

# **THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL**

The Church is a community of all the baptized. As an institution this community of believing Christians has hierarchic persons for fulfilling the various needs of the community. In fact the clergy, religious and laity play a role in the total mission of the Church.

The Ministers in the hierarchic order in the Church are not merely delegates of the faithful but also representatives of Christ chosen by Him to exert His power and action in the world through the active response of the faithful. Here the universal Church, the particular parish and the communion of the baptized has a definite role in the world. The parish community is the concrete expression of such a role and function in the society today.

The Parish community can function effectively through the vital animation of the clergy and religious and active leadership role of the laity. The Parish Pastoral Councils are a welcome means to make the local parish community functional to live and share the Christian life. The laity, religious and clergy share and contribute to the life, growth and mission of the Church in this world.

What are the Parish Councils and How are they formed?

## **The Parish Councils and their formation**

The Clergy in the Church as ordained Ministers are set apart by God to serve the Christian communities as pastors, animators and guides. They stand guarantee before God and the world to the perspective of each baptized Christian in participating in the mission of "service" in the Church.

The lay persons are in vital contact with the secular world around and are living and transforming the world from within unto the establishing of the Kingdom of God. In general, the Christian

living and witnessing are one and comprise the task of spreading the faith and of leading all to worship the Father in Christ.

### **The Essential Aspects of the Mission of the Laity in the Church**

The first is Participation - Every member of the Church shares in every aspect of its mission, understood as guided by the hierarchy according to Christ's design. Each member according to his own charism and ability contributes to the various needs of the parish community. Such various services and tasks contribute to the coming of the Kingdom of God within the entire human family.

The Second is Co-responsibility which flows from Participation—All Christians in their varied endeavours contribute towards the building up the Kingdom of God by mutual sharing of plans and initiatives and helping in the process of decision making. The implimentation of the final decision is then entrusted to the hierarchy for their guidance in carrying it forth in practice. This is done in accordance with their office, vocation and aptitude Each Christian is co-responsible in both deliberation and action. Canon 212 stresses this co-responsibility as a right and a duty. (cf also Canon 15 of the Oriental Code).

Therefore, the lay-person is a full member of the Church, which is the "people of God", the "community of faith". He/she has the duty and the right to share in the mission entrusted by Christ, inclusive of every aspect of the apostolate, whether of a spiritual or a temporal nature. Hence, under the guidance of the Bishops and the priests, who perform the service of shepherding the flock, he/she is co-responsible for the task of participating in this mission according to his/her vocation and gifts of grace, and the actual needs of the Church in the world of today.

## **PARTICIPATION OF THE LAITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH:**

### **Two Levels- 1. The Diocese. 2. Parish.**

#### **1. Participation at the level of the Diocese**

The mission of the Church in the Diocese is carried out by the specific shepherding service of the Bishop and the priests (engaged in the pastoral, evangelical works), but also through every apostolic undertaking of every baptized member, whether he acts individually or within a variety of associations.

The animation and co-ordination of all apostolic works in the Diocese is the task not only solely of the Bishop and his Curial Officers, but jointly with-

- a) The Council or Synod of Priests (Canon 500) and the College of Consultors (Canon 502).
- b) The Diocesan Pastoral Council (Canon 511) in which lay delegates play an important role.

#### **2. Participation at the level of the Parish**

As there is a Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) there need to be also the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) which shares and is co-responsible with the Parish Priest for the co-ordination and promotion of all pastoral activities in the parish.

We concern ourselves here Parish Pastoral Council-

#### **A Look at the Parish:**

The present way of looking at the Parish has to be—not as a

territory with a Church and one or two priests who manage all church activities. But it is to be looked at as the community of the faithful.

The Canon Law speaks- "A Parish is a certain community of God's faithful, stably established within a particular Church (Diocese) whose pastoral care, under the authority of the Diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a Parish Priest as its proper pastor" (Canon 515, 1).

The Parish is then a kind of mini diocese, the immediate, visible and tangible expression of the Universal Church. It is the Family of God, an organic Faith Community, in which every Christian is called to participate in a variety of apostolic activities under the authority of the Parish Priest.

Canon 536 states- "If after consulting the Council of Priests the Diocesan Bishop considers it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish".

Speaking of lay participation in the life of the Church, Pope John Paul II, advocates the establishment of Parish Pastoral Councils: "Local ecclesial authorities ought to foster adaptation of parish structures according to the full flexibility granted by Canon Law, especially in promoting participation of the lay-faithful in pastoral responsibilities". (Synod on Laity - Christifideles Laici, n. 26). This Document testifies that the lay faithful participate in all pastoral activities being fully co-responsible.

