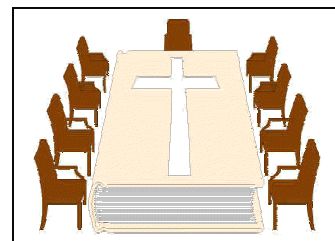


The Community of the Blessed Sacrament Discernment Process for Councils

At the discernment gathering, the present and potential Council stewards are gathered, welcomed and invited into the prayer and discernment process. Participants are seated in a large circle. Process starts with introduction prayer. During the discernment process current Council members and new candidates provide overviews of their parish, business and personal experiences.

ALL – start with Sign of Cross

Generous God, you shower us with abundance
Help us to take only what we need
And offer the rest as your gift to others.



Reading – Psalm 139 (Read by Prayer Lead)

Reflection: *Excerpt from “God of Peace” Irish reflections on peace, entitled “Our Life Planner”*

Prayer (ALL)

Great God, You are beyond our imaginings

And, yet closer than we will ever know.

Show us the gifts we each bring to Blessed Sacrament’s faith community.

Holy One, make us one, even as you make each of us different.

Gracious God, help us open our hearts to one another, as your heart is open to us.

Gracious God, help us to open our ears to listen to one another, as you listen to us.

Gracious God, give us faith to comprehend your grace during this discernment.

(Adapted from various prayers within “Alive Now” Sept/Oct 95 issue)

Discernment Process Steps

1. The facilitator (usually the Parish Manager) notes:

- Names of Council members with term ending and new candidates shall be written on white board/or flip chart for all attendees to view.
- The time needed for authentic discernment may exceed that allotted for a simpler meeting.
- Respectful listening and continuing prayer to the Holy Spirit mark the entire spirit of the gathering.
- Parish Mission and Vision Statements are reviewed:
 - **Parish Mission Statement:** *“We are a Spirit-led Catholic Community that welcomes all to celebrate the Eucharist, to pray, and to know, love, and serve Christ.”*
 - **Parish Vision Statement:** *“To foster Stewardship as a way of life, engaging our community in works of ministry founded on hospitality, prayer, formation and service.”*
- The Council job description is reviewed.

2. **Each participant introduces him/herself** as current Council member and/or candidate and gives a short overview of:

- Personal Information i.e. married, children, professional/work experience.
- Parish locations prior to Blessed Sacrament (i.e. hometown).
- For how long and in what ways have you been involved in our Parish?
- What drew you to offer your gifts to the ministry of leadership in our Parish?

The Community of the Blessed Sacrament

Discernment Process for Councils

- What gifts do you possess which will enhance the work of this Council (note: this includes assessment of the time and energy that can be directed to Council in balance with your family, work and other ministries)?
 - What do you believe are the biggest needs (member skills/talents) for this Council's Ministry and/or parish?
 - What is your fondest hope for our Parish in the next 10 years?
3. After the candidates have spoken, **opportunity is given for anyone with clarifying questions** to ask them.
4. Together the **attendees pray**:
- Lord, open our eyes, that we may see you in our brothers and sisters.
Lord, open our hearts, that we may love each other as you love each of us.
Renew us in your spirit. Lord, free us and make us one.*
- (Mother Teresa)*
- And,
Our dearest Lord,
Be a guiding star above us
Be a smooth path beneath us
Be a kindly Shepard behind us
Today, tonight and during our discernment process.*
- (St Columbia 521-597- Adapted)*
5. Then, the facilitator asks each participant to pray silently for guidance regarding the following question: *"After hearing each person's response to the various questions and hearing about the gifts these candidates can bring to the Council, who are the best persons in this group of candidates to serve as Council stewards – as a new candidate do you want to join the Pastoral Council and those of you currently serving do you wish to continue to serve?"*
6. The facilitator will then ask: Does anyone wish to withdraw his/her name from this process? He/she is asked to stay with the group through the rest of the Council Discernment process.
7. At this time the group could come to a consensus to accept all candidates and those choosing to renew – thereby, filling open positions and there being no more than 10-12 Council positions.
8. If there is no consensus, or if there are more candidates to fill 10-12 Council positions:
- It will be necessary for each participant to **write names on the white sheets/ballots** - number of names written is dependent on the number of openings on Council and there being no more than 10-12 serving on the Council.
 - If applicable, the facilitator and current Council chairperson will **count names** written on sheets/ballots. If there are tie votes – then the current Council Chair randomly selects a ballot from sheets with tied candidates names.
 - The Facilitator will announce those receiving simple majority of votes. Those candidates not receiving the majority of votes will be added to the Council wait list of candidates for future openings.
9. If Council Chair and or Vice Chair positions need to be filled, attendees may nominate candidates and facilitator/Current Council Chair will manage a consensus process to fill these positions.
10. A **final affirmation** of discernment process consensus is voiced and the **Pastor offers a Closing Prayer** of blessing and gratitude.