

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – LAY MINISTRY PROGRAM

Who are lay pastoral leaders?

There are lay pastoral leaders who serve the Church as volunteers in many and diverse leadership roles, for example, RCIA team members, coordinators of bereavement ministry, coordinators of parish outreach or catechetical ministry. There are also lay pastoral leaders who serve on parish staffs.

For whom is the diocesan program intended?

The diocesan program for lay ministry is intended for persons who will assume leadership **on a volunteer basis for a particular ministry or project or currently serve as a member of a parish staff**. They will serve in collaboration with other members of the staff in promoting the mission and vision of the parish community. Persons who complete the diocesan program will be prepared to coordinate a particular ministry such as baptism preparation, care of the sick, bereavement ministry, parish outreach etc. The pastor/administrator, in collaboration with the parish staff/team and in dialogue with the program participant, determines the ministry to which the individual is called. Lay parish staff members are also encouraged to participate to further their development.

Who will select the participants?

The pastor/administrator in collaboration with the parish team/staff will select the person(s) whom they feel will benefit from the program and who has the potential to assume parish **leadership** as a volunteer or member of staff at the conclusion of his/her formation. The parish serves as a **sponsor** for the candidate and offers guidance and mentoring throughout the formation process and discernment for ministry.

What does the diocesan program look like?

The diocesan formation program is a two-stage process that includes theological content (theology of lay ministry, ecclesiology, Christology, moral theology, scripture, cultural diversity, ecumenism/inter-faith relations), spiritual formation (days of reflection, journaling, etc.), ministerial preparation, and a mentoring process. There is the possibility for graduate level studies in theology or a related field for qualified candidates in the program's Second Stage.

Where will the classes be held?

During the Initial Stage, classes are scheduled in various locations in order to make transportation as convenient as possible. The schedule generally includes options for weeknight and extended Saturday classes.

What is the cost of the program?

The financial cost of the program is the responsibility of the parish, the participant and the diocese. During the Initial Stage, each parish will contribute \$170 per semester for each person it sponsors; the participants will pay \$80 tuition per semester and a yearly \$25 book fee. There is also a one-time non-refundable application fee of \$35 and a one-time commissioning fee of \$10. The diocese will

cover the remaining cost. Financial assistance may be available through the Catholic Foundation for Brooklyn and Queens for parishes or individuals who cannot make the full contribution. The cost for the Second Stage will be based on the study track and program selected.

What is the timeline of the nomination and application process?

In the spring of each year, a packet of materials is provided to each parish containing the documents related to the acceptance of candidates into the English and Spanish tracks of the lay formation program. These materials are provided through the DioNet system. The pastor/administrator then submits a Nomination/Sponsorship Form. Upon receipt of the Nomination/Sponsorship Form, applicants will be sent a letter directing them to the Pastoral Institute website for the application materials. The complete application package must be received by the Pastoral Institute in time to allow sufficient time for review prior to the applicant's interview with a representative of the Pastoral Institute. These interviews take place in mid-July and mid-August. The Pastoral Institute cannot guarantee acceptance to any candidate whose application is not received by August 1st.

What will this program do for a parish?

The program will primarily provide parishes with individuals who are capable of coordinating a particular ministry or project in the parish. They will bring to that responsibility a foundation in theology, experience in spiritual formation and the skills and competencies required by that ministry. Depending on the course of study during the Second Stage, lay persons may also be prepared to join a parish staff.

How will volunteer lay leaders differ from Pastoral Associates and parish catechetical leaders?

Volunteer lay pastoral coordinators have limited program responsibility and decision-making authority. Ordinarily, they function in collaboration with the parish staff.

How does a person join the program?

The pastor/administrator in collaboration with the parish staff/team recommends the candidate to the Pastoral Institute by sending the sponsorship form. The candidate will then receive an application packet and information about the interview process. Each person will be asked to sign a release for a background check that will be conducted by an independent agency.

Whom do we contact for further information?

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