#### **The Objectives of the Parish Pastoral Council**

1. The primary objective is the building of the Parish Community under every aspect, especially as a Eucharistic and an Evangelizing Community. Pope John Paul II high-

lights both the factors here: The Parish is founded on a theological reality, because it is a Eucharistic Community (Christifideles Laici, n. 26, para 2).

The Pope quoting the Document on Laity adds, "The lay faithful ought to collaborate in every... ..missionary undertaking sponsored by their own ecclesial family. (n. 10)..

Hence the Parish Pastoral Council will be chiefly concerned with fostering a community united in worship and witnessing to and propagating its faith in the immediate non-christian neighbourhood.

2. Since the Parish Pastoral Council has a limited membership and yet the entire parish has to be energized into pastoral activities, it will function as a "Co-ordinating Body". The Parish Pastoral Council does not render the existing associations superfluous. It rather directs and assists them to work better within the parish in co-operation with the Parish Priest and all other institutions (school, Catholic Union Association, Youth Association, Health and Social Development Schemes etc). Activities not catered for by any existing organization will be the special concern of the Parish Pastoral Council through various parish teams (e.g. for liturgy, evangelization, catechetics, finances etc.)

The Membership of the Parish Pastoral Council

The objectives of the Parish Pastoral Council provide indications regarding its membership. The Diocesan Bishop normally lays down some norms in this matter according to the size and character of each parish.

1. All important organizations should have their representative. This is necessary with a view of the objectives, especially in order to co-ordinate all activities and avoid duplications.
2. A further consideration is representation of all parts and sections of the Parish (territorially, social conditions, professions). The selection can be done by way of election by the neighbourhood/area or village and/or by nomination by the Parish Priest.

In every case only persons of firm faith, tested prudence and genuine loyalty to the Church are to be assigned to the Parish Pastoral Council (cf. Canon 512, 3). It may be wise to limit the original membership to some 10-15 depending on the size of the Parish. In the course of time more suitable members may be added.

#### **How does the Parish Pastoral Council Function ?**

1. The Parish Pastoral Council like the Diocesan Pastoral Council has a consultative role.

First of all the Parish Pastoral Council is not a political body, where a majority vote is binding, and where some influential persons manipulate both deliberation and decision.

Everyone has the duty and the right to contribute towards the all round welfare of the parish community and its apostolic outreach. All the members of the Parish Pastoral Council sincerely seek God's design for the Church in the parish, in an atmosphere of prayer and fraternal co-operation. They freely express their view on problems raised, on initiatives that are

debated, on ways and means for implementation. If well-conducted the deliberations will either lead to a broad consensus, and then the Parish Priest will easily come to an acceptable decision; or the issue will remain inconclusive. In this case a decision will be postponed and a modified proposal come up at a next meeting.

It is important that priests do not fear any loss of authority. Their very attitude of "being for others" will help them in shedding any trace of authoritarianism, and inspire the faithful with the spirit of the Gospel, like the Lord, we come "not to be served, but to serve".

2. The Parish Priest as representative of the Bishop, is the President of the Parish Pastoral Council. He convenes the meeting, fixes the agenda, evaluates the recommendations and decides whether and how to implement them; he may appoint someone else as chair-person.

From the start clear norms are necessary for the sake of procedure, fruitfulness and continuity. Some norms are suggested:

1. The entire parish and separately a select group, should be explained the nature, objectives and structure of the Parish Pastoral Council.
2. Regarding membership, representatives of organizations are listed and directives laid down for the election/nomination of others.
3. The term of membership is to be fixed (2-3 years) with a provision of gradual renewal by co-opting new members.

- 4 Determine the frequency of meetings and some sanctions to remedy absenteeism.
- 5 The Office-bearers and their respective duties are listed.
6. Provision is made for sub-committees for parish teams, entrusted with diverse areas of the apostolate.
7. Cessation of membership.

(adapted from "Life and Worship" No.3, 1993)

## GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

1. **AUTHORITY:** Every parish Priest in the Diocese of Jaipur is authorised to form a Parish Council in his own Parish.
2. **COMPOSITION:** A possible structure suggested is as follows:
  - (a) The Parish Priest - ex officio President, since he is the head of the community.
  - (b) All the Assistant Priests-ex officio.
  - (c) Religious Institutes-Superiors/delegates-ex officio.
  - (d) Representatives from existing lay apostolate organisations (elected).
  - (e) Professional and vocational experts (nominated).
  - (f) Members elected by the parishioners.

**N.B.:** Young people between the ages of 18 and 25 should be included even though they may not belong to any of the parish organisations.

It will be left to the Parish Priest to determine the exact structure and the number of people who will form the Parish Council, since one parish differs from another.

### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The Council will advise the Parish Priest and assist him in making decisions. It shall also provide leadership in executive action in certain specified areas.

