



Killaloe Diocese

DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

November 2024



Introduction:

We read in the Code of Canon Law:

“In each diocese, in so far as pastoral circumstances suggest, a pastoral council is to be established. Its function, under the authority of the Bishop, is to study and weigh those matters which concern the pastoral works in the diocese, and to propose practical conclusions concerning them.” Can. #511

The Diocesan Pastoral Council has been established to work in collaboration with the Bishop in discerning the pastoral needs of the diocese. This is a consultative body which aims to assist the bishop in discerning how best to engage the pastoral life of the diocese, and in the implementation of the diocesan pastoral plan.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II not only identified and encouraged the formation of Diocesan Pastoral Councils but he also put before us the principal means by which a Diocesan Pastoral Council were to operate:

“in a diocesan level this structure [the Diocesan Pastoral Council] could be the principal form of collaboration, dialogue, and discernment... The participation of the lay faithful in these Councils can broaden resources in consultation and the principle of collaboration – and in certain instances also in decision-making – if applied in a broad and determined manner.” CL #25

The Diocesan Pastoral Council aims to be synodal in its outlook and in its methodology. It will conduct its ministry in a collaborative manner by engaging in continual dialogue with the People of God and the broader society. The Diocesan Pastoral Council will aim to discern the call of the Gospel for the Diocese of Killaloe. This will not only help shape a pastoral vision for the diocese, but it will also shape the manner in which the diocese will discern ways forward in an ever changing world.

Pope Francis in an address to Clergy, Consecrated People and Member of Diocesan Pastoral Councils in Assisi stated:

“How needed pastoral councils are! A bishop cannot guide a diocese without pastoral councils. A parish priest cannot guide the parish without the parish council. This is fundamental!”

This dovetails with the vision gifted to us in Pope Francis’ Synodal Pathway. The Synodal Pathway gives a mandate to Diocesan Pastoral Councils in discerning how best to empower the ecclesial community in the living out of its baptismal call and as such enable all to be co-responsible agents in the mission of the Church.

Function of the Diocesan Pastoral Council

The Diocesan Pastoral Council works in collaboration with the bishop to highlight the pastoral needs of the diocese and how best to address them. It hopes to model for other diocesan structures a way of working which is synodal and collaborative, with discernment playing a key role in decision making. The Diocesan Pastoral Council is a consultative body that works with the bishop to explore and develop pastoral initiatives in the diocese.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council shall:

- Concern itself with the pastoral works of the diocese and in this regard collaborate with the bishop in formulating recommendations for developing and supporting the diocesan pastoral vision.
- Collaborate with the Council of Priests, the Office for Mission and Ministry, Pastoral Area Councils, Parish Pastoral Councils and other Councils or groups that maybe set up by the bishop to address specific pastoral needs. This might include such areas of interest as
 - Pastoral Area and Parish Life
 - Diocesan Synodal Group
 - Youth Ministry
 - Faith Formation
 - Justice and Peace
 - Ecumenism
 - The Environment.
 - Prayer and Spirituality
 - Pastoral Ministry
- Collaborate with the Office of Mission and Ministry in an annual review of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and recommend any necessary revisions to the Bishop.
- The Diocesan Pastoral Council will endeavour to establish links with all diocesan bodies; however, it is not within its remit to direct their activities.
- It will collaborate closely with the Pastoral Area Councils and Parish Pastoral Councils as key agents in the pastoral life of the diocese.

Membership

The Code of Canon Law states:

The members of Christ's faithful assigned to the pastoral council are to be selected in such a way that the council truly reflects the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the diocese taking account of the different regions of the diocese, of social conditions and professions, and of the part played in the apostolate by the members, whether individually or in association with other. Can #512 §2

In an effort to ascribe to the vision as outlined in the above canon, membership of the Diocesan Pastoral Council shall be constituted as follows:

- Bishop
- Vicar General
- Council of Priests 2 Representatives
- Ministers of Pastoral Care and Catechesis 2 Representatives
- Pastoral Areas 1 Representative each
- Diocesan Communication Officer
- Religious
- Vicar/Director for Mission and Ministry
- The Bishop/DPC can also co-opt people from specific areas of ministry or with particular skillsets.

