

## Chapter Sixteen

# Discerning Councillors

**T**he ecclesial meaning of representation enables us to dissolve—in theory, at least—two apparent contradictions. The first is the tension between popular participation and wise choice in the selection of councillors. We have seen that the popular participation of an educated parish may yield better councillors. The second apparent contradiction is the tension between the pastor’s trust in the council and the council’s representation of the parish. A good pastor knows that a representative council may be better than a hand-picked group of friends. Popular participation is indeed preferable, at least in theory.

The purpose of this chapter is to move from theory to practice. It aims to show how to discern councillors in a way preferable to an uninformed election or an exclusive selection. We will begin with a review of church teaching about the selection of councillors. Church teaching does not say how to choose councillors, but it indicates the value of popular elections and the need to attract gifted people. Next we will explain what it means to discern councillors. Discernment is an informed choice, a choice using

our best resources and consonant with our Christian tradition. It requires a clear pastoral intent, the awakening of interest, and the development of commitment. Finally, we will show how parish discernment intimately expresses the community's faith.

### **The Option for Discernment**

What does the church teach about selecting councillors? This teaching is not unanimous. Vatican documents, for example, endorse the practice of election but also speak of the appointment of councillors by a pastor. Most diocesan guidelines for parish councils recommend popular election, but some also encourage a discernment that may or may not include a popular election. On this topic, both Vatican documents and diocesan guidelines deserve a closer look. I am convinced that the diocesan advocates of discernment are on the right track. A knowledgeable, reflective, and popular choice of councillors by the parish is better than an uninformed or exclusive choice. So after a review of official teaching about council selection, we will explain discernment and see what its advocates recommend.

#### *Vatican II's Support for Elections*

The Vatican II Decree on Bishops was the first to recommend pastoral councils, but it did not say how to select the members. After publishing the Decree, Pope Paul VI wrote an apostolic letter about how to implement it. His instructions scarcely address the selection of the diocesan pastoral council. They state only that such councils "may be established in different ways."<sup>1</sup> Paul VI left the means of selecting members to the bishops.

But the Decree on Bishops was not the only Vatican II document that spoke of pastoral councils. The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity spoke about them also. It referred to diocesan pastoral council members as "delegates" of the people who have been "selected."<sup>2</sup> The selection of delegates includes the possibility of popular election. Eight years later, the 1974 Directory on Bishops also endorsed the value of elections. Although it did not say how parish councillors are to be selected, it implicitly encouraged the election of diocesan pastoral council members. Parish pastoral councils, it said, may "choose their representatives to serve on the diocesan council."<sup>3</sup> In brief, there are a variety of ways to choose councillors, of which popular election is one.

Although the 1973 Circular Letter on Pastoral Councils spoke about the

number of members, their term of office, and rotating membership, it did not endorse any particular way of choosing members.<sup>4</sup> It simply left the selection of them to the free choice of the bishop. It even neglected to mention the Decree on Missionary Activity and its reference to “delegates.” In Chapter Ten, we saw that a first draft of the Circular Letter recommended appointment instead of election. This recommendation, however, was dropped in the final draft. Not everyone supports popular elections, but they have been an option for selecting pastoral councillors since Vatican II.

#### *Election in Diocesan Guidelines*

Diocesan guidelines have much to say about the selection of parish pastoral councils, as we saw in Chapter Seven. More than two-thirds of the 26 guidelines surveyed in 1990 and 1995 recommend the election of councillors. Most guidelines endorse the election of councillors at large. A few recommend (as an alternative to parish-wide elections) that ministerial standing committees elect councillors as representatives of the various ministries. But whether through elections at-large or by committees, popular participation is the U.S. norm for selecting pastoral councillors.

Most guidelines provide for the appointment of pastoral council members by the pastor for the sake of representation, that is, for diversity or balance. This is an implicit critique of the civic concept of political election. The appointment of councillors by the pastor indicates that the pastoral council expresses something other than the sovereignty of the people. It seeks to express the practical wisdom that has its source in God.

