Lay Ecclesial Ministry Program

Diocese of Gary
9292 Broadway
Merrillville, Indiana 46410
Introduction

The Diocesan Lay Ministry Formation Program is a four year program that prepares lay men and women as Ecclesial Ministers. Ecclesial Ministers are defined as lay men and women who have been prepared professionally for specific roles of service and leadership in and for the Church. The Church needs people with a solid sense of ministry, a clear theology of Church and the skills to carry out their ministry. The eight-semester program includes:

- Theology Classes
- Pastoral Development
- Spiritual Formation
- Ministry Practicum

The Lay Ministry Formation Program is a prerequisite for the Deacon Program.
The Ecclesial Minister

Ecclesial Ministers include, but are not limited to, the following ministerial positions.

Deacon

The diaconate is conferred through a special outpouring of the Spirit (ordination), which brings about in one who receives it a specific conformation to Christ, Lord and servant of all (n.5. Basic Norms for Ordination of Deacon). Lumen Gentium (n.29) defines the laying on of hands on the deacon as being not for the celebration of Eucharist, but for service. The role of the deacon is to express the needs and desires of the Christian community and to be a driving force for service or diakonia, which is an essential part of the mission of the Church. The deacon is ordained for the Diocese and not for a specific parish. The work of the deacon could include hospital work, serving the needs of the poor and homeless, prison work, and assisting at liturgical celebrations.

Pastoral Associate

A Pastoral Associate is a “generalist”, who is responsible for a several areas of parish life, such as visitation of the sick, adult formation, evangelization programs, etc. The pastoral associate is accountable to the pastor, and collaborates with the parish staff in ministering to the needs of the parish or parishes.
Liturgy Coordinator
The Liturgy Coordinator works with the pastor and staff to administer the worship program for the parish. The responsibilities of the Liturgy Coordinator include recruitment, training, support and supervision of liturgical ministers, as well as liturgy planning and developing spiritual experiences such as retreats and days of reflection.

Director of Religious Education
The Director of Religious Education is a person trained in the theology and methodology to direct the parish religious education program. He or she is responsible to the pastor and works collaboratively with other parish leaders. Some of the Director’s responsibilities include administration, curriculum development, training and sacramental preparation.

School Principal
The School Principal is the “pastoral” and educational leader of the Catholic School. He or she is responsible to the pastor and works collaboratively with other parish leaders. In addition to being certified by the State of Indiana, the Principal is responsible for the overall faith development of the students and the building of a Catholic Christian community.
Director of Youth Ministry
The Youth Minister is a person trained to develop and administer programs for and with youth. The Youth Minister is responsible for the development of youth programs and activities, and for the recruitment and training of youth leaders and workers. The Youth Minister is responsible to the pastor.

Director of the RCIA
The Director of the RCIA is responsible for developing and directing a team that will lead the catechumen into full participation with the community of the faithful. The director assists the faith community to develop its proper identity as an evangelizing, welcoming, faith-sustaining body. The director is responsible to the pastor.

Director of Adult Formation
The Director of Adult Formation has the responsibility of helping adults grow to maturity of faith as members of the Church. The director, working with pastor and parish staff, provides a comprehensive formation program for adults to grow in their faith.

Parish Business Manager
The Parish Business Manager is trained in theology, as well as, business, and is responsible for the administrative tasks delegated to him or her by the pastor.
I. Theology Classes

Introduction to the Old Testament
This course provides an introduction to the literature of the Old Testament and its historical, cultural, religious, geographical and social context. The course will introduce the methodological tools employed in investigating the content and genre of the texts.

Introduction to Theology
To study the nature of theology, the historical development of theology, the analysis of theology in the World Church Period, the nature of revelation and faith as they relate to theology, and the magisterium of the church.

Introduction to Morality
To understand the nature and process of the Catholic principals of moral decision making.

Christology
To introduce the theology of the Church's doctrine about Jesus Christ, in light of Christian faith, practices, and worship, and how the Church reflects systemically on the person, being and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.
The Mystery of the Holy Trinity
To give the student a basic awareness of the literature and issues concerning the central Christian symbol of God, and the basic insights about the doctrine of the Trinity.

Ecclesiology
To introduce the biblical, magisterial, and theological foundation of the nature and mission of the Church. This course will include major moments of the Church’s development.

Liturical and Sacramental Theology
To introduce the sacramental nature of the Church and the sacraments as celebrations of the Paschal Mystery.

Introduction to the New Testament
This course provides an introduction to the literature of the New Testament and its historical, cultural, religious, geographical and social context. The course will introduce the methodological tools employed in investigating the content and genre of the texts.
II. Pastoral Development

The Pastoral Development component is designed to give the lay ministers first hand knowledge, experience and skill in pastoral leadership. The Pastoral Development component includes a hands on practicum. The component includes the following classes and workshops:

Pastoral Theology
To understand the connection between the academic disciplines of theology and pastoral care, and be familiar with theological sources to ground, interpret and guide the activity that constitutes the pastoral life of the Church.

Ministerial Role
To understand the role of the minister within the faith community, to be a witness to the Gospel values, and to understand the pastoral concerns and skills appropriate to one’s area of specialty.

