

We read in the Acts of the Apostles of the young Church, of the engagement of the community in pursuing life as followers of Jesus Christ. We read about the seemingly equitable embrace of all the members of the community, even in that earlier day with its many proscriptions for human behavior, welcoming and using the gifts of the community—men and women alike.

During the ensuing centuries, that openness and equitable inclusiveness got lost.

A very limiting climate and an environment of separation between clergy and laity became the norm for life in the Church. That environment and the structures it spawned have caused the faithful to seriously undervalue their true place in the Church—their privilege and obligation as baptized members of the Body of Christ.

Then, in the 1960s, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Second Vatican Council took place. Vatican II “opened the windows and doors” of the institutional Church and reawakened the spirit of the young, energetic, and more equitable Church of the first century.

The Council issued many directives for the ongoing renewal of the Church and looked upon members of the Church with a renewed appreciation. The Council spoke and dioceses around

the world responded by requiring each parish to have a Parish Pastoral Council.

Members of the Parish Council are elected by parishioners and/or appointed by the pastor and meet monthly or quarterly with the pastor to discuss the life of the parish and how effective the parish is at bringing Christ into the world. No parish exists primarily for itself, but for the good of the whole Church and the parish contributes to the health and well-being of the Church insofar as it is faithful to the Gospel and when it is a source of evangelization both for the lives of its parishioners as well as for those with whom our parishioners interact through the parish's various outreach ministries.

The Church is not a democracy, nor is the Council, but Parish Council members are privileged to serve and actualize in a very small but significant way what baptism calls us to, and to help restore to the universal Church a more equitable atmosphere. As the parish grows in its commitment to the Gospel and in its identity as Church, we are blessed with a wonderfully vibrant faith community that each of us loves and calls our spiritual home.