

OVERVIEW OF THE *MANUAL FOR LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY*

In 2005 under the direction of Bishop David Zubik (of Green Bay, WI), the then Chair of the Committee on the Laity, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published the document, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. The purpose of this document was to provide the Church in the United States a vision and appropriate guidelines for the ever-growing presence of lay ecclesial ministers within the Church. The growth of lay ministry flows directly from the Second Vatican Council's universal call to holiness and has become an indispensable gift to the Church.

With contemporary society becoming increasingly secularized and parish life becoming progressively more complex, the presence of lay ecclesial ministers has risen to a level of paramount importance. The value of lay ecclesial ministry does not rival the central role of the ministerial priesthood in the life of the Church, nor could it ever replace it. Rather, the contribution of lay ministers is found in their personal and professional support of the Church's mission, which the clergy could never fulfill alone. The clergy and the laity are called to be co-workers in the Lord's vineyard, an "organic blending of legitimate diversities," in the common work of sanctifying the world.¹

A lay ecclesial minister exercises his or her leadership role under the canonical authority and supervision of a pastor, first the bishop of the diocese where they serve, and in most instances, under a pastor of a parish. Leadership as a lay ecclesial minister is a supportive role to the pastor and the ministry of his responsibilities to the flock he shepherds.

Co-Workers calls this work *ministry* because the word expresses the work by which the Church's lay members labor as professional leaders in the Church to "continue the mission and ministry of Christ within her and the whole world."² By the nature of their collaboration and shared responsibility with pastors, however, the work of lay ecclesial ministry requires "academic preparation, certification, credentialing, and a formation that integrates personal, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions." The need for this formation proceeds from a personal calling to serve in ministry,

¹ *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, pp. 10-11.

² *Ecclesia de Mysterio*, practical provisions, articles 1-2.

which is appropriately discerned “within the Church and authenticated by the Bishop.”³

To fulfill the requirement for the requisite formation of our lay ecclesial ministers, our own Bishop Zubik launched the *Institute for Pastoral Leadership* in October 2017 to provide a certification program in which the four areas of formation would be provided for lay persons interested in and/or serving in lay ecclesial ministry roles. The Institute is not an academic program, but a formation process intended to build the capacity of our LEM aspirants in the principles and practices of effective leadership, ministry, and evangelization for the *Church Alive!* The theological education of these individuals will be handled by partner institutions that offer theology degrees and certificates.

The work of the Institute focuses on the proper integration of the four areas of formation in the life and ministry of lay leaders in the Church. For the sake of the people LEMs serve, the work of integral formation requires continual growth in Christian virtue and a life-long commitment to holiness as well as ongoing professional development. Practically speaking, this means that every LEM is to be encouraged to make deep personal connections between the content of the faith, their prayer life, their personal strengths and giftedness, as well as their pastoral and professional effectiveness in ministry. The purpose of the Institute is to provide ongoing opportunities for this growth to occur. The certification program is intended to lay a foundation for each LEM upon which they can build as they mature in ministry over time.

The certificate program lasts two years with monthly gatherings and is detailed below. The first year is dedicated to core principles and practices of “Leadership with the Heart of Christ,” a vision for leadership that has been developed within the Secretariat for Leadership Development over the past seven years around the principles and practices of effective leadership and strategies for the New Evangelization.

The second year is more practical in nature and is comprised of a ministry specific track for each area of lay ecclesial ministry. Those enrolled in the certificate program

³ *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, pp. 10-11.

will work through the process in cohorts of no more than 25 people. In the second year, participants will develop a professional growth plan within the context of their parish ministry and they will have opportunities for coaching, mentorship in their respective areas of ministry, access to a human formator, spