



ROMAN CATHOLIC

DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

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Decree

Parish Finance Councils

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Flowing from our rebirth in Christ through the waters of baptism, we are all called to contribute and to build up the Body of Christ (cf. c. 208), to promote the growth of the Church (cf. c. 210) through apostolic action (cf. c. 216) and to bring the message of salvation to “all people of all times and all places.” (cf. c. 211) We do this by lives lived in conformity with the Gospel message and by the generous sharing of our time, talent and treasure as good stewards of God’s manifold gifts.

Since our financial treasure plays such an important role in providing the Church with those material resources for divine worship, for catechesis and sacramental preparation, for ministry to youth, the elderly, the poor and countless other apostolic and charitable works (cf. c. 222), it is essential that the Christian faithful share their knowledge and competence in financial and administrative matters with their pastors for the good of the Church. (cf. c. 212.3)

Therefore, in compliance with canon 537 of the *Code of Canon Law*, which states that “in each parish there is to be a finance committee to help the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish...” and in virtue of my legislative authority in accord with canon 391.2 of the same *Code of Canon Law*, I hereby decree the following norms as particular law for the Diocese of St. Petersburg:

1. Each parish, mission and inter-parochial school of the Diocese of St. Petersburg is to have its own finance council. Parishes and missions are subject to the norm of canon 537 of the *Code of Canon Law*; inter-parochial schools are subject to the norm of canon 1280 of the same *Code*. The by-laws of these entities are to be submitted to the vicar general for his “*visum est*” by January 1, 2011. The finance council is to provide the pastor (administrator) with sage wisdom and necessary assistance in the administration of the goods of the parish (mission, school) in accord with canons 1281-1288, while keeping in mind that the pastor is the representative of the parish in such matters (cf. 532).
2. The finance council is a consultative body over which the pastor presides either directly or through a delegate, named as chairperson. The finance council by-laws should determine the chairperson’s duties in accord with diocesan policy published in *Financial Guidelines and Policies – Parishes, Schools and Early Childhood Centers, Appendix II*.
3. Excluding the pastor, each finance council must be composed of:

- a) at least 3 members for parishes with fewer than 500 families,
 - b) at least 5 members for parishes between 501 and 1,500 families,
 - c) at least 7 members for parishes over 1,500 families,
 - d) for inter-parochial schools, a minimum of two consultants to assist the administrator in the administration of the material goods of the school [cf. c. 1280].
4. Members of the finance council must possess outstanding integrity and be committed to the furtherance of the Church's mission, be qualified in finances, and/or business, and not employees of the parish or school.
- a) Members of a parish finance council must be registered members of the parish.
 - b) Members of a school finance council may be parents of a child attending the school or an alumnus(a) or another qualified adult appointed at the discretion of the school pastor.
5. Terms of office, as determined in the finance council by-laws, should not be less than two years nor more than four years. A member may be reappointed but must not serve more than 8 continuous years. Members' terms must be staggered so as to provide continuity.
6. Each parish finance council must meet at least 4 times a year. Finance council by-laws may require more frequent meetings. Parishes designated as FINANCIALLY CHALLENGED must meet monthly until the FINANCIALLY CHALLENGED designation is lifted.
7. The parish finance council must be consulted in the preparation of the annual budget of the parish and, if applicable, the parish school. In parishes and/or schools designated as FINANCIALLY CHALLENGED, the finance council must approve the budget before being accepted by the diocesan finance office for its review.
8. In addition to the annual budget, the parish finance council is to provide advice and assistance to the pastor concerning the following matters published in *Appendix II of Financial Guidelines and Policies Manual for Parishes, Schools and Early Childhood Centers*:
- a) quarterly and annual financial reports to the bishop;
 - b) financial accountings to parishioners at least once per fiscal year;
 - c) short and long term financial planning;
 - d) educating the faithful of the parish in the area of financial stewardship, in order to increase financial support of the parish;
 - e) the incurring and repayment of debt;
 - f) the resolution of unpaid debts and budget deficits;
 - g) personnel administration, especially staffing needs, salary scales, tax compliance and reporting, personnel policies;
 - h) federal, state and local regulatory matters;
 - i) acquisitions and sales of land;
 - j) expenditures or projects in excess of \$25,000;
 - k) leases or other contractual arrangements that last more than one year;
9. School finance councils should follow the norms prescribed in *Appendix III of Financial Guidelines and Policies Manual for Parishes, Schools and Early Childhood Centers*.
10. The pastor of a parish or mission must consult the parish finance council before submitting:
- a) the annual governance certification letter and
 - b) the internal control questionnaire to the diocesan bishop.

