

Canonically-Defined Diocesan Consultative Bodies

CONSULTATIVE BODY	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	MEMBERSHIP	EXISTENCE
1. COLLEGE OF CONSULTORS (c. 502)	The college of consultors assists the diocesan bishop in the governance of the diocese in accord with the provisions of Church law. For particular exercises of ecclesiastical governance, canon law requires that the diocesan bishop consult the college, and even obtain its consent. When the see is vacant or impeded, the college fulfills the functions of the presbyteral council.	The college is comprised of no less than six priests, and no more than twelve, who are members of the presbyteral council and freely appointed by the diocesan bishop.	The college of consultors is a required body in the diocese. It is to be established for a five-year term, but it continues its functions even after that time until a new college is constituted. It continues in existence during a vacant or impeded see.
2. DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL (cc. 511-514)	The purpose of the diocesan pastoral council is to follow the bishop's direction in investigating all things which pertain to the pastoral works of the diocese. Following its investigation, the council studies the information it has gathered and then proposes practical conclusions concerning it.	The diocesan pastoral council consists of members of the Christian faithful who are in full communion with the Church. These clergy, members of institutes of consecrated life, and especially lay persons are named to the council in a manner approved by the diocesan bishop. The council's membership as a whole should be reflective of the people of God who make up the diocese.	The pastoral council is established by the diocesan bishop when, in his judgement, pastoral circumstances recommend it. It is to be established for a definite period of time, during which it is convoked at least once a year. The council ceases at the completion of its term or whenever the see is vacant.
3. DIOCESAN SYNOD (cc. 460-468)	The synod assists the diocesan bishop in matters pertaining to the entire diocesan community. The consultation rendered by the members may lead to the issuance of declarations or the promulgation of decrees. The synod's consultative functions are utilized solely at the discretion of the diocesan bishop.	<i>In iure members:</i> the coadjutor and auxiliary bishops of the diocese; vicars general, episcopal vicars and the judicial vicar; cathedral canons; members of the presbyteral council, lay members of the Christian faithful and members of institutes of consecrated life; the rector of the diocesan major seminary; the vicars forane; at least one priest from each vicariate, as well as a designated alternate; and some superiors of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life which have a house in the diocese. <i>At the diocesan bishop's discretion:</i> As <u>members</u> other clerics, members of institutes of consecrated life, or lay faithful. As <u>observers</u> Ministers or members of other churches or ecclesial communities.	The diocesan bishop makes the determination to convoke the synod when circumstances warrant it, and following consultation with the presbyteral council. The diocesan bishop may suspend or dissolve the synod. The synod is interrupted <i>ipso iure</i> when the see becomes vacant or impeded, and remains interrupted until the succeeding diocesan bishop determines by decree to continue or declares to terminate it.
4. EPISCOPAL COUNCIL (c. 473 §4)	The episcopal council assists the diocesan bishop in fostering the more suitable pastoral activity within the diocese.	The council is composed of the vicars general and the episcopal vicars within the diocese.	The council is established solely at the discretion of the diocesan bishop to meet particular pastoral actions.
5. FINANCE COUNCIL (cc. 492-494)	The finance council exists to advise the diocesan bishop on financial matters affecting the diocese. Among its primary duties are to approve the annual diocesan fiscal statement and to prepare the annual budget. Canon law requires that the bishop consult the finance council in many instances, and in some cases, it requires that he obtain the finance council's consent before acting.	The finance council is composed of at least three members of the Christian faithful who must each be well skilled in financial and secular legal matters, and be of outstanding integrity. The bishop appoints the members of the council to five-year renewable terms.	The existence of the finance council is required by Church law.
6. PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL (cc. 495-501)	In accord with the norms of canon law, the presbyteral council acts as a senate of the bishop assisting him in the governance of the diocese so that the pastoral welfare of the people of God may be more effectively achieved. Consultation with the presbyteral council is at the discretion of the diocesan bishop. The diocesan bishop is required, however, to seek the advice of the council in matters of greater importance, and to obtain its explicit consent in those instances stipulated in Church law.	The presbyteral council is comprised of representative members of the diocesan presbyterate, who are to be named for a term. About half of the members are elected by the presbyterate, the remainder are comprised of <i>ex officio</i> members (according to the councils own statutes), and members named by the diocesan bishop.	The diocesan bishop convokes the presbyteral council, whose existence is mandated for each diocese. The council ceases its functions when the see is vacant. However, within a year of taking possession of the diocese, the succeeding bishop is required to reestablish the council. The diocesan bishop may dissolve the council for serious reasons only, and after consultation with the metropolitan bishop (or senior suffragan bishop, if it is a question of the metropolitan see, presbyteral council). The diocesan bishop is to establish a new one within a year.