



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS

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Special Circular

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TO ALL PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS WORKING IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS, AND THE LAY FAITHFUL

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

THE EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF THE PARISH GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

The First Review of the Lagos Archdiocese Parish Guidelines has been concluded. We wish to thank all those parishes and deaneries that took the trouble to provide informative and enriching feedback on the progress they have made as well as the challenges, solutions and impact of their implementation efforts.

In this category, we wish to specially commend **Agege, Maryland and Festac Deaneries** for ensuring that over 50% of their parishes returned their completed questionnaires. We look forward to **100%** return at the next review, which will take place in April 2017 DV. That review would take place six months after the Review meeting for this year 2016 that will involve all of the Clergy and Parish Representatives on **October 26, 2016 and October 29, 2016** respectively. The Seminar for the Clergy will be done in Regions; **Badagry, Lekki, Lagos & Ikeja**. The venue shall be communicated to us duly. That of the Parish Representatives shall be at St. Leo Catholic Church, Ikeja on the said date by 11:00am.

Each Parish is to send two (2) representatives for the Finance and Administration/Human Resources Management Guidelines and another two (2) representatives for Parish Pastoral and Parish Laity Councils **from the current members of the various councils**.

We also wish to appreciate the great effort made by a number of parishes to ensure a correct and complete implementation of the guidelines. Some parishes reported holding a series of seminars to ensure a complete understanding of the guidelines before implementation. Some parishes communicated a number of innovative solutions to initial bottlenecks that they encountered all to ensure the successful implementation of the guidelines.

One thing was clear, the parish priests of these parishes played a strong leadership role from the beginning and continue to provide leadership till date. To these **potential model parishes**, we say: "well done".

We cannot but express our disappointment with those Parish Priests who have not shown adequate commitment to this process. Such an attitude, is to say the least, unexpected and so we urge them to justify the confidence reposed in them at the entrustment of the parishes to their care. May God bless all our efforts with resounding success. Amen

There are potential model parishes across the deaneries that submitted their reports but we wish to recognize the **Festac Deanery where 45% of the parishes qualify as potential model parishes** after this first review exercise. We look forward to all the parishes in the Archdiocese becoming potential model parishes by the end of the first three-year period and hope that all the deaneries in the Archdiocese will trump Festac Deaneries' record in producing potential model parishes by the next review in April 2017.

There were a number of commendations from some parishes arising from their experience of the implementation of the Guidelines. Those parishes have begun the strenuous but rewarding process of building inclusive parish communities where the parishioners feel a sense of commitment and engagement with the parish. Here are a few that stand out:

- *“It has brought relief to the parish priest...”*
- *“Some parishioners that were not participating are now participating.....”*
- *“The conflicts between the PPC and PLC have finally been resolved in my parish...”*
- *“There is now greater accountability in managing the finances of the parish, of the societies and groups.....”*

OUR EXPECTATIONS

What were the expectations at the end of this initial review period?

1. All parishes in the Archdiocese should have three parish councils – PPC, PLC and PFC with their basic structures operational.
2. The PPC would have begun work on a parish strategic plan.
3. The parish priest would have taken stock of the pastoral leadership gaps in the councils, developed a training/developmental plan and begun implementation.

OUR DISCOVERY

What were our findings?

Some parishes did excellently well in this regards. Some have mixed results while others appear to have made little progress. For those that did not return their questionnaires, we urge them to **bring their reports to the October review meetings** while those that submitted can update their reports to facilitate discussions on current issues.

FUTURE REPORTING

Going forward such review reports will be returned **ANNUALLY in the last quarter of the Year**. Kindly note that this report shall be turned in on or before the **1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT** every year.

Each parish will submit three reports to the Dean – **the Parish Priest’s report, the Reports of the Parish Finance and Human Resource Representatives, and Parish Pastoral and Laity Councils representatives. The Dean will collate all the reports and send to the chancery along with the Dean’s report.**

The Deans are expected to monitor the progress of implementation with the assistance of the deanery clergy representatives and providing assistance and support, where necessary. It will be of great benefit to us if you provide more detailed information that will help us evaluate the success of your implementation or lack thereof.

To assist us further and make the process of implementation easier for us, we have included here the frequently asked question and their answers. We hope and pray that this will go a long way in entrenching the provisions of the Guidelines in our Parishes and Churches.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Parish Pastoral Council

1. Are we allowed to have any other committees other than the five prescribed Pastoral Committees – Liturgical, Devotional, Welfare and Social Action, Community Building, Faith Formation and Education?

Each parish can have a maximum of five pastoral committees representing all the areas of the life of a matured parish. A critical review of the definitions of each of the parish pastoral committees will show that all the spiritual, religious and pastoral activities that are undertaken in a parish fall under one of these five pastoral committees. There is therefore, no need for any additional ad hoc or standing pastoral committee other than the five prescribed ones.

Some parishes may not see the need for all five pastoral committees, at this time. For example, small and growing parishes and outstations may have no need for stand - alone Devotional, and Welfare and Social Action Pastoral committees, from the onset. They have the option of leaving them out completely or merging them with others until they are able to have the five as stipulated in the Guidelines.

