and may not act in certain cases. They both operate through a consensus process and prayerful reflection.

Mission? The purpose of the Pastoral Council is to foster full participation of the entire parish in the life and mission of the Church. *Asks: What is the mission of Christ in this local parish? How is it achieved?*

Identity and Mission: Must develop a statement of purpose which reflects the identity and mission of the parish in light of the gospel, church teachings and the parish's abilities.

Planning and Directions: The Pastoral Council develops and recommends: parish pastoral plans; and directions. The Finance Council allocates resources for that purpose.

Committees and Ministries: The Parish Pastoral Council is to hear from and cooperate with parish committees and ministries, viz. Worship; Spirituality; Community; Evangelization; Education; Service.

Specific Functions: Advise the Pastor in pastoral matters. Inform the Pastor of the needs and concerns, gifts and resources of the whole parish and its members. Develop and review a parish mission statement—need to periodically re-evaluate and revise it. Develop a parish pastoral plan. Participate in the ongoing pastoral planning. Recommend policies, procedures and programs which assist in the implementation of the mission and pastoral plan. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs. Reflect on diocesan pastoral priorities and recommend how they can be implemented in the parish.

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Conclusions:

- Be open and honest;
- Be critical but loving;
- Remember, role is consultation and the significance of consultation in the Church;
- Take measure and Christ takes measure;
- Take a chance;
- Plan for the Mission of Christ;
- Keep the parish focused on its divine purpose
  - loving God;
  - loving God's people;
  - doing God's will;
  - leading others to God through Christ;
- Help Pastor foster parish vitality by
  - careful investigation;
  - prayerful consideration; and
  - consensual recommendations.