Most diocesan guidelines also allow for the presence on the pastoral council of *ex officio* councillors. *Ex officio* councillors are parish staff members who bring a special knowledge or competence to council meetings. About them, some guidelines express a word of caution. They say that the staff members are merely a “resource” or are “non-voting” members. Staff members should not dominate council meetings or stifle the voice of elected members. In brief, the common practice of election of pastoral council members by the parish is supplemented by *ex officio* councillors and by the pastor’s appointment of other members.

#### *The Meaning of Discernment*

Some guidelines advocate a process of discernment as an alternative or adjunct to parish-wide elections. Three out of thirteen guidelines surveyed in 1995 recommend it. Discernment refers to a process designed to give parishioners knowledge of council nominees and of the council

ministry. It tests the ability of nominees and plumbs their commitment to council membership. Guidelines say that it may take place in one or more open meetings or by a select group of parishioners. In the meetings, parishioners weigh the gifts of potential councillors and probe whether they have a real calling for the ministry. Guidelines distinguish between the discernment proper and the actual choice by appointment or balloting.

The recommendation that parishes “discern” their council members emerged in the late 1970s. It was a response to the critique that general elections had become a “popularity contest,” that is, a superficial way of choosing councillors. Thinkers in the pastoral council movement stated that discernment has its roots in the church’s spiritual tradition and the practices of many religious congregations. They wanted to employ that tradition in the pastoral council and discourage the comparison of council elections to political contests. By the mid-1990s, references to discernment in pastoral council guidelines were common.<sup>5</sup>

Although most guidelines do not treat the process of discernment at length, it deserves such a treatment. A thorough discernment solves many problems in councillor selection. Unlike some popular ballots (that fail to educate parishioners about councils and that offer a merely superficial acquaintance with nominees), discernment aims at more profound knowledge. It explores the role of the council and offers an opportunity to watch potential councillors exercise their gifts. Unlike the private selection of council members by a pastor or by his staff (which leaves parishioners in the dark about the criteria for the choice of councillors), an entire parish may discern together. This can build up the community and inspire the confidence of everyone, including the pastor. Discernment helps provide the knowledge required for selecting wise councillors.

The practice of discernment generally includes four stages. It begins with the sharing of information about the council. The discernment proper takes place in a series of parish meetings. In these meetings, people are nominated, and the participants examine and weigh the nominations in dialogue. Finally, there is the act of selection, usually by ballot.<sup>6</sup> The first step, the sharing of information, lays a foundation for the remaining steps. It expresses the pastor’s intention, awakens the parish’s interest, and builds commitment to the council.

**Intent, Interest, Commitment**

Before a parishioner can make a commitment to service on a parish pastoral council, he or she needs to know about the ministry. We saw in the last chapter that the church's official teaching about the qualifications of councillors is vague because the work of the council is contingent. It cannot be described in the abstract because it depends on the parish's situation. It also depends on the pastor. He has a reason for consulting his people, but others may not know what the reason is. To attract good councillors, he must tell them. He must share his intentions and awaken parish interest.

Ultimately, the goal is to choose councillors who are best for the ministry and to help the parish see why they are best. This is the heart of discernment. Sound discernment expresses church unity and is a participation in God's love. It builds commitment to the council. The sharing of pastoral intent, the awakening of interest, and the building of parish commitment—these are essential to councillor discernment.

*Father Parise and Pastoral Intent*

In 1995, an article by Father Michael Parise appeared in *The Priest*. Entitled "Forming Your Parish Pastoral Council," the article described how Father Parise's Boston parish chose council members.<sup>7</sup> The parish, a busy place with fifty projects and programs, used a process of discernment. Father Parise announced a series of three Sunday evening meetings with the explicit purpose of choosing a pastoral council. All parishioners were invited, and Father Parise sent personal invitations to a number of parishioners whom he especially wanted to consider council membership. In the meetings, he spoke in general about the purpose he envisioned for the council. He also did some work in small groups about the church, discipleship, and the personal formation of the pastoral councillor.

The third meeting emphasized the importance of personal formation in Christian life. It also included a process of nomination, discernment, and balloting. Father Parise invited the participants into the sanctuary of the church. There, in a climate of prayer, he led them through a process of discernment, asking them to nominate and vote for council members. None of the nominees were excluded. "All those who had received votes during the nomination process," Father Parise wrote, were invited to the next meetings. Later we read that the council included eleven members of the parish staff and 22 lay councillors. The 22, we can presume, were the ones who received votes.

Father Parise's article illustrates the four stages of discernment: information, education in a series of meetings, nomination, and balloting. It also describes the formation of councillors after they were selected. It says that they reviewed an archdiocesan report about the parish, examined the structure of the parish staff, and created a parish vision. The article, however, does not explicitly state why everyone who received a vote was allowed to participate in the council. Nor does it explain why the pastor wanted a council of 33 members. Father Parise's expectations for the council—what he hoped it would achieve—were not clear, at least not from the outset.

One sentence toward the end of the article, however, hints at Father Parise's pastoral intent. After the councillors were chosen and formed, he wrote, they began their proper work. It was "to envision the parish of the future and to evaluate the 50 projects and programs now in place, to determine their evangelical potential and perhaps to recommend consolidation, elimination of old programs and the creation of new efforts to serve the People of God." This sentence implies that his parish, with its 50 initiatives, may have lost its focus. Some projects and programs had more evangelical potential than others. Some were more worthy of parish support. Some deserved to be consolidated or eliminated. Father Parise wanted a council to help him examine and reflect on them in the light of the parish mission.

This purpose falls squarely within the church's threefold intention for pastoral councils, namely, the work of investigating, pondering, and recommending. Such a purpose is clear and important. Father Parise, I believe, should have stated it more explicitly from the outset. To be sure, he did not want to create needless anxiety about the future of the 50 projects and programs. And by choosing councillors in an open series of meetings and excluding no one, he defused the fear that his new council was out to close down beloved parish initiatives. But he was less than perfectly candid about his intentions. Had he been clearer, he might have attracted better councillors.

The first stage in the discernment of councillors is to express the pastor's intention. He has a reason for wanting a council. The more clearly he can express the intention, the more he can help his parishioners understand the council ministry. The clearer the pastoral intent, the better the chance of attracting suitable councillors.

*Awakening Interest and Different Cultures*

Robert Howes, a priest of the Diocese of Worcester, has vividly expressed the principal motive for parishioners to join the pastoral council. They want red meat, he wrote, substantial and nourishing fare.<sup>8</sup> People want an opportunity to study pastoral matters, to reflect on them for the sake of achieving the parish's mission, and to make wise recommendations to the pastor. When pastors clearly state their intentions for the council, they help people see why council membership is an important and rewarding ministry. This is essential to awakening parish interest.

For immigrant parishioners, especially parishioners whose first language is not English, participation in a pastoral council is not easy. But a wise pastor will want to attract the immigrant community's leaders. These are the people who speak for the community and enjoy its respect. They have prudence and skill in deliberation. Such immigrants typically do not enjoy the leisure of more established parishioners. They may find the council's work of study and reflection time consuming and without immediate rewards. Participation in an English-speaking council may be strenuous for them.

I witnessed this directly in the Diocese of Oakland. The diocese sought the participation of various ethnic communities at its pastoral conventions in 1985 and 1988. The first convention taught a lesson that proved instructive in the second convention. The 1985 plan called for the selection of two delegates by each of the diocese's ethnic pastoral centers. These centers were offices, sponsored by the diocese, that employed pastoral workers to promote a sense of community among immigrant groups. When the plans for the diocesan convention were finalized, I assumed that it would be enough to write a letter to each of the center directors, inviting them to choose convention delegates from their communities. I presumed that they shared my ideals of participation in the church. Based on my American experience, I took for granted what such a diocesan convention might mean. I believed that they took it for granted as well.

What I found, however, was that there were many ideas of participation in a diocesan convention. Each ethnic pastoral center had its own way of examining issues, raising concerns, and forming consensus. I discovered that my assumptions were not the only ones. But they prevailed because they were the assumptions of the dominant culture in the diocesan church. These assumptions gave delegates from the dominant cul-

ture—those who spoke English as their native language and were familiar with U.S. forms of political discourse—a decided advantage. They were more prepared to voice their issues than were immigrant delegates. As a result, some pastoral center members felt that the 1985 convention did not sufficiently heed their concerns.

In planning the 1988 convention, diocesan officials were able to avoid some of these problems. Part of their success was due to the efforts of Felicia Sarati, a Sister of St. Joseph. Sister Felicia had participated in the 1985 convention, and thereafter had become the ethnic pastoral center coordinator. She knew firsthand the frustrations felt by the ethnic pastoral center delegates. Long before the second convention, she began to prepare them. She held meetings with the leaders of each of the pastoral centers. She asked them to name the contribution that their immigrant group made to the diocese. She invited them to identify the most pressing issues facing their communities, the issues that the diocese should address. She asked them to discern from among their members those who could deliberate well, who could best contribute to the convention. Her efforts paid off. The ethnic pastoral centers participated effectively in the 1988 convention. They successfully brought their concerns to the attention of the diocese.

Oakland's experience offers a lesson to the pastor who wants to awaken the interest of the parish, especially immigrant parishioners, in the pastoral council. No pastor should presume that his people grasp the council's purpose. The very idea of a council, which a pastor consults but whose advice he is not obliged to follow, is difficult. Not everyone understands the concept of practical wisdom and the knowledge of contingent things. Immigrants may not see the importance of participation in a council whose language may be utterly foreign and whose benefits are not immediately obvious. Special effort is needed to ensure their participation. Awakening interest in the council requires not only a clear pastoral intent, but also a convincing promise that participation will be nourishing and fulfilling.

#### *Developing Commitment*

Advocates of discernment agree that it takes a series of meetings to adequately prepare a parish for the selection of councillors. If they are to accomplish this purpose, however, parish meetings cannot consist of mere lectures in which parishioners are passive. Instead they must begin to engage the entire parish in the work of the council.

This was what Father Jim Keeley did at Our Lady of the Snows Church in rural Utah. He recently opened a new church, constructed to seat 700, with magnificent views of the Rockies. On any given Sunday, he can look out upon his growing congregation, many with young families, and take justifiable pride in the parish's new sanctuary. But with a construction debt of more than a million dollars, Our Lady of the Snows is cash poor. Father Keeley and Sister Carmen Braga (the names have been changed) are the parish's only paid staff members. They made a deliberate decision to keep personnel expenses low in order to retire the debt. But this has hindered the parish from developing other initiatives, such as youth ministry. Doubtless Our Lady's Church needs a youth ministry, said Father Keeley, but where are the resources to undertake it? Father Keeley had no pastoral council. He wanted to establish one to help him address the youth ministry question.

In order to engage the parish's interest in the question, and to help select council members, Father Keeley called for a series of four parish meetings. In them, he invited parishioners to envision the kind of youth ministry that they desired. Did they want weekly youth meetings or a drop-in center? Would youth ministry include religious education and sacramental preparation? Was the youth minister to work exclusively with young people or would the minister recruit and train adult volunteers? Father Keeley also presented the parish's financial situation and challenged participants to estimate the resources a youth ministry requires.

Having laid this foundation, Father Keeley clarified the tasks for which he needed a pastoral council. He hoped the council would reflect with him on what parishioners had said, define the hoped-for youth ministry, draw up a job description for a youth minister, and plan ways to develop new resources. By clarifying his intentions, Father Keeley engaged the interest of the whole parish. Parishioners helped him envision the future, restructure the parish's ministry, and solve problems.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the third meeting, Father Keeley invited them to nominate people for his ten-member pastoral council. During the fourth meeting, participants chose the new councillors.

Parish meetings at Our Lady of the Snows achieved the purpose of selecting the pastoral council. They were able to do this because they raised the interest of the whole parish. The meetings explained Father Keeley's intention, educated parishioners about the pastoral situation

faced by the parish, and asked them to share their insights about youth ministry. As they did this, parishioners learned about the pastoral council and the qualities that councillors should have. They were able to discern these qualities in their fellow parishioners. They grew in commitment to the council and its work.

