

CANON LAW

Parish Definition, Finance Council, and Pastoral Planning

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I. Parish Definition (canon 515 § 1)

- A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful
- stably constituted in a particular church,
- whose pastoral care is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor
- under the authority of the diocesan bishop.



St. Matthias Church, Bala Cynwyd

I. Parish Definition (canon 515 § 1)

- A parish is a **certain community** of the Christian faithful
 - stably constituted in a particular church,
 - whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (parochus) as its proper pastor (pastor)
 - under the authority of the diocesan bishop.
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- As a general rule parishes are to be territorial but can be determined by rite, language, nationality, or other basis. (canon 518)



St. Mary Church, Conshohocken

I. Parish Definition (canon 515 § 2)

- It is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes.
- He is neither to erect, suppress, or alter notably parishes unless he has heard the presbyteral council.



I. Parish Definition (canon 515 § 3)

- A legitimately erected parish possesses juridic personality by the law itself.

I. Parish Definition (canon 515 § 3)

- A legitimately erected parish possesses juridic personality by the law itself.
 - Comparable to a corporation under secular law
 - “Perpetual”
 - Statutes
 - Property belongs to the juridic person
 - Administrator
 - Harmony between canon and secular law

I. Parish Definition

- Take Away Summary Points:
 - Parishes are Individual but not Independent



- Parishes work under two legal systems:
secular law and canon law



II. Parish Finance Council (canon 537)

- In each parish there is to be a financial council
- which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop
- and in which the Christian faithful selected according to these same norms
- are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish...

III. Parish Pastoral Planning

- Planning Process:
 1. Archdiocesan Strategic Planning Committee (ASPC), in consultation with the Deans, recommends Pastoral Planning Areas (PPA) to the Archbishop for study.
 2. ASPC compiles information on the PPA and proposes a starting points for discussions.
 3. PPA planning committee meets over several months to study parishes, consult with parishioners, and formulate a plan (with help of the Dean and a facilitator).
 4. ASPC reviews plan and makes a recommendation to the Archbishop.
 5. Archbishop consults with the Council of Priests.
 6. Archbishop makes decision.
 7. Procedures for implementation of plan begins.

III. Parish Pastoral Planning

- Parish Merger –

Two or more parishes are united into one parish.

- All parish assets (and obligations) remain with the community (the newly merged parish).

III. Parish Pastoral Planning

- “Worship Site” Church–

A church within a parish other than the parish church.

- Churches must be made available at least periodically for public worship (e.g. funerals, devotions, adoration).
- Only the parish church should be the site of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation) and of the Easter Triduum.

III. Parish Pastoral Planning

- Relegation of a church to profane but sordid use.
 - “Grave” reason(s) required (e.g. church uninhabitable, upkeep and repair of church beyond capacity of parish).
 - Reasons must be documented.
 - Alienation (i.e. sale) of church building cannot commence until **after** a church is relegated and recourse (if any) is resolved.