

# *Organizational Structures*



## *A Primer*

“We respect the teaching authority of the Church and recognize the role that the hierarchy should exercise in discernment. It is essential, however, that all the people of God be involved in this process of discernment. We will therefore devote ourselves to advancing meaningful and active engagement of the laity in the life of the Church.”

*From the VOTF Structural Change Statement  
February 2003*



# Overview

- Governing Laws
- Titles, Roles and Organizational Structures
- Lay Structures
- Putting It All Together

# *Governing Laws*





# Governing Laws

- Canon Law
- Episcopal Directives
- Diocesan Statutes and Norms
  - Diocesan statutes actually carry more legal weight than policy directives from the Episcopal Conference
- Parochial Norms and Rules



# Canon Law

- Applies to the worldwide Catholic Church
- Promulgated by the Holy See
- Most recent major revision: 1983
- Large body of supporting information





# Episcopal Conference Norms

- Norms are promulgated by an Episcopal Conference and apply only in that Episcopal Conference area (i.e., the U.S.).
- The Holy See reviews the norms to ensure that they are not in conflict with Catholic doctrine and universal legislation.
- These norms may be a clarification or refinement of Canon law but may not supercede Canon law.
- Diocesan Bishops have to follow norms only if they are considered “binding decrees.”
  - Norms become binding when two-thirds of the Episcopal Conference vote for them and the norms are reviewed positively by the Holy See.
- Each Diocesan Bishop implements the norms in his own diocese; however, there is no mechanism for overseeing or enforcing implementation.
- On the web: <http://www.usccb.org>



# Diocesan Statutes and Norms

- Apply within the Diocese only
- Promulgated and modified by the Bishop
- Typically a further specification of Canon Law
- May be different from one diocese to another





# Parochial Norms and Rules

- Apply in the Parish
- Issued by the Pastor
- Pastoral Parish Council may be consulted, but approval is not required

**Note:** On the parish level there is no ecclesiastical legislative authority (a Pastor cannot make Church law).



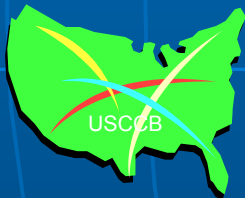




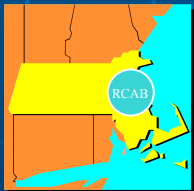
# Example: Canon Law 522



- Canon Law 522 states that to promote stability, Pastors are to be appointed for an indefinite period of time unless the Episcopal Council decrees that the Bishop may appoint a pastor for a specified time.



- The Episcopal Conference decreed that in the United States, Bishops could appoint pastors for a renewable six-year term or for an indefinite period of time.



- At the Diocesan level, statutes indicate whether the local bishop will use the six-year option or not. Customs may also guide the process for the installation of the Pastor.



# Modification Process

- **Canon Law** – modified by the Holy See
- **Episcopal Norms** – modified by the Episcopal Conference and subject to review by the Holy See
- **Diocesan Laws and Directives** – modified at the discretion of the Bishop
  - In some instances, a regional or diocesan synod may be called to discuss modifications, but it is not strictly required.
- **Parochial Directives**– modified at the discretion of the Bishop and Pastor, ideally with the input of the parish faithful



## Governing Laws: Issues for Discussion

- The consequences when all Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Authority within a Diocese belong to the Diocesan Bishop:
  - No “checks and balances”
  - No independent judicial process
  - No independent reporting to the Holy See
  - No enforcement structure



# *Titles, Roles, and Organizational Structures*



# Ordained Offices

- There are only three ordained offices:
  - Deacon
  - Priest
  - Bishop
- All other terms are administrative or honorific.



# Titles of the Latin Rite

- **Pope:** the bishop of Rome
- **Cardinal:** A bishop or priest selected by the Pope as part of a group whose only official right and duty is to meet to elect a new Pope
- **Archbishop:** A bishop who presides over an Archdiocese, which is the “lead” diocese of a group of individual dioceses for organizational purposes; each bishop has full authority within his own diocese, and does not “report” to the Archbishop
- **Diocesan Bishop:** A bishop assigned by the Holy See to lead an active diocese
  - *Titular Bishop:* A bishop without an active diocese who may be assigned to a Diocesan Bishop to assist in his diocese
  - *Auxiliary Bishop:* A Titular Bishop with such an assignment in a diocese
- **Monsignor:** (purely honorific)
- **Vicar:** Given jurisdiction in certain matters by the Diocesan Bishop