The main functions of the Council shall be :

1. To foster and promote a sense of community in the parish.
2. To propose suitable plans for the spiritual and material progress of the parish.

3. To identify and determine the problems and needs peculiar to the parish, and to suggest solutions.
4. To promote the collaboration of all parishioners and to co-ordinate the activities of parish associations, in a family spirit, maintaining always due respect for the proper character and autonomy of each association.
5. To seek and foster inter-parochial co-operation in religious, socio-economic and cultural matters.
6. To collaborate with the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

#### 4. TERM OF MEMBERSHIP:

It is advisable to have the term of the Council for two or three years. Vacancies can be caused in any of the following ways:

1. Death of a member.
2. Resignation of a member.
3. Absence for three consecutive meetings without a valid excuse in writing, unless this absence has been condoned.
4. Migration outside the parish for a period exceeding six months.
5. Expulsion by the President for reason of misconduct or misdemeanour.

A vacancy caused during the tenure of membership shall be filled by nomination by the Parish Priest. The person thus nominated shall retain membership until the expiry of the term of his/her predecessor.

#### 5. OFFICE BEARERS:

The officers of the Council shall be :

President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer

The Parish Priest shall be ex-Officio President of the Council.  
More office bearers may be added, if necessary.

#### 6. DUTIES OF OFFICE BEARERS:

The President shall moderate the proceedings of the meetings of the Council

The Vice President will assist the President in carrying out his duties. He will conduct the meetings in the absence of the President.

The Secretary shall issue notice of meetings to all the members, record the Minutes of the Meetings, and perform any other duties assigned to him by the President.

The Treasurer shall maintain the accounts of the income and expenditure of the Parish Fund, parish collections made on various occasions etc.

#### 7. MEETINGS:

1. All meetings shall be called by the President once a month or at least once every two months.
2. Extraordinary meetings shall be called by the President whenever he thinks it desirable, or on a requisition by not less than one-third of the total number of members of the Council.
3. Notice of the meetings, specifying place, date, time and agenda of the meetings, shall be conveyed to the members by the Secretary according to the rules laid down by the Council.
4. The agenda for the Council meetings shall be approved by the President, prior to its being sent to the members.
5. The Quorum for the purpose of conducting the business of the Council shall be one-third of the total number of members of the Council.
6. The meetings shall be open to other parishioners. However, only members of the Council shall have the right to vote. Non-members shall not have the right to speak at meetings of the Council but the President may, at his discretion, grant them this privilege.
7. The Council shall have the right to invite experts to speak at the

meetings, even though they are not parishioners.

## 8. FINANCE:

Should the implementation of any recommendation of the Council, approved by the President, involve the incurring of any expenditure, the same shall be met from the Parish funds, subject to the norms regulating finances in the Diocese of Jaipur.

## 9. INTERPRETATION :

Should any doubt arise about the interpretation of any Article or Election or Clause of this Constitution, the interpretation in this regard shall be given by the President. Appeal is possible to the Bishop of Jaipur, whose decision shall be final.

Rt. Rev. OSWALD J. LEWIS  
Bishop of Jaipur

# हमारी कार्यरत कलीसिया

(पल्ली धर्म सेवा समिति)

आज के जगत में प्रभु खीस्त का प्रकाश एवं प्रभाव लाने में सारे खीस्त विश्वासियों का दायित्व है पुरोहित, धर्म-संघीय भाई-बहन एवं लोक-धर्मी (अयाजक वर्ग) सभी एक साथ मिलकर मसीही मुक्तिकार्य को संसार भर में फैला सकते हैं।

हमारी कलीसिया को कार्यरत कलीसिया होना आवश्यक है। जिस तरह आत्मा के बिना शरीर निर्जीव है, उसी तरह कर्मों के अभाव में विश्वास निर्जीव है। (याकूब 2 : 26) यदि पल्लीवासी अपने विश्वास को अपने कामों में परिणत करने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं तो वास्तव में स्थानीय कलीसिया अपने पुरोहित एवं धर्म संघीय जनों के साथ मिलकर प्रेरिताई के महान कर्तव्य को पूरा कर पायेगी। यही मसीही दायित्व है जो कि खीस्त विश्वासी प्रभु येसू के जीवन एवं शिक्षा का साक्षी बन पायें।

खीस्तीय जीवन में विश्वास, भरोसा और प्रेम तीनों सतगुण बने हुए हैं। किन्तु इन तीनों में प्रेम ही सबसे महान है। (1 कुरिन्थियों 13:13) इस प्रकार खीस्तीय विश्वासी को भ्रात्र प्रेम और परोपकार के दर्शन की अत्यधिक आवश्यकता है।

