

Discernment Approach for Pastoral Councils

Discernment is a reflective and prayerful decision-making process that parishes across the country have been adopting for nearly a decade. With this approach, the Pastor and the Council call upon and trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit in selecting new Council members and in making decisions during Council meetings. Individuals interested in joining the Council review their gifts in light of the Council's work and self-nominate or accept an invitation to step forward. The actual discernment of new Pastoral Council members involves prayer and identifying the gifts an individual brings to the parish community that resonate within the context of the issues facing the parish.

We are inviting our parishioners to step forward themselves, or nominate others, because of their specific abilities. This helps encourage a richer leadership base, better enables us to select parishioners with the skill sets to advance the goals of the council, and helps empower the Council to do its work of serving the Pastor and our parish.

Although in-pew voting may seem like the most democratic way to build a Council, parishioners often do not have enough information about the specific needs of the Council or the skills of all the nominees. Discerning members within the context of our parish, where the role and purpose of the Council are defined, gives every eligible parishioner a more equitable opportunity to become part of the Council. It also enables the Council to unite with members based on their skills and interests and not just on popularity.