The Chairperson shall be appointed by the Bishop and the recording secretary shall be nominated by the Council at its initial meeting.

Terms of Office

- The term of office shall be three years. Non –ex officio members may be reappointed, but may serve only two consecutive terms at any one time.
- Members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council automatically lose their office, when the Bishop is transferred, retires or when the See is impeded or vacant.
- The term of the first Diocesan Pastoral Council will be for three years. Thereafter, one third of the non-ex officio members will resign and may be nominated for re-appointment for one further term of three years by their nominating body or the bishop.
- In year 4 of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, a further one third of the non-ex officio members will resign, and in year 5 of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the final one third of the first Diocesan Pastoral Council will resign. Thereafter, one third of the non-ex-officio members will resign each year.
- Those who are to retire shall be those who are longest in office, since their last appointment.

- To maintain stability and efficiency, only one third of the Diocesan Pastoral Council members are to be open for appointment or re-appointment at any one time.
- Any member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings without indication of non-attendance will have their appointment to the Diocesan Pastoral Council rescinded, and the bishop or the nominating body of that member will be asked to nominate a replacement.
- Terms of new membership begin on September 1st

Selection of Members

The Code of Canon Law is quite explicit in outlining the characteristics of a potential member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. It states:

“Only those members of Christ’s faithful who are outstanding in firm faith, high moral standards, and prudence are to be assigned to the pastoral council.” Can #512 §3

Therefore when proposing a person for membership of the Diocesan Pastoral Council the following should be considered. They should be

- Committed to their faith
- Person of prayer
- Good listener
- Good communicator
- Positive attitude
- Open to study, reflection and discernment.
- Pastoral sensitivity to the needs of parishes and the diocese
- Willing to commit to the time required.

Sub-Committees

The Diocesan Pastoral Council may set up sub-committees to advise it on matters of special pastoral interest. People who are not members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council may be co-opted onto these sub-committees because of a particular gift, skill or charism.

Meetings

- There will be at least four plenary meetings each year.
- A quorum shall consist of 50% +1 of the membership.
- Members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council are invited to submit relevant topics for the agenda to the Secretary ten days before each meeting.
- Prior to each meeting, the Bishop and Chairperson together with the Secretary shall draw up the agenda. The agenda will be circulated to all members, a week before each meeting.
- Items for AOB must be presented to the Chairperson prior to the meeting and the chairperson in consultation with the bishop may include or decide to defer the matter to a future meeting.
- In an effort to promote co-responsibility and good communication throughout all levels of pastoral life in the Diocese, members may join one subgroup or working group engaged in implementing some aspect of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Such groups should appoint chairpersons and recording secretaries.
- To promote ongoing dialogue between the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests minutes from the Diocesan Pastoral Council meetings will be shared with the Council of Priests.
- Special meetings may be scheduled by the Bishop.

Office for Mission and Ministry

- The Office for Mission and Ministry in collaboration with the Diocesan Pastoral Council, will operate as custodians of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.
- There will be a close working relationship between the Office for Mission and Ministry and the Diocesan Pastoral Council.
- The Office for Mission and Ministry will report to the Diocesan Pastoral Council at each meeting (at least four per annum). It will indicate work being done, areas of concern, and initiatives that need to be undertaken.
- In an effort to keep the Diocesan Pastoral Council informed, the Office for Mission and Ministry will endeavour to keep oversight regarding work being carried out by the different sub-groups or working groups.

Finance

A separate budget for the Diocesan Pastoral Council shall be presented to the Financial Controller on a yearly basis. With regard to finance the Diocesan Pastoral Council will comply with the requirements of Diocesan Financial Procedures Policy

Amendments

With the approval of the Bishop amendments to the Constitution of the Diocesan Pastoral Council may be proposed and adopted at any regular Diocesan Pastoral Council meeting.