पल्ली धर्म सेवा समिति और अन्य संघ (जैसे युवा संघ, महिला-संघ, बालक-संघ, शिक्षक-संघ, नर्सों का संघ इत्यादि) पल्लीवासियों के विश्वासी जीवन का बाहरी संकेत होते हैं, एवं प्रेरिताई

की बुनियाद भी है। खीस्तीय विश्वास जीवंत साथी द्वारा ही पूर्ण बन जाता है। इसलिए कलीसिया की आशा यह है कि हर पल्ली में धर्म सेवा समिति का उद्घाटन हो, जिनके द्वारा अन्य सेवा-कार्य संघों की स्थापना भी हो जाये। अतः सब धर्म विश्वासी अपने कामों और उत्तरदायित्व को निभाने की कोशिश में पल्ली की आवश्यकताओं और समस्याओं का समाधान ढूँढ सकें। सच्ची गवाही यह होती है कि पूरे पल्लीवासी सक्रिय रूप से कलीसियायी कामों में भाग लें।

पूजन विधि को सुन्दर और अर्थपूर्ण बनाने में विश्वासीगण योगदान दे सकते हैं। इसतरह की अन्य समितियां उमंग के साथ कार्यरत हो सकती है। विभिन्न समितियां सक्रिय रूपसे वेदी की तैयारी, पाठ की तैयारी, गीतों का चयन इत्यादि में काफी योगदान दे सकती है। विचार एवं आचरण, विश्वास और जीवन, पूजा और आपसी सहयोग सम्पूर्ण पल्ली क्षेत्र, समुदाय व छोटे प्रादेशिक समुदाय इन सबों में अलगाव मिटा सकते हैं। इसके द्वारा विश्वास में वृद्धि तथा सेवा भाव में प्रगति हो सकती है।

गिरिजा घरों में उपासना तथा घरों में व दलों में प्रार्थना, विभिन्न सेवा-संघ तथा सेवा-कार्य इन सबों में घन संबन्ध एवं समन्वय हैं वास्तव में हर प्रभु भक्त जीवन में अपनी अपनी उपासना को लाते हैं तथा जीवन के हर सुख दुख एवं कार्यों को आराधना में लाते हैं। उतना ही नहीं उपासना से जीवन में जीने के लिए शक्ति और कृपा पाते हैं। प्रेरिताई का अर्थ है कि इस अनुभव को हम दूसरों तक पहुंचाते हैं और प्रभु का वचन सुना कर तथा प्रचार करके अपनी प्रेरिताई कार्यरीति पूरी करते हैं।

इस स्तर पर पल्ली का अधिक क्रियाशील होना अत्यधिक

आवश्यक है। कलीसिया एक साथ मिलकर व व्यक्तिगत रूप में पल्ली के सर्वांगीण विकास के लिए काम करती रहें।

यह सहज है, कि सारा खीस्तीय समाज यह समझे कि बपतिस्मा संस्कार द्वारा उनकी एक बुलाहट हैं। कलीसिया के विभिन्न रचनात्मक कार्य खीस्तीयों के अधिकार एवं कर्तव्य है।

कार्यरत कलीसिया में सेवा कार्य की प्रधानता रहती है। कभी कभी व्यवहारिक जीवन में देखा जाता है कि अत्यधिक कार्यरत व्यक्ति के जीवन में आध्यात्मिक जीवन को धक्का पहुंचता है। अत्यधिक काम के बावजूद प्रार्थनामय जीवन आवश्यक है क्योंकि इससे ही आन्तरिक शक्ति मिलती है।

कभी ऐसा भी होता है कि विभिन्न दलों के बीच हानिकार प्रतियोगिता की भावना उत्पन्न होती है। इस होड बाजी और दिखावे में अपना स्वार्थ छिपा रहता है तथा दूसरों को नीचा दिखाने की चेष्टा की जाती है। इस तरह एक दूसरे को प्रोत्साहन देने और आपसी सहयोग की भावना में कमी आ जाती है, जो विकास के मार्ग में बाधक है।

कोई भी काम कितना छोटा या बड़ा क्यों न हो, वह खीस्त केंद्रित हो। पल्ली के सभी कार्य "ईश्वर की अद्भुत महिमा" के लिए हो, कि किसी दल या व्यक्ति के अधिकार पदवी और दिखावे के लिए न हो। पल्ली का हर खीस्तीय लाचारी से नहीं, बल्कि खुशी से, धिनौने लाभ के लिए नहीं, बल्कि सेवा भाव से, अपने सौंपे हुए लोगों पर अधिकार जताकर नहीं, बल्कि झुण्ड के लिए आदर्श बनकर एकदूसरे के लिए काम करें।

(1 पेत्रुस 5:2-3)