The signatures of the finance council members on these documents are indicative of consultation, not approbation.

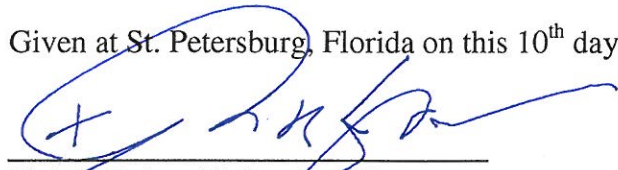
11. Before petitioning the bishop in writing for his approval for an act of extraordinary administration, namely a single act, or an aggregate of acts so intimately connected that they are essentially one, which incurs an expense or indebtedness in excess of \$40,000, a pastor must consult the parish finance council. Their signatures on the petition to perform an act of extraordinary administration are indicative of consultation, not approbation.

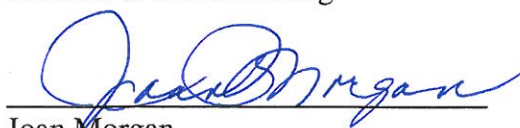
However, before accepting a petition to perform an act of extraordinary administration which is in excess of 20% of a parish's annual offertory, the bishop, exercising his pastoral office (cf. c. 381) and ever mindful of the intentions of the donor(s) (cf. c. 1300), may require a pastor, not only to consult the finance council, but the parish pastoral council as well, even obtaining the latter's consent by majority vote (cf. c. 127) before beginning his review of the petition for approval.

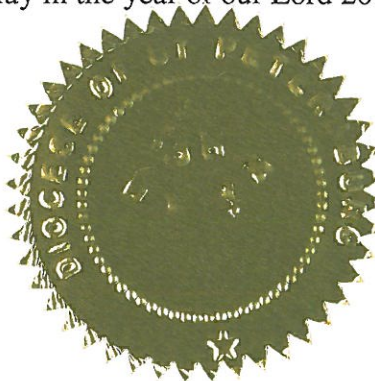
12. A printed record of each finance council meeting must be kept. In order to keep members of the parish informed, it is recommended that a summary of each parish finance council meeting be published either in the parish bulletin or on the parish website.
13. For a just cause, a pastor, with the written consent of his finance council, may petition the vicar general of the diocese in writing to be dispensed from a particular norm of this decree for a period of time. Such dispensation from the vicar general must be in writing and witnessed by the chancellor or vice-chancellor.

These norms, herein decreed as particular law for the Diocese of St. Petersburg shall be binding for all parishes and missions in the Diocese of St. Petersburg, and all diocesan inter-parochial schools, effective July 1, 2010. By this decree, all policies contained in *Financial Guidelines and Policy Manual for Parishes, Schools and Early Childhood Centers* for the Diocese of St. Petersburg, which are not contrary to the norms prescribed above, are raised to the status of particular law for all Christ's faithful and institutions in and of the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

Given at St. Petersburg, Florida on this 10th day of May in the year of our Lord 2010.


Bishop Robert N. Lynch, DD,
Diocese of St. Petersburg


Joan Morgan,
Chancellor / Notary



Financial Guidelines and Policy Manual for Parishes, Schools and Early Childhood Centers for the Diocese of St. Petersburg can be reviewed and downloaded at <http://www.dioceseofstpete.org/>

Code of Canon Law can be reviewed and downloaded at:
<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/INDEX.HTM>