



## Official Communiqué 2

### **The Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) in the Diocese of Saint-Jean-Longueuil**

#### **Introduction**

To honour the mission entrusted to it, the diocesan Church is called to provide certain councils for itself. These are an invaluable help to the Bishop whose triple function as its pastor is to teach, guide and sanctify the Church.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council is, as its name suggests, an assembly of Christians responsible for advising the Bishop concerning pastoral activity in the diocese. This document hopes to explain, not only the role of this council, but especially to suggest its composition and its manner of functioning.

#### **Mandate and Functions of the DPC**

The Council decree *Christus Dominus* states that it is altogether desirable that, in each diocese, there be established a special Pastoral Council, chaired by the diocesan Bishop himself, and in which specially chosen clerics, religious and laity participate. It would be up to this committee "to search for whatever relates to pastoral work, to examine it and to draw practical conclusions about it" (art. 27). The eminently pastoral role of the DPC consists in helping the Bishop

- by reviewing with him the way the Gospel is lived by the people of God living in the diocese;
- by pointing out to him what is not in conformity with the Gospel and what could be improved in the lives of these people;

- by informing him about the spiritual aspirations and needs of the diocese and seeking with him the best way to meet them;
- by suggesting to him pastoral plans of action which allow Christians of all ages and Christian communities to grow in faith, to live a Gospel-flavoured, fraternal life, a life of commitment in the midst of the world, and to celebrate the Lord in prayer and in the sacraments.

These four points are well summarized in the introduction to the Congregation of the Clergy's circular letter published in 1972 which defined the role of the DPC in these terms : "to highlight more clearly for the Bishop the concrete needs of the people of the diocese and to suggest a course of pastoral action which is most suitable".

Thus, in its consultative role, the DPC has as an ultimate goal to help the bishop to make "the life and activity of the People of God more conformable to the Gospel". (*Ecclesiae Sanctae*, art. 16)

## **DPC Structures**

In its research and deliberations, the DPC could continually ask the following question: "What is God's will for the Church of Saint-Jean-Longueuil? What is the Holy Spirit "whispering and saying" to our Church who owes it to Christ and to itself to be a fraternal community of faith planted in the midst of the world as a sacrament of salvation there?"

For the answer to this question to be well understood, completely understood by the council, it must be composed of members who know how to listen, to reflect, to study; these members must also come from different backgrounds so that they will be representative of all the baptized people; they must know how to give an account not only of the joys and hopes of these people but also of their sorrows and fears.

Moreover, to avoid having the people consulted be the same ones who make pastoral decisions and carry them out, DPC members should be chosen mostly from among persons who are in the people of God only on account of their baptism and confirmation.

Thus, the Bishop will chair the DPC composed of baptized people convinced:

- of the need to cultivate an understanding of the faith;
- of the importance of bringing about fraternal communities who live the values promoted by the Gospel;

- of the Gospel requirement of service to the poorest and of social commitment;
- of the value of spirituality, prayer and celebration.

These baptized persons will come from all the regions of the diocese and will represent young people, families, and the elderly.

Besides the Bishop, 19 people will be DPC members, including the vicar general, an executive secretary, persons representing priests, pastoral ministers, one person who is a member of an institute of consecrated life and other persons coming from pastoral regions.

### **DPC's Method of Functioning**

To fulfill its mandate well and carry out its functions, the DPC will use an appropriate method of functioning.

As a prerequisite, all members must recognize the priority of DPC meetings (4 or 5 a year, except if special situations require more) over other pastoral activities. This means that from the time of their nomination, members are committed to being present at all meetings.

The DPC functioning committee will take the place of a facilitating team. It will be made up of the Bishop, the person acting as executive secretary and two other members named by the Bishop. This committee should always focus on the following points:

- to see that the DPC members are well informed - even before the council meetings - of everything that could be useful in making a judgment;
- to prepare the agenda of DPC meetings by writing in them important pastoral questions on which the Bishop really expects the advice of the DPC;
- to suggest a methodology of working on the different topics examined;
- to create ad hoc committees chaired by certain DPC members to study some special questions;
- to provide the DPC with the technical support it needs to fulfill its mandate.

The DPC will link up with other diocesan organizations and will work interdependently with them. It may happen that the same basic question be dealt with under different viewpoints both by the DPC and the presbyteral council. It is possible that these two councils might meet together occasionally to review a situation and not cancel each other out. The DPC must also know the follow-ups given to its studies and its recommendations; they must see how people and teams with executive power have taken into consideration the decisions made by the Bishop after he has been advised by the council.

## Conclusion

Enthusiastically recommended by Vatican II, particularly in the decree *Christus Dominus* (art. 27), the Diocesan Pastoral Council also finds its inspiration in the constitution *Lumen Gentium* which calls the whole Church to be “the visible sacrament of salvific unity for each and every one” (art. 9) Invested with its own just power, carrying out its mandate well by truly representing the very diversified people of God, equipped with the support necessary to exercise this mandate, the DPC of Saint-Jean-Longueuil will be invaluable for the Bishop and for our whole Church.

Given in Longueuil, on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the eleventh day of February of the year nineteen hundred and ninety-eight.

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