# Organizational Roles: The Holy See

- The Pope
  - The Bishop of Rome who in that role has primacy among all the Bishops.
- The College of Cardinals
  - The Pope selects the Cardinals, usually from the pool of Bishops although the only actual requirement is ordination.
  - Their only right and duty *per se* is to meet to elect a new Pope.
  - “Cardinal” is a title, not an office, and can be revoked by the Pope. There are currently over 140 in the College of Cardinals, but those older than 80 are not eligible to vote.
  - The Pope may use them singly or collectively for consultation.
  - Some Cardinals have prominent roles in the Roman Curia.
- The Roman Curia
  - Composed of the Secretariat of State and a variety of congregations and other offices created to assist the Pope in the administration of the Church.
- In the Latin church there is ordinarily no intervening authority between the Pope and Diocesan Bishops.



# Organizational Structure of the Church





# Organizational Roles: Diocese

- **Bishop** – Appointed according to current Canon law
- **Episcopal Vicars/Auxiliary Bishops** – Granted authority by the Diocesan Bishop for governance of a part of the Diocese or in a specific role, such as Education
- **Vicar General** - Assists in the governance of the entire Diocese
- **Vicars or Deans** - Parish Pastors from a group of neighboring parishes (a vicariate or deanery) within a region, “first among equals”
- **Pastors**
  - Parochial Vicars
  - Assistant Pastors

There are currently more than 2,700 active dioceses (Episcopal Sees or similar units) worldwide, 195 in the U.S.





# Titles, Roles, and Organizational Structures: Issues for Discussion

- Mutual Visitation Between Bishops
  - Analogous to the accreditation process in universities and hospitals
  - Mechanism for fraternal accountability
  - Visiting Committee could include both clerical and lay members
- Lay Monitoring
  - Requires access to information such as NRB audits or visitation reports
  - Must be sustained in order to be effective

# *The Laity*





# Existing Lay Structures

- **Diocesan Pastoral and Finance Councils**
  - Membership and function of both are based on Diocesan Statutes and Canon Law.
- **Parochial Pastoral and Finance Council**
  - Diocesan guidelines for membership and function of these councils are common, but implementation varies significantly and is often not a high diocesan/parish priority.



# Diocesan Finance Councils

- Required by Canon Law (Can 492).
- Canons 492 and 493 address the composition and scope of the Council:
  - Prepares a yearly budget for the governance of the diocese and is responsible for accounting at the end of the year for income and expenditures.
  - Finance Councils may veto specified financial transactions by the Ordinary, but otherwise have no authority over the Ordinary.
- Diocesan Statutes may dictate how to elect members, require meetings, etc.
- Membership and operation are functionally at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop.



# Parish Finance Councils

- Required by Canon Law (Can 537).
- Governed by Canon Law and by the norms laid down by the ordinary.
- It remains the responsibility of the Pastor under the Bishop to ensure that the parish goods are administered in accordance with Canon Law.



# Diocesan Pastoral Councils

- Required by Canon Law (Can 511)  
“in so far as pastoral circumstances suggest.”
- Canons 512 through 514 address the composition of the Council and its scope.
- Diocesan Statutes may dictate how to elect members, require meetings, etc.
- Membership and operation are functionally at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop.



# Parish Pastoral Councils

- Recommended by Canon Law 536 if the Ordinary “considers it opportune.”
- Required by many Diocesan statutes.
- Governed by Parochial Foundation Documents which should comply with diocesan guidelines.
- Pastoral Councils are given “consultative” authority in Canon law, but the interpretation of “consultative” varies greatly.





# The Laity: Issues for Discussion

## **VOTF recommends the creation of Parish Safety Committees.**

- VOTF and its members will work for the formation of Parish Safety Committees (PSCs) in every parish. PSCs will actively support the formation and activities of Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) teams in each parish. CAP activities should include:
  - Prevention education conducted annually for all children, parents and others
  - Performance of yearly criminal offender record information checks on all parish clergy, staff and volunteers
- PSCs will also ensure that zero tolerance for sexual abuse is maintained by obtaining information concerning past assignments of all newly assigned pastoral personnel.

