

PARISH COUNCIL

Why Should You Serve on the Parish Council?

Fr Jim Kordaris

What will you say when someone offers to nominate you to serve on the parish council? Why would anyone take time to sit through monthly meetings, in addition to the likely committee work that it would entail?

WHY NOT?

It is best to start with the reasons *not* to serve on the parish council. Don't join the parish council to build your resume. Don't join the parish council to network for your business or career. Don't join the parish council because you want your opinions to be heard. We don't serve the Church in order to get something (*it's not about us*). In serving, we give ourselves in service to Jesus Christ and his Church, always pointing to Him and giving glory in all things to Him. We offer our gifts, talents, education, training, and experience to make our local parish a truly welcoming spiritual home for all, leading people to Jesus Christ.

WHY?

What is the purpose of the Church? What is our calling? What is our *Why*? Our purpose in serving the Church comes from the final instructions –the Great Commission – of Jesus as He was leaving His disciples at His Ascension. As with anyone's last words, Jesus left his disciples – and us – with the most important thing that He wants us to do: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (MT25:32). Then He promised to be with us forever.

THE CALLING TO SERVE

The calling to serve on the Parish Council is a calling to serve God, His Church and your fellow parishioners. For a few years, you will offer your time in order that others may worship freely. You will welcome, assist, fix, organize, evaluate, implement, and cooperate, in service to your church. Most of all, you will love. You will love God. You will love those with whom you serve. You will love those who enter the doors of your church – those you know and those who may enter for the first time.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY/FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Should the parish council be filled with experienced, long-term members or is a fresh perspective needed? The answer is *both*. We need our long-time members who, along with our priest, provide institutional memory and continuity. We also need new members to bring fresh eyes to our situation and to offer new solutions. This requires mutual respect for what each brings to the parish council.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE (SABOTAGE?)

Resistance to change is the greatest impediment to church growth. We need to be open to new ideas and allow for change. "That's the way we've always done it" and "We've never done it like that before" are not the basis for good decision-making. We have all heard the saying, "doing the same thing and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity." In the words of Fr Evan Armatas, "We need to change without changing the unchangeable" (*Reclaiming the Great Commission*, Ancient Faith Press). Resistance to change in its worst form can actually be called sabotage. Rather than resisting change, some may actually sabotage new ways of doing things.