### **Choosing Councillors**

Council experts agree that the selection of councillors is an act of faith in the church, in the pastor who seeks the parish's wisdom, and in the parish members.<sup>10</sup> It touches the deepest chords of Christian life. It should be intimate and prayerful. It should recall the purpose of the parish and allow members to speak truthfully to one another. The intimacy of the selection of councillors and the role of prayer deserve a special word.

#### *The Intimacy of Discernment*

Benedictine Sister Mary Benet McKinney emphasizes the importance of intimacy and interaction in discernment. The author of *Sharing Wisdom*, she says that parish meetings allow people to match their own gifts and talents with the needs of the council. This process should not be hurried. It should involve conversation, reflection, and prayer.

Instead of impersonal or secret nominations, Sister Mary Benet suggests that parishioners speak up about those they want to see on the council.<sup>11</sup> If they have participated in several meetings, they are in a good position to judge who has the ability to serve on the council. A good discernment process invites them to express their views. They should be able to say, "I nominate Stephen," and give their reasons. "Stephen is thoughtful, a careful listener, good at stating his views, and able to compromise." In this way, they honor Stephen, expressing their faith in him and in the church. Others should also be able to affirm his nomination. If they disagree, they may nominate another.

After the nominations and the affirmations, the nominees need to speak. They must indicate whether they accept nomination. "I accept the nomination," Stephen should be able to say. "I have a deep interest in the parish and the council and I believe that I can make a good contribution." After the nominees have accepted or declined, the parishioners need further discussion. Sister Mary Benet calls this testing or confirming the group's wisdom. People should be able to express doubts ("Stephen has just started a new job and may not have time to serve on the coun-

cil") or affirmations ("I was impressed by what Stephen said about the parish's youth ministry"). These reflections help the group arrive at a common understanding of the nominees.

Once the discernment of nominees is complete, writes Sister Mary Benet, "the process of final selection can vary according to the experience and expectations of the parish or diocese: election, appointment, or a combination of the two."<sup>12</sup>

This does not mean, however, that popular participation is unimportant. Sister Mary Benet rightly implies that the discernment is more important than the means by which participants indicate their judgment. But her underlying assumption is that those who discern are fair-minded sharers of wisdom. Popular participation is one way of ensuring that the discerning group is not exclusive and close-minded. In addition, the discernment should be unhurried. By means of it, the parish discovers its representatives and expresses its faith. When the discernment is complete, parishioners should learn its results and celebrate it publicly.

#### *Prayer of Discernment*

Some writers about parish councils in 1967-68 did not refer to prayer in the council meetings and did not advocate a discerning style of decision making. That changed by the 1980s and 1990s. Those years gave rise, as we saw in Chapter Thirteen, to the idea of a *pastoral* council. That is the council, many said, that understands itself as ministry, studies the Scriptures, and focuses on the parish mission. All of the literature about discernment emphasizes the importance of prayer.

What is the prayer of discernment? It originates in contemplation, the simple recognition that God is the foundation of all reality. Christian tradition calls this adoration. Prayer is next an act of praising God. It acknowledges the difference between God and creatures and celebrates the way God has disposed all things. Next comes thanksgiving. The prayer of Christians gives thanks for their relationship with God. Adoration, praise, and thanksgiving—these are the context for the prayer of petition, the request that God come to the community's aid. Whether the petition is conducted spontaneously, or based on the Scriptures, or according to the liturgy, it has a proper context, namely, faith in the God who is always present.

The discerning community should be cautious about a prayer of petition that expresses hope in a miraculous intervention. Some prayers imply that the outcome of the discernment is God's will. Without prayers, they

suggest, God might not guide the discernment. We saw in Chapter Seven that some guidelines for pastoral councils recommend the final selection of parish council members by drawing lots. A parishioner can misread these guidelines and conclude that drawing lots expresses God's will. But God is not a link in a chain of causes that ends with a lucky draw.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, there is nothing wrong with lots, provided that every nominee for the pastoral council is equally gifted and the community is willing to leave the final selection to chance. The drawing of lots, however, is no substitute for a thorough discernment. Our petitions express the faith that God is already working through the community and will continue to do so.

