



PC · RELATIONAL MINISTRY

What is Pastoral Care?

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral care lies at the heart of our ministry. It is not an optional task added to preaching or teaching, but a fundamental expression of the Church's participation in the saving work of Jesus Christ. In pastoral care, ministers accompany individuals in their concrete life situations, bearing witness to God's nearness, mercy, and redemptive will.

This learning module invites you to deepen your understanding of pastoral care as it is revealed in Scripture and articulated in the teaching of our Church. The Gospels present Jesus Christ as the definitive model of pastoral care; He turns toward people in love, listens attentively, offers guidance and correction, intercedes in prayer, and leads with self-giving compassion. His conduct shows that pastoral care is relational, holistic, and oriented toward reconciliation with God, while always respecting human freedom.

As a minister, you are entrusted with those whom God has placed into the care of the Church. This responsibility calls for faithful stewardship rather than control, and for a willingness to serve with humility, patience, and joy. Pastoral care, therefore, is exercised not through technique or authority alone, but through the presence and grace of Jesus Christ.

Through reflection, discussion, and introspection, this module seeks to help you examine your own pastoral practice in light of Christ's example. Its aim is to strengthen your ability to support members on their path toward redemption and growth into the image of Christ, while remaining anchored in the hope, love, and promise of the Good Shepherd.

JESUS' CONDUCT AS THE FOUNDATION OF PASTORAL CARE

Our Catechism provides this foundation: *"The accounts of Jesus' conduct allow us to understand the significance of pastoral care. Without regard for the person, He turned to sinners and allowed them to feel His love. He listened, helped, comforted, counselled, admonished, strengthened, prayed, and taught. Jesus came for all human beings, but not all of them accept Him"* (Catechism 12.4).

The accounts of Jesus' conduct in the Gospels provide the normative framework for understanding pastoral care. Pastoral care is not presented in Scripture as a technique or auxiliary function of ministry, but as a participation in the incarnational mission of Christ Himself. The actions of Jesus reveal that pastoral care is fundamentally relational, redemptive, and oriented toward reconciliation with God.

Pastoral care rooted in the incarnation

Jesus' turning toward sinners *"without regard for the person"* (meaning without judging or categorizing the person) reflects the theological reality of the incarnation (John 1:14; Philippians 2:6–8). By assuming human nature, Christ enters fully into the lived reality of those He came to redeem. His pastoral engagement is not selective or conditional; it is grounded in God's universal salvific will (1 Timothy 2:3–4). This establishes pastoral care as an act of proximity rather than distance. As a minister, you are called not merely to address moral or doctrinal deficiencies, but to enter into the concrete circumstances of human life, reflecting the nearness of God made visible in Christ.

Turning toward sinners as an expression of divine mercy

Jesus' consistent orientation toward sinners (Luke 5:30–32; Luke 19:1–10) demonstrates that pastoral care is inseparable from mercy. His willingness to eat with tax collectors and speak with the morally compromised reveals that divine love precedes repentance, even while calling forth transformation. This dynamic is especially evident in Jesus' encounter with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11), where care, protection, admonition, and moral clarity are held together without contradiction. This illustrates that pastoral care neither condones sin nor withholds grace, but rather, it creates a space in which repentance becomes possible because the soul you are caring for has first encountered love.

The multidimensional nature of Jesus' pastoral actions

The Gospel narratives describe Jesus as one *"who listened, helped, comforted, counselled, admonished, strengthened, prayed, and taught."* These actions demonstrate that pastoral care is holistic, addressing the spiritual, emotional, relational, and moral dimensions of the human person.

- **Listening** (Mark 10:46–52): Jesus attends to the cry of Bartimaeus, allowing the individual to articulate need before offering healing.
- **Helping and comforting** (Matthew 9:36): Jesus is moved with compassion for the crowds, recognizing their vulnerability.

- **Counseling and admonishing** (Matthew 16:23; Luke 12:15): Jesus provides corrective guidance, when necessary, motivated by concern for truth and life.
- **Strengthening and praying** (Luke 22:31–32): Jesus intercedes for Peter, acknowledging weakness while affirming vocation.
- **Teaching** (Matthew 5–7): Instruction is integrated into care, forming disciples for sustained faithfulness.

This diversity of Jesus' actions invites you not to limit pastoral care to a single role, such as counseling or teaching alone. It calls you instead to listen prayerfully and discern what is truly needed in each moment, so that your response may support spiritual growth and open the way toward reconciliation.

Universal invitation and human free will

The statement that *"Jesus came for all human beings, but not all of them accept Him"* reflects the tension between God's universal invitation and human freedom (Matthew 23:37; John 5:40). Jesus' ministry is marked by genuine openness to all, yet also by respect for the human capacity to reject grace.

This has critical implications for pastoral care. You are called to offer care faithfully and persistently, without equating rejection with failure. Your responsibility lies in witness, accompaniment, and invitation, not in coercion or outcome control. Jesus Himself allows individuals to walk away (Mark 10:21–22), demonstrating that pastoral care honors free will while still remaining anchored in truth.

QUESTIONS FOR INTROSPECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. How do the recorded actions of Jesus define the true scope of pastoral care?

