

Parish Council Elections 2022

Parish Council (PGR)

The Parish Council is the central body for pastoral development of the parishes in terms of a church of missionary discipleship. The Parish Council forms a variety of other bodies: "Pfarrleitungsteam" (i.e. the leading board of the parish), "Vermögensverwaltungsrat" (i.e. the responsible financial board) and – according to the structural model the necessary bodies of a "Pfarrverband" (i.e. a union of independent parishes), a "Seelsorgeraum" (i.e. a close cooperation of independent parishes), or "Gemeindeausschüsse" (community leading boards in parishes with several communities). The Parish Council is elected for a period of 5 years.

The Parish Council discusses all important questions of pastoral care, community life, and activities of groups, coordinating church services and festivities in the ecclesial year. The Parish Council helps the people in the parish to deepen their faith and form a community, and, together with the responsible parish priest, it tries to help in all pastoral tasks to the best of its abilities.

In addition to their work in the Parish Council, its members engage in special fields, e.g. pastoral work with children, youth, Caritas or the like, according to their talents and what is important for them personally. However, they are also responsible for the parish to care for the people's needs and becomes active in society's problems on the basis of their faith.

The Parish Council Elections

On March 20, 2022, all Austrian parishes will elect new Parish Councils for a period of 5 years (until 2027) under the motto of "mittendrin" (right in the middle). This motto shows that Jesus is right in the middle of his church, but also that the Catholic church and therefore also every parish is placed right in the middle of the world: according to Pope Francis' assignment "right in the middle" at the edges to proclaim the Gospel. This responsibility lies with the Parish Council and the parish priest, and in this way parish life is shaped.

All Catholics who are aged 16 or older or have been confirmed and who reside within the parish area or actively take part in parish life are entitled to vote. Candidates for election must be aged 16 or older, profess faith and order of the church, and announce candidacy in written form with the Election Committee ("Wahlvorstand"). Exact stipulations can be found in „Wahlordnung für den Pfarrgemeinderat“ (i.e. Parish Council election rules) from Sept. 2011.

Parish Council elections are an important means of participation and give future direction for the parish. At the same time, the elected women and men are shown support for their work in the Parish Council. Through the elections, many people of different age, social origin and professional experience can become involved and enrich each other. In this way, parish life can be diverse and animated.

Preparing for Parish Council Elections

Between October 2021 and January 2022, as many women and men as possible who are willing to participate in the Parish Council should be found. This is not a task for the parish priest alone, but a task for all members of the parish. In practice, the Election Committee, which is appointed by the Parish Council and in which the parish priest is one of the members, takes care of this work. Persons suitable for election can be named to the Election Committee. By January at the latest, the list of candidates for election is determined. On election day, as many parish members as possible should vote to show their confidence in and support of the candidates.

Some candidates might not get enough votes to become part of the Parish Council. However, in many parishes these candidates work in different groups and teams, thereby showing that the parish is of common concern to all people.

Conclusion

The appointment of Parish Councils is one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council for the purpose of strengthening the shared responsibility of all baptized and confirmed people for the mission of the church. This is why the Vatican instruction „The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church“ (July 2020) emphasizes the importance of synodal listening to each other and advice given by the Parish Council, so that the work of priests and pastors can be done at its best because it is adapted to the people in the parish.

The Archdiocese of Vienna has held Parish Council (PGR) elections since 1971. At the moment, approximately 4.050 women and men are elected members of Parish Councils, 56 % of them women.

For updated information see
www.erzdioezese-wien.at/pgr-wahl