### **Discernment and Wisdom**

Official documents do not concur on how to select pastoral councillors. Although most pastoral council guidelines in the United States favor popular elections and do not require a process of discernment, the process helps to ensure the success of elections. Parishes should not regard discernment and election as alternatives. Rather they are aspects of one and the same process of selection. Discernment without the participation of interested parishioners may yield unrepresentative councils. Elections without discernment may yield poor councillors. When parishes educate people about the council ministry, begin to engage them in the council's work, and invite their participation in selecting councillors, they express the faith of the church.

The discernment of councillors expresses faith in the church's vision of shared responsibility. It allows parishioners to understand the role of the pastor and his search for practical wisdom. It reveals the parish as God's instrument, an instrument with a mission and a future. It invites people to honor one another and speak the truth. The discernment of council members expresses a common faith that the parish is indeed God's people and that God will continue to work through them.

recommend people for appointment to the pastoral council. See Mark F. Fischer, "Diocesan Pastoral Council Constitutions," in H. Richard McCord, editor, *Diocesan Pastoral Councils* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, forthcoming).

### Chapter Fifteen: Ecclesial Representation

1. For more technical commentaries about the pastoral council, starting with the most recent, see Renken, "Pastoral Councils"; Marceaux, "The Pastoral Council"; Page, *The Diocesan Pastoral Council*; and Joseph F. Hayden, "Diocesan Pastoral Councils," dissertation for the Degree of Licentiate in Canon Law (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1969).

2. See Vatican II, "Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church," no. 27, in Vatican II, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Flannery, General Editor, p. 580.

3. We discussed this letter in Chapter Ten. See the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, "Private Letter."

4. Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, "Circular Letter," no. 7. See the discussion of the Circular Letter in Chapter Ten. For technical commentaries, see Wuerl, "Pastoral Councils"; McManus, "Diocesan Pastoral Councils"; and Sheehan, "Commentary."

5. For further treatment of the knowledge of contingent things in classical philosophy, see the discussions of Plato, Thomas, and Aristotle (respectively) in Mark F. Fischer, "Parish Councils: Where Does the Pastor Fit In?" *Today's Parish* (Nov./Dec., 1991): 13-15; "Keeping Your Council on Track," *Today's Parish* (March 1996): 31-33; and "When the Parish Council and the Finance Council Disagree," *Today's Parish* 30.1 (January 1998): 8-12.

6. See Vatican II, "Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops," no. 27, in Vatican II, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Flannery, General Editor, p. 580. In addition to the "Circular Letter" (no. 9) and Canon 511 of the *Code of Canon Law*, the formula also appears in the Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*.

7. See Vatican II, "Declaration on Religious Liberty," *Dignitatis humanae*, 7 December 1965, translated by Laurence Ryan, in Vatican II, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Flannery, General Editor. See numbers 2 (about the dignity of persons and their privilege of bearing personal responsibility, p. 801) and 8 (about the importance of forming people who reach decisions on their own judgment and who govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, joining with others in a cooperative effort, p. 805). See also John Courtney Murray's 1960 title, *We Hold These Truths: Reflections on the American Proposition* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1988).

8. See the discussion of the "Ecclesial Nature of a Christian" in Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. by William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press [A Crossroad Book], 1978), p. 389 f. Rahner treats the origin of the church in Christ at p. 330.

9. For an analysis of the doctrine of participation in God, see Peter C. Phan, *Grace and the Human Condition*, vol. 15 of the series *Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Wilmington, Michael Glazier: 1988), especially Chapter 5 (on "The Restoration of the Image and Divinization of Humanity" according to Athanasius of Alexandria, pp. 132-138), and Chapter 6 (on "The Cappadocian Fathers," especially Gregory of Nazianzus, pp. 171-176).

### Chapter Sixteen: Discerning Councillors

1. Pope Paul VI stated that councils exist so that "the life and activity of the People of God may be brought into greater conformity with the Gospel," thereby implying the concept of representation (i.e., that the work of the council concerns all of the faithful). He did not endorse a particular method of councillor selection. See Paul VI, *Ecclesiae Sanctae* I, no. 16, in Vatican II, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Flannery, General Editor, p. 601.