2. Which of the listed actions of Jesus do you practice most naturally, and which require greater intentionality?

3. How do you respond when care is offered but not accepted?

THOSE ENTRUSTED TO CHRIST BY THE FATHER

“His own have been entrusted to Him by the Father. He seeks to protect and preserve all those in His care and does not want to lose any of them (John 17:12)” (Catechism 12.4).

Those who belong to Christ are described as having *“been entrusted to Him by the Father”* (John 17:12), which places pastoral care within the framework of divine stewardship. The flock is not claimed by the Shepherd, but received, emphasizing that ministry originates in God’s initiative rather than human authority (John 6:37). Jesus’ commitment to protect and preserve those entrusted to Him reflects the biblical image of the shepherd who actively guards, guides, and intercedes for the flock (Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34).

At the same time, Christ’s desire not to lose anyone does not negate human free will, evident in the reality of rejection even within His closest circle. For you, this establishes pastoral care as faithful accompaniment rather than control. Preservation becomes a reality through truth, prayer, and presence, with those entrusted to your care, who ultimately remain in the hands of God.

QUESTIONS FOR INTROSPECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. What does being “entrusted” imply about responsibility and accountability in pastoral care?

2. How does Christ’s desire to lose no one shape your ministry?

THE IMAGE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

“Jesus Christ’s words and deeds are the perfect model for pastoral care. Every minister is to take example in this from the Son of God. To this end, Jesus gives us the image of the good shepherd, who knows his own, talks to them, and leads them: ‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ...My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand’ (John 10:11, 27–28).

From this we derive that ministers have the task of ‘tending’ the flock of Christ and of preparing them for the return of the chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. They do this ‘willingly’ and ‘eagerly’ (1 Peter 5:2–4)” (Catechism 12.4).

Chief Apostle Mutschler stated the following in January 2026, *(scan the QR code to watch the video)*: “We shall be shepherds. Shepherds go to the flock out of love because they want to be with the flock. Shepherds open doors and show the way to the green pastures. Sometimes I thought about this - sometimes we have closed doors in our hearts due to our unforgiveness that we don’t love the brothers and sisters enough and that we have prejudices.



Shepherds open the doors and build bridges and show the way to the food. Jesus said, ‘I am the way.’ That is our task: to show the way to salvation. That is the only focus we have...

Shepherds care for the weak ones and for the injured sheep, with only this motivation of love. That’s the other side of the motivation. Shepherds give food. And this food is not giving money or whatever to the brothers and sisters. What do we really, really need deep in our hearts? That there is somebody who accepts you and loves you. And shepherds give *this* food.

Shepherds provide a good mood in the flock. We have such a big love for Jesus Christ in our hearts, and such a joy and hope for the future. Let us go to the flock and say to them all - we can be so full of hope because Jesus Christ is coming.”

QUESTIONS FOR INTROSPECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. What does it mean for a shepherd to know, speak to, and lead the sheep?

2. How does self-giving love define authority in pastoral care?

3. How does the attitude, joy, and hope of a shepherd influence the spiritual and emotional climate of the flock, and what practical steps can you take to cultivate a similar mood of encouragement and confidence among those you care for?

THE OBJECTIVE OF PASTORAL CARE IN THE NEW APOSTOLIC CHURCH

“The objective of pastoral care in the New Apostolic Church is to support our neighbor on the path that leads to redemption from sin and death, and into the image of Christ. The foundation for this and the ability to do this can be only found in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The earnest endeavor of the believers to grow into the nature of Christ is supported by sensitive pastoral care” (Catechism 12.4).

Pastoral care in our Church is grounded in God’s redemptive work through Jesus Christ. This care serves the believer on the path from sin and death toward redemption and eternal life and supports growth into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). It does not produce salvation but accompanies believers as they respond to the grace made available through Christ’s sacrifice.

Because the foundation and effectiveness of pastoral care rests solely in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, care must remain Christ-centered rather than moralistic or merely therapeutic (Hebrews 9:26). Your sensitive pastoral care supports the believer’s earnest endeavor toward Christlikeness by encouraging, guiding, and strengthening faith, while respecting personal responsibility and the work of the Holy Spirit. In this way, you participate humbly and faithfully in God’s ongoing work of redemption and transformation.

QUESTIONS FOR INTROSPECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. What does “into the image of Christ” imply about spiritual growth?

2. How can your pastoral care remain focused on the above objectives amid daily concerns?

KNOWING YOUR BOUNDARIES AND HUMILITY ABOUT YOUR ABILITIES

Pastoral care is a sacred calling that attends to the condition of the soul, grounded in the gospel, prayer, as well as word and sacrament. Yet you must learn early that faithful care also includes humility about your own limits.

Ordained ministry does not replace medical, psychological, or social expertise, nor is it meant to. Some struggles, such as mental health conditions, trauma, addiction, or physical and social needs, extend beyond the competence of pastoral care alone. In such cases, it is not a failure of ministry to acknowledge this; rather, it is an expression of love and responsibility.

You are called to listen, accompany, pray, and offer spiritual guidance, while also recognizing when professional help is necessary and encouraging it with support and respect. By honoring these boundaries, you protect those entrusted to your care and serve as an instrument of God's compassion in cooperation with the broader helping professions.

QUESTIONS FOR INTROSPECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss how you recognize your limits and know when a situation requires professional help beyond pastoral care?

2. How do you support and encourage someone to seek that help while continuing to walk with them spiritually?