*Putting It All Together*



# The Diocese

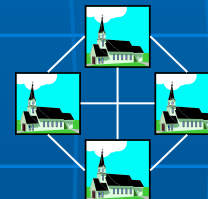
## PARISH

- Laity: Parish Pastoral and Finance Council
- Clergy: Pastor / Assistant Pastor / Parochial Vicar
- Governed by: Diocesan Statutes  
(Parish may operate under Parochial By-Laws)



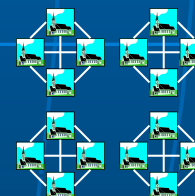
## VICARIATE (Optional)

- Laity: **No Formal Organization**
- Clergy: Vicar (Pastor of one in the group)
- Governed by: Diocesan Statutes



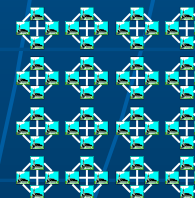
## GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS (Optional)

- Laity: **No Formal Organization**
- Clergy: Episcopal Vicars
- Governed by: Diocesan Statutes



## DIOCESE

- Laity: Diocesan Pastoral and Finance Council
- Clergy: Bishop, Auxiliary Bishops, Vicars General
- Governed by: Diocesan Statutes







# Existing Structures

Clergy

Organizational  
Level

Laity

**Bishop**

**Diocese**

**Pastoral  
Council**

**Finance  
Council**

**Auxiliary Bishop/  
Episcopal Vicars**

**Region**

**Vicar**

**Vicariate**

**Pastor**

**Parish**

**Asst. Pastor**

**Parochial Vicar**

**Pastoral  
Council**

**Finance  
Council**



# Structures Recommended by VOTF

Clergy

Organizational  
Level

Laity

**Bishop**

**Diocese**

**Pastoral  
Council**

**Finance  
Council**

**Safety  
Committee**

**Auxiliary Bishop/  
Episcopal Vicars**

**Region**

***Regional  
Council***

**Vicar**

**Vicariate**

***Vicariate  
Council***

**Pastor**

**Parish**

**Asst. Pastor**

**Parochial Vicar**

**Pastoral  
Council**

**Finance  
Council**

**Safety  
Committee**





# Summary

## **Governing Laws and Norms**

- Canon Law applies to the Catholic Church worldwide.
- Episcopal Norms apply within the Episcopal Conference (such as the U.S.).
- Diocesan Statutes and Norms carry more legal weight than Episcopal Norms, based on the legal authority of the Bishop.
- Parochial Norms and Rules do not have the force of law.

## **Titles, Roles, and Organizational Structures**

- Priest, Deacon and Bishop are the only ordained offices.
- The Pope has primacy in his role as the Bishop of Rome.
- No intervening authority normally exists between the Pope and a Diocesan Bishop.
- All executive, legislative and judicial authority belong to the Bishop within his Diocese.

## **The Laity/ Putting It All Together**

- Parish and Diocesan Finance Councils are required under Canon Law.
- Parish and Diocesan Pastoral Councils are called for “if opportune” or “if pastoral circumstances suggest.”



# Points for Discussion

- What are the consequences when all Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Authority within a Diocese belong to the Diocesan Bishop?
- How effective would Mutual Visitation between Bishops or Lay Monitoring be in addressing some of these consequences?
- What is the best way to empower Pastoral and Finance Councils at both the Parish and Diocesan level?
- How can Lay Councils be implemented at each organizational level within the Diocese to provide a continuum of lay involvement in critical decision-making?
- How should Parish Safety Committees be defined and organized to make them most effective?



“Communion must be cultivated and extended day by day and at every level in the structures of each Church's life. There, relations between Bishops, priests and deacons, between Pastors and the entire People of God, between clergy and Religious, between associations and ecclesial movements must all be clearly characterized by communion. To this end, the structures of participation envisaged by Canon Law, such as *the Council of Priests and the Pastoral Council*, must be ever more highly valued. These of course are not governed by the rules of parliamentary democracy, because they are consultative rather than deliberative; yet this does not mean that they are less meaningful and relevant. The theology and spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between Pastors and faithful: on the one hand uniting them *a priori* in all that is essential, and on the other leading them to pondered agreement in matters open to discussion.

“To this end, we need to make our own the ancient pastoral wisdom which, without prejudice to their authority, encouraged Pastors to listen more widely to the entire People of God. Significant is Saint Benedict's reminder to the Abbot of a monastery, inviting him to consult even the youngest members of the community: ‘By the Lord's inspiration, it is often a younger person who knows what is best’. And Saint Paulinus of Nola urges: ‘Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes’.”

*Pope John Paul II*

*Novo Millennio Ineunte (At the Dawn of a New Millennium), January 2001*