2. The Decree on Missionary Activity stated that clergy, religious and lay people would have a part in the diocesan pastoral council "through elected delegates" (Latin: "per delegatos selectos"). Vatican II, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," no. 30, in Vatican II, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Flannery, General Editor, p. 847.

3. Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, no. 204, p. 105.

4. Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, "Circular Letter," no. 7. There the Letter speaks of the number of councillors, term of office, and staggered elections. It states (1) that "*the number of members of the pastoral council* should not be too great so that it is able to carry out effectively the work that is committed to it." This is the only reference in Vatican documents to the number of pastoral council members. The Letter also states (2) that council members, apart from those who serve by virtue of their office, should be "nominated for a period of time determined in the statutes." This is the only Vatican reference to term of office. Moreover, the Letter speaks (3) about staggered elections. "So that the whole council membership will not go out of existence at the same time, it is advisable that for its renewal of membership, a *system of rotation* be employed in such a way that at stated times a certain number end their membership and new members are named in their place." This is the only Vatican reference to such a system of rotation. See the discussion of the Circular Letter in Chapter Ten. For technical commentaries, see Wuerl, "Pastoral Councils"; McManus, "Diocesan Pastoral Councils"; and Sheehan, "Commentary."

5. See the reference to St. Ignatius Loyola's treatment of spiritual discernment in the Archdiocese of Newark's 1976 *Parish Council Guidelines*, p. 275. For a general treatment of discernment, see Thomas H. Green, *Weeds among the Wheat*. For the critique that elections stem from a secular model of decision-making inappropriate for the Church, see Rademacher, *The Practical Guide*, p. 118; and McKinney, *Shared Wisdom*, pp. 6-8. Recent guidelines that make discernment a part of popular elections include the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's *Called to Be Church: A Guide for Parish Pastoral Councils*, prepared by the Office of Pastoral Planning, 1998; and the Diocese of Greensburg's *New Wine, New Wineskins: Revisioning the Parish Through the Ministry of the Parish Pastoral Council*, produced by the Office of Parish Life and Ministry; Mary Ann Gubish, Director, 1996.

6. McKinney defines the four stages of discernment at p. 81 and in her Appendix I, pp. 140-143.

7. Michael Parise, "Forming Your Parish Pastoral Council," describes his parish's voting on p. 45 and the evaluation of the 50 projects and programs on p. 46.

8. Howes, *Creating an Effective Parish Pastoral Council*.

9. Envisioning the future, restructuring work, and solving problems—these are the three major purposes of assemblies, according to Barbara Benedict Bunker and Billie T. Alban, *Large Group Interventions: Engaging the Whole System for Rapid Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997). The book describes group processes that have worked well with industry, but are also relevant to parishes.

10. See the works by McKinney and Parise. For a variation on McKinney's "shared wisdom" model, see the "election committee" model of Rademacher with Rogers, *The New Practical Guide*, pp. 120-128. This model uses a committee to screen and discern nominees, after which the committee proposes a slate of nominees and conducts a general parish election.

11. See McKinney, p. 81 and her Appendix I, pp. 140-143.

12. Pastors can provide for the participation of certain parishioners, such as immigrants, by appointing them. Appointment does not do away, however, with the need for discernment. Not every discernment must be followed by a parish-wide election, McKinney states (p. 81), but there should be no appointment without discernment.

13 See the discussion of "God's Activity in and through Secondary Causes" in Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 86 ff.

## Chapter Seventeen: Misunderstandings About Coordination

1. To be sure, there are some who flatly state that the bishops of Vatican II did not intend pastoral councils to coordinate. This is the assertion of Giuseppe Ceschin, *Il Consiglio Pastorale Parrocchiale. Genesi, Natura e Funzionamento*, Dissertation ad Lauream in Facultate Iuris Canonici apud Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae in Urbe (Roma: Pontifical University of St. Thomas in the City, 1992), pp. 99, 310. But there is abundant evidence to show that the the Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, no. 26, was a source for parish pastoral councils. See the discussion of the 1983 Code of Canon Law in Chapter Twelve, especially footnote 23.