

Discussion Questions For Parish Pastoral Councils



DIOCESE OF HONOLULU

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ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

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To Pastors and Members of Parish Pastoral Councils

Aloha!

Is your parish pastoral council – pastoral? That may seem like an absurd question, but sometimes pastoral councils are so wrapped up in building projects, budgets, and social events that they do not take much time to reflect on deeper pastoral issues that affect the parishioners and society at large. The Diocesan Pastoral Council of the Diocese of Honolulu has reflected on the need for greater pastoral reflection by councils and now offers this guide to parish pastoral councils. This is not a mandate or a program to complete, but it is a very important tool to assist members of a parish pastoral council to be more focused on real pastoral issues for the good of all. It is divided into several topics, which need not be taken in the order presented. A council may decide to discuss one item each month or to devote several months to a particular topic. We joyfully present them to you who have been chosen to assist your pastor in shepherding the parish as members of the parish pastoral council.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Larry Silva
Bishop of Honolulu

Zachary Ramones
Chair, Diocesan Pastoral Council

Discussion on Family



Family life is at the heart of each person's life and at the heart of the Church. Yet we know families have their challenges. Here are some questions to spark discussion.

- How does our parish celebrate the sacred nature of family life?
- What are the major challenges faced by families in our parish? (For example: so many commitments outside the home that the family spends little time together; lack of good communication skills; caring for a sick or disabled family member; economic hardships.)
- How can the parish help families meet these challenges?
- How do we present marriage and family life to our young people as a vocation, a calling from God? How do we identify and celebrate the witnesses to this reality?

Discussion on the Homeless

- Are there homeless people in our parish? Where? Who?
- What are the root causes of homelessness (economic, social, spiritual)?
- Why is housing so expensive in Hawaii and can anything be done about this?
- How do we reach out to the homeless to help with the immediate needs?
- How do we advocate for the homeless to help with their long term needs?
- Are the homeless welcome at our parish?

Discussion on Stewardship vs. Ownership

- Are ministers in our parish true stewards and servants or have some of our ministries become a niche for particular people?
- Do we welcome new people into our ministries with openness to their new ideas; or do we give the message “We have always done it this way, and always will.”
- Are young people deliberately recruited for ministries, mentored, and allowed to exercise various ministries in the parish?
- Do we change the membership of our councils, committees and ministries from time to time to allow new people and fresh ideas to enliven our parish?

Discussion on Youth Ministry

- What are the signs that our parish is committed to a robust youth ministry? (Ages 13-18)
- How do we engage youth in the mission of evangelization?
- How do we identify and recruit adults who have the gift of working with youth?
- Do we seek the opinions of youth to improve the life and mission of the parish?
[Note: Sometimes youth may be intimidated when asked questions by adults. Perhaps questions could be given to them to discuss among themselves first, then they will be ready to speak to the adults on the council.]
- Do we encourage and equip youth to be evangelizers in their schools, sports teams, and other activities? How?



Discussion on Young Adult Ministry

- Do young adults, single and married, feel they are an integral part of the parish community?
- Do they have a stake in our parish's mission?
- Do young adults have the opportunity to share with their peers about their joys and struggles of faith, love, and hope for their futures?
- Are young adults challenged to missionary activity, to take the Gospel to their places of work, to families, and to the body politic?



Discussion on Welcoming

- Do visitors and newcomers feel welcome when they come to our parish? How do we know?
- Do we have mechanisms for reaching out to those who have recently arrived?
- How do we welcome people with special needs: the deaf and hard of hearing; people with mobility problems; parents with small children?



Discussion on Mission & Evangelization

- How can the parish be a kind of “seminary” that forms its members to go outside its doors and proclaim the gospel in the family, the workplace and in the civic community?
- When we speak of evangelization, does our discussion always circle back to taking care of those who come to us, or is it focused on those who do not come?
- How do we equip parishioners to sensitively but boldly reach out to Catholics who no longer practice their faith?
- Do we have specific training to equip people to “preach” the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have no faith but whom the Lord wants to touch with his love?
- Do we, from time to time, ask who is NOT with us and ask ourselves why?

Discussion on Faithful Citizenship

- Does our parish promote the value of life in all its stages from conception to natural death? How?
- Does our parish engage in advocacy for those who are poor and in need by influencing legislation or government programs to help them in their needs?
- Does our faith have an influence on an economy that recognizes the dignity of the human person?
- Are we vigilant about Catholic values being undermined in our schools, such as in sex education programs that actually teach children how to engage in sexual activity?





Our Mission: Witness to Jesus