A best practice from an outstation that is eager to set the right foundation from the onset was to have three pastoral committees by merging two with similar functions thus: Liturgical and Devotional Committee, Faith Formation and Community Building, and Welfare and Social Action.

Another best practice is having the Faith Formation Coordinators of all societies, ministries and parish organisations join the Faith Formation and Education Pastoral Committee in the same way as the Welfare Coordinators of all parish groups join the Social Action and Welfare Pastoral Committee.

Some parishes have indicated the need for **security and health committee** due to the peculiarities of their environment. Security Committee is best constituted as a committee of the Parish Finance Council since it deals with the temporal affairs of the parish. A committee to deal with the **health issues** of the parishioners will belong to the Welfare and Social Action Committee of the PPC. If the parish owns or runs schools and clinics, they are deliberated upon under the Parish Finance Council. The Faith Formation and education needs as well as pastoral ministry needs of these institutions are deliberated upon by the relevant Pastoral Committees.

2. Must every parish have the five Pastoral Committees?

All parishes need not have all five Pastoral Committees from the onset. As parishes grow, for a balanced and healthy parish life, all five aspects of parish life is recommended.

3. Can a pastoral council have Ad hoc committees?

No, Parish Pastoral Councils are not to have ad-hoc committees as a close examination of the existing groups will show that one of the them can handle any assignment and is free to co-opt and *liase* with other groups, if and when necessary.

4. Should the Priest's appointees belong to the Pastoral Committees?

The priest's appointees to the PPC need not belong to any of the Pastoral Committees and are in fact meant to be independent members of the PPC who function to ensure that the affairs and decisions at the PPC have the common good of the entire parish and parishioners in focus rather than focus on the interests of any one group.

5. What is a strategic pastoral plan and how can a parish develop one?

A pastoral strategic plan is a document that itemizes a three to five year plan to develop the parish life. It is the result of a comprehensive assessment of the parish's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities in order to map out a plan that helps the parish to move forward and continually renew itself in advancing towards its mission.

Parish pastoral planning is the primary responsibility of the PPC and to be well done, could take more than a year to complete, if it is to be thorough. There are a number of resources available on the Internet and in Catholic bookshops, and also the peculiar local experience of the particular church, that can assist the parish in its goal.

The Parish Pastoral Council has been described as a faith sharing leadership body whose ministry is **pastoral planning**, investigating and pondering **significant** pastoral issues and developing creative and effective responses to them. Clearly many of the operational issues that are currently considered at some Parish Pastoral Councils are best presented and resolved at the relevant Parish Pastoral Committee because of they are not significant enough and in fact are more operational than strategic in nature.

What could a developmental plan for Parish Pastoral Council Leaders look like?

We could begin by recognizing that all the Faith Formation Officers and Vice – Chairs of the societies and associations and ministries, are pastoral leaders whose primary responsibilities are to ensure the effective execution of the pastoral plan of the PPC. A pastoral plan is primarily a plan to grow the spiritual–commitment of the entire parishioners from one specific level to another within a specified time frame.

Each parish priest is in the best position to know what the pastoral leaders need to become effective evangelizers in the parish. The parish priest could liken them to the twelve apostles who were the original disciples of Jesus. How could he train them to become effective disciples much as the twelve became so effective in transforming the world for Christ?

6. Can a member of the PPC also belong to either the PFC or PLC?

Yes. Recall that the PFC sends a representative to the PPC and so does the PLC. Other than for these two reasons, it is not ideal but when it happens, the members involved should decide if they are able to function effectively in their various roles and if there is no one else that is able to occupy one of the positions.

It is however, not recommended that a parish priest appoints the same person to the PPC and PFC.

7. Are PPC members expected to contribute towards a purse or make other financial contributions?

We are aware that in the past, some PPCs functioned more like associations than councils. This is no longer the case and it is for this reason, that councils have only the vice chairs and secretaries. There is no need and it is in fact against the spirit of the new guidelines for such practices to continue. When meetings are well organized and run in a board like manner, with reports presented and deliberated upon under the five pastoral areas, focused on strategic rather than operational issues, meetings tend to last for shorter periods – maximum of two hours. Parishes may show hospitality to the councilors by providing water, soft drinks, snacks or food in accordance with the needs and what it can afford.

8. Must a parish have all the societies and organizations listed in the guidelines?

Each parish does not need to have all the societies and organizations listed in the guidelines. Each parish is free to form or not form additional societies purely based on their discerned need.

We would appreciate if all parishes that have societies and other groups that are not listed in the guidelines send us a list of such societies and groups as well as their purpose so we can update the list, in a revised edition.

9. What if a parish has only a few societies under a particular pastoral committee? The members will be too few?

This is true. There are some pastoral committees that traditionally have few member societies – Welfare and Social Action and Faith Formation and Education.

The Parish Laity Council has some work to do in introducing and helping the formation of societies and associations that cater for the poor and needy as well as work against the numerous injustices in our world today. We can certainly do a lot more than we are doing at the moment in these areas!

Secondly, the welfare coordinators of all the groups in the parish should belong to the Welfare and Social Action Pastoral committee for proper coordination of parish welfare activities.

