

INFORMATION SHEET

M. A. Scholarship Program in Theology

What is the purpose of the program?

The M.A. Scholarship Program in Theology, leading to a Master's Degree in Theology, prepares an individual to serve as a Catechetical Leader, a Pastoral Associate, or in other leadership roles in a parish or agency in the Diocese of Brooklyn.

A Catechetical Leader is the individual hired by the parish who is qualified to be responsible for the administration of the parish's total catechetical effort as set forth by the pastor. The Leader is a member of the staff and is chiefly responsible for planning, organizing, and guiding the parish religious education program. The Catechetical Leader is to recruit, screen, and train catechists to teach the faith to parishioners.

A Pastoral Associate is a professional minister who shares with the pastor or onsite pastoral team in the overall care of the parish. He/she is a member of the staff and is accountable to the pastor. The ministry of the Pastoral Associate is comprehensive, relating to all aspects of parish life, with designated responsibilities, i.e., liturgy, faith formation, pastoral care of the sick, ministry of consolation, administration, etc.

Who is sponsoring the program?

The Diocese of Brooklyn sponsors the program which is administered by the Pastoral Institute. Financial assistance may be provided by the Catholic Foundation for Brooklyn and Queens through the John Paul II Fund for Lay Leadership and the Pastoral Institute Scholarship Fund.

What are the components of the program?

Spiritual Formation: theological reflection groups, days of reflection, prayer, liturgical life in the parish.

Academic Preparation: the completion of a Master's Degree or Graduate Certificate in Theology, Pastoral Ministry or Religious Studies.

Pastoral Skills: competencies in those areas that contribute to effective parish leadership, e.g., communication, team building, group dynamics, conflict resolution, etc.

What educational institutions will offer the academic component?

St. John's University (Jamaica), Fordham University Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education (Bronx/Midtown Campuses) and St. Joseph's Seminary at Huntington.

Who can apply to the program?

Women and men who have completed a bachelor's degree with a B+ grade average and who are interested in serving the Church as pastoral leaders. The program is also open to those who have a Master's Degree in another field (e.g., education, administration, social services) and who need to supplement it with theological studies. A Certificate in Theology (18 credits) would answer their need.

How long will it take to complete the program?

Generally the university or seminary will require 33-39 credits for the M.A. Degree. The time required for completion will depend on the number of courses an individual can take during any semester. Colleges generally stipulate the outside time limit for completing the degree. A Certificate in Theology (18 credits) is offered for those who already have an M.A. Degree in another field such as Administration, Social Work, Education, etc.

What criteria are considered when accepting an applicant into the scholarship program?

Because we have a significant number of candidates for this program, the following criteria will be considered when accepting a person who is in need of a scholarship:

- The applicant is willing to minister in a geographic area that is under-served by professionally prepared lay ministers.
- The applicant currently works for the Church.
- The applicant has completed the lay formation program sponsored by the Pastoral Institute.
- The applicant possesses the ability to complete the academic requirements of the university or seminary.

How will the degree be financed?

Financing will depend on several factors: the individual's contribution, the possible availability of scholarships through the Catholic Foundation for Brooklyn and Queens, and the college's discount in tuition. St. John's University and Fordham University give our students a 50% tuition discount. The applicant is responsible for all other costs including general fees, books, matriculation fees, etc. The CFBQ scholarship, if granted, would apply to tuition only.

Scholarships from CFBQ will only be made available should there be sufficient funds available from the applicable endowments. If funds are available priority will be given based on the factors indicated above. If scholarships are not granted for the 2014-2015 academic year, applicants will be given priority consideration if CFBQ funds become available for the 2015-2016 year.

What is involved in the application process for financial assistance?

- The applicant submits a **Statement of Interest** to the Pastoral Institute – attention Mr. Gerald Tortorella.
- If the Statement of Interest indicates that the applicant has the potential for graduate level studies, he/she will receive a list of the Task Force members. The applicant contacts one member and arranges for an interview.
- The applicant will bring to the interview an **unofficial copy** (a photocopy) of his/her undergraduate transcript.
- The candidate will also bring to the interview a letter of recommendation from a member of his/her parish staff.
- At the interview the applicant will discuss with the Task Force member the amount of money that he/she can contribute toward the cost of tuition. Applicants will receive a copy of a Covenant (an agreement) that states the responsibilities of both the diocese and the individual.
- Applicants will receive a letter indicating acceptance into the program. A member of the Task Force will contact personally those individuals who are not accepted into the program.

Please Note: the applicant is encouraged to begin the application process with the educational institution as soon as possible. Contact the institution(s) and request their application materials. This process often takes considerable time.

Web Link: <http://dioceseofbrooklyn.org/m-a-scholarship-program-in-theology/>