By-Laws of the St. Joseph University Parish Pastoral Council

Article I – Name

This Body shall be named the **St. Joseph University Parish Pastoral Council**, hereafter referred to as "the Council" in these By-Laws.

Article II – Mission, Purpose, and Scope

1. **Mission**
   To advise the Pastor in pastoral planning that aligns with the Mission of the Parish.
2. **Purpose**
   - To identify and articulate the pastoral needs of the parish community (students, faculty, staff, local parishioners).
   - To propose pastoral priorities, goals, and strategies.
   - To recommend initiatives in evangelization, liturgy, service, faith formation, and campus ministry.
   - To foster collaboration between parish ministries and the wider parish family.
3. **Scope**
   - The Council is consultative; it does not have decision-making authority over canonical or financial structures, though it gives pastoral input.
   - It works in close alignment with diocesan norms.

Article III – Membership

1. **Composition**
   - The Pastor — presides.
   - Lay members: 8 lay members, including a mix of university students, staff, local parishioners, and an SJUP School representative.
   - Ex-officio non-voting members: trustees, ministry leaders (for campus ministry, liturgy, service), pastoral associates.
2. **Qualifications**
   - Must be a baptized, practicing Catholic.
   - Must be actively engaged in parish/campus and/or SJUP school life.
   - For student members: active involvement in campus ministry or parish life.

3. **Terms**
    - Lay Council Members serve three-year terms, with the possibility of one consecutive renewal, unless otherwise agreed by the Pastor.
    - Members can serve more than 2 terms as long as they are not consecutive.
    - Terms should be staggered to maintain continuity.
    - Terms run concurrently with the fiscal year of the parish (Sept. 1-August 31).
4. **Selection**
    - The Council will solicit nomination from the parish (including campus ministry) annually or when a term ends.
    - Candidates are vetted by the Council and the Pastor approves/appoints new Council Members.
    - Nominations will be solicited in June of each year; vetted nominations will be discussed at the July Council Meeting; the Pastor will make decisions at the August Council Meeting; and new members will be seated at the September Council Meeting.
5. **Removal / Resignation**
    - A Council Member may resign in writing.
    - The Pastor, after consulting with the Chair, may remove a Member for non-participation, misconduct, or failure to fulfill responsibilities.
6. **Duties:** All Council Members are expected to come to the meetings, be active in Parish, Campus, and/or SJUP Life, to engage with parishioners, and listen to parishioner concerns so those concerns can be brought to the Pastoral Council for discussion and resolution.

Article IV – Officers

1. **Officers**
    - Chairperson
    - Secretary
2. **Duties**
    - **Chairperson**: Collaborates with the Pastor to set agenda, leads meetings, ensures follow-through, serves as secretary in absence of.
    - **Secretary**: Records minutes; distributes minutes/agenda; maintains records; tracks follow-up, and serves as chair in absence of chair
3. **Election and Term**
    - Officers are elected annually from among the lay members of the Council at the September meeting.
    - Simple majority vote by Council members.
    - Officers may serve multiple terms, as long as they remain Council members.

Article V – Meetings (Town Hall meetings are open for all to attend; Pastoral Council meetings are closed to members and invitees)

Pastoral Council Meetings

1. **Frequency**
    - Regular meetings: held monthly.
    - Council cannot meet without a quorum.
    - Regular Council meetings are closed meetings. Town Hall meetings are open to parishioners.
2. **Special Meetings**
    - Can be called by the Pastor, Chairperson, or a majority of members.
    - Provide notice ideally one week in advance.
3. **Quorum**
    - Defined as a simple majority of voting members.
    - The Council may not vote on major recommendations without a quorum.
4. **Agenda**
    - Prepared by the Chair in collaboration with Pastor.
    - Includes prayer or reflection.
    - Distributed in advance.
5. **Minutes**
    - Secretary records and drafts minutes.
    - Minutes are reviewed and approved at the next meeting.
    - A summary or report of key outcomes should be shared with the parish community.
    - Minutes must note when executive session is called.
    - Executive Session may be called during meeting. All discussions in Executive Session are confidential.

Town Hall meetings

- Regular town hall meetings will be held throughout the year.
- Everyone is invited to town hall meetings.

Article VI – Decision-Making and Recommendations

1. **Consensus and Voting**
    - The Council strives for consensus.
    - If a consensus is not reached, a vote may be held.
    - Decisions or recommendations require a simple majority of those present.
2. **Recommendation Process**
    - Parishioners or Council Members can present a recommendation.
    - The Chair (or working group) works with the Pastor to refine them.
    - The final recommendation is submitted to the Pastor.
    - The Pastor provides feedback or a decision (accept, modify, defer) and communicates this back to the Council.

Article VII – Committees

1. **Formation**
    - The Council may establish standing or ad-hoc committees to handle specific pastoral areas or concerns.
    - Standing committees might include:
        - Campus Ministry / Evangelization
        - Liturgy & Worship
        - Faith Formation / Education/Spirituality
        - Social Justice / Service
        - Communications
        - Stewardship
2. **Membership**
    - Committees are made up of Council members + other parishioners, students, and staff on an as needed basis.
    - Chairs of committees are approved by the Council (or Pastor).
3. **Reporting**
    - Committees report regularly to the full Council.
    - Committee proposals must be approved by the full Council.

Article VIII – Relationship with Other Parish / Diocesan Bodies

1. **Finance Council**
    - The Parish Finance Council (separate from the pastoral council) is the advisory body on financial administration. Diocese of Buffalo

- The PPC may consult with or receive financial input, but the Finance Council handles financial planning, budgeting, and canonical financial matters. Diocese of Buffalo

2. **Ministries / Staff**
   - Ministry leaders (campus ministry, liturgy, social service, youth) should be invited to participate in Council Meetings or committees.
   - Pastoral Associates, Deacons, and other staff may serve as ex-officio members, at the discretion of the Pastor.

Article IX – Communication & Transparency

1. **Communication to Parish / Campus Community**
   - Provide regular periodic updates on Council work via parish bulletin, website, campus ministry newsletter, or social media.
   - Share key recommendations, plans, and meeting summaries, subject to confidentiality agreements.
2. **Feedback Mechanisms**
   - Organize listening sessions (i.e. Town Hall Meetings), surveys, forums (especially for students), a suggestion box, emails, word of mouth, and council work sessions to gather input on pastoral priorities.
   - Use the above as an impetus in Council discernment and planning.
3. **Confidentiality**
   - Some topics (personnel, pastoral care, sensitive issues) may require confidentiality.
   - The Council must agree and adhere to confidentiality norms and laws (what is shared, how).
   - Executive Session may be called during a meeting. All discussions while the Council is in Executive Session are confidential.

Article X – Formation, Orientation & Evaluation

1. **Orientation / Formation**
   - New Council members should receive orientation: overview of parish mission, by-laws, diocesan structure (including the *Families of Parishes* model), and their role.
   - An annual retreat or formation session is strongly encouraged, possibly leveraging diocesan formation resources.
2. **Evaluation**
   - The Council should evaluate its effectiveness at least once a year (structure, membership, processes, impact).
   - The Council will use the results of this evaluation to improve how the Council functions and to adjust By-Laws if needed.

Article XI – Amendments to the By-Laws

1. **Proposing Amendments**
    - Any Council member can propose an amendment.
    - Proposals are to be submitted in writing, ideally at least two meetings before a vote.

Article XII – Adoption / Ratification

- These by-laws are to be adopted by a meeting of the initial Council (or a special meeting for that purpose).
- Once approved, they become the governing document for the St. Joseph University Parish Pastoral Council.