The same applies to the Faith Formation and education coordinators of all the parish groups who should belong to the Faith Formation and Education Pastoral Committee for proper channeling of the annual parish Faith Formation programme for all parishioners through their groups.

10. What if a parish has societies with very few members or the society itself is no longer active?

Societies and associations exist in parishes to meet a discerned need within the specific parish. **The Parish Laity Council can provide support and guidance to the PPC by:**

- Ascertaining whether or not there is a need for the specific group in the parish.
- Embarking on a membership drive through the activities of the Discernment Committee of the PLC.
- The PLC can also help with leadership trainings that can assist the executives of societies to lead and operate in ways that attract and retain members.

11. What will be the difference between the reports presented at the PLC and that presented at the PPC?

In the past, the PLC presented a collated report of the individual members to the PPC while the Chairpersons and secretaries of the member societies and groups in the PLC presented their reports to the PLC. With the new guidelines the expectations are different.

The report presented at the PPC by the Pastoral Committee representatives should focus on significant issues in their area of parish life as it affects the entire parish rather than the a report of the activities of its individual members. Where the activities of individual members are reported, they focus only on their pastoral activities – faith formation and welfare issues. For example, The devotional committee will report on the devotional life of all parishes and how the pastoral committee is adding value to enhancing the devotional life of the of parish. How are its member organizations implementing pastoral plans cascaded down from the PPC? The same applies to other pastoral committees such as Liturgical, Community Building, Faith Formation and Education, Welfare and Social Action. Individual societies do not present their reports to the PPC.

The report presented at the PLC ought to be the reports of the committees of the PLC - Leadership and Social Development, Evaluation, Discernment and Publicity – as it affects the entire parish. Where the reports of individual members groups are mentioned, it is in relation to the topics of the committee – leadership and social development, evaluation, discernment and publicity.

Parish Finance Council

What are the committees that must exist in the Parish Finance Committee?

If there is only one committee that must exist in a parish, it is the budgeting and financial planning committee, being the core function of a Parish Finance Council. All others exist based on the size of the parish and need.

Is the Parish Finance Committee subordinate to the Parish Pastoral Council?

The Canon law states that every parish must have Parish Finance Council while Parish Pastoral Council exists if this Bishop declares it necessary. For this reason, some people argue that the PFC is superior to the PPC. However, if one were to assess the question from that of functionality and organizational sense, it becomes clear that the parish exists to meet pastoral needs.

The two bodies exist, distinct but not exclusive of each other. There should be no question as to who is superior as both are faith - sharing bodies modeled after the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. The PPC is the highest decision – making body of the parish on pastoral matters and the PFC takes care of the temporal needs that support the mission of the church. A representative of the PFC attends PPC meetings.

What is the relationship between the Parish Finance Council and the Financial Secretaries and Treasurers of the societies and associations?

The secretaries and treasurers of societies, associations and ministries must comply with the parish guidelines on finance and administration but as independent and complying organizations in the parishes. They cooperate with the PFC in areas of budgeting, financial planning work and reporting. The PFC assists the parish priest to monitor and ensure compliance.

How does the Harvest Committee Function under the Parish Finance Committee?

Many of the activities of the harvest thanksgiving and bazaar are logistical in nature. All the Liturgical aspects of the programme are best handled by the Liturgical Committee and should form part of their annual plans from the onset. The fund raising and other operational aspects are handled in conjunction with the relevant committees of the PFC.

For example, where the parish has existing PFC committees for security, communication, logistics, there is very little need to duplicate efforts when the parish has well-established machineries in place. This will reduce the need to organize completely - new committees to deal with recurring tasks during harvests and fund raising events.

How to deal with issues of confidentiality such as the priest's allowances? Is this a valid reason not to form a budgeting and financial planning committee of the Parish Finance Council?

The parish priest is at liberty to select all the members of the Parish Finance Council and especially the members of the budgeting and financial planning committee. Such members must be of impeccable character that can be trusted with confidential information, as described in the guidelines. Issues of trust can be handled by doing what is humanly possible and leaving the rest in God's hands. Sometimes, what one fears may be alarming to some people have instead generated perplexity at how little is being spent on maintaining the clergy house.

Training and Education of Parish Councils

Some parishes have identified the need for seminars on the Archdiocesan guidelines as well as some leadership topics that are hampering the effective implementation of the guidelines.

- Each deanery is to have a **Deanery Implementation Monitoring Team** made up of the two deanery clergy representatives and four parish representatives from each parish – one person from PPC and one person for human resource management guidelines, one from PPC and one from PLC. This team will work with the deans to ensure that all reports are submitted to the deans on time and also monitor the progress of implementation.
- They are to organize a deanery - wide seminars for all members of the various councils on the guidelines.
- They should also hold quarterly review meetings to help bridge any gaps and provide support to any parish that needs it.
- Team building and Conflict resolution have been identified as gaps in some parishes. It is recommended that the **Deanery Laity Councils** organize as a matter of urgency, effective training programmes to address these gaps for all council members as well as executives of all societies and organizations.

(Signed)

+ Alfred Adewale Martins
Archbishop, Metropolitan See of Lagos