Communication Skills
To understand the importance of being an active listener; to attend to both verbal and non-verbal communication; to be empathetic and provide feedback; to withhold and make judgements appropriately.
Leadership Skills
To understand the role and skills of leadership and to develop skills of strategic pastoral planning, conflict management, problem solving and decision making.

Assessment & Intervention Skills
To demonstrate the ability to be empathetic, genuine, and respectful, and to maintain confidentiality and objectivity.

III. Spiritual Formation
A solid and healthy spiritual formation is essential to all ministries in the Church, and it is required by the core curriculum. To be authentic and suitable for ministry in the Church, a personal and communal spirituality must be informed by the long, rich tradition of the Church and in tune with the pastoral needs of the present.

A. Initial Self-Assessment
As a part of the application process the student will complete a self-assessment form that will help he or she assess their spirituality as it relates to their personal religious experience.
B. Spiritual Autobiography
The autobiography helps the student discover spiritual roots, determine change in their spiritual life, identify patterns and habits in their spiritual life and bring them to a better understanding of themselves.

C. Spiritual Experiences
The students will participate in the following spiritual exercises:
- Formation day once a month.
- Two retreats each year
- Regular Spiritual Direction
- Regular participation in the sacraments
- Communal Prayer
- Personal Prayer
- Theological Reflections

IV. Ministry Practicum
The student will be assigned a specific practicum each year of the program. During the first three years of the program the practicum assignment will be in the parish; the fourth year the assignment will be at an institution outside of the parish.
Evaluation

The evaluation process begins when a person asks for admission into the Lay Ministry Formation Program, and continues throughout the four years. A formal evaluation of the student will be conducted each spring by the Program Director along with the student’s pastor.

Role of the Pastor

The priests have an active role in the formation of the students. A recommendation from the pastor is expected before a student can be accepted into the program. However, in the absence of a pastor’s recommendation, the Program Director may defer an action on the application to the Lay Ministry Formation Board.

The pastor is asked to meet once a quarter with the student from his parish. The pastor will be kept informed of the student’s progress throughout the year, and he will be asked to participate in the student’s annual evaluation.

Mentor

Each student will choose a mentor that will walk with them during their four years. The mentor is not a spiritual director, but one who listens and provides feedback. The student and mentor are to meet minimally once every six weeks. Annually the mentors and students will share a formation session with the Program Director.
Admission Procedure

Those seeking admission to the program must request an application packet from the Diocesan Office of Lay Ministry Formation. The packet can be picked up at the Diocesan Pastoral Center or it can be mailed.

In order to process the application, and prior to the personal interview, the following items must be returned to the Program Director:

- Application form
- Self-Evaluation form
- Pastor’s recommendation and two additional recommendations
- Baptismal Certificate
- Confirmation Certificate
- Marriage Certificate
- Annulment Decree (if applicable).

The applicant will be interviewed by the Program Director, an Advisory Board member and/or a Formation Committee member. The scheduling of interviews will begin the first of March. Applicants will be notified of his/her acceptance within two weeks of their interview.
Criteria for Admission

Applicants must meet the following criteria for admission into the Lay Ministry Formation Program:

- A baptized, confirmed Catholic who participates in the sacramental life of the Church.
- A person of prayer, with a desire for a deeper relationship with God.
- A person of normal psychological health, including a capacity for growth and openness to change.
- A person of relative stability in home and personal life at the present time.
- A person who is actively involved in parish ministry.
- A person who has the ability to collaborate and work with others.
- A person who demonstrates leadership skills.
- A person who has the initiative to identify a need and create an appropriate response.
- A person who is willing to devote the time and effort required by the program, making this program a priority in relation to other commitments.
- A person who has the ability and interest in studying theology in a consistent and demanding way.
- A person who has the capacity to reflect on and integrate theory and practice; academics and service; tradition and personal experience.
- A person must have the recommendation of his or her pastor.
Academic Credit

Catholic Theological Union at Chicago (CTU) provides both full time faculty members and adjunct faculty members for the program. Two, 15 week theology classes are taught each year between September and May. Students may seek on their own undergraduate credit from Calumet College of St. Joseph and graduate credit from Catholic Theological Union.

Academic Requirements

Students will be required to complete all reading assignments, reflection and research papers, and examinations. Grades will be issued for each course and students who do not complete the assigned work for the course will receive an “F”. A student who receives an “F” for the semester must meet with the Program Director before moving on to the next term.

Attendance

Students are expected to be present at all classes and at all days of formation. The policy for absenteeism for each semester is as follows:

- A student who is absent once, either from the class or a formation day, will receive a warning letter.
- A student who is absent twice during the semester will be placed on probation.
- A student absent three times must meet with the program Director in order to continue.
Tuition and Fees

The cost of the Ministry Formation Program is shared by the student and the diocese. The tuition is $375.00 per course per semester.

Textbooks

Students must purchase the required textbooks for each course prior to the beginning of the term. The books may be purchased at Boric Bookstore, St. John, IN or on the Internet.

Class Cancellation

If a class session needs to be cancelled due to inclement weather, or for some other reason, the students will be notified by e-mail.
A new class will begin in September 2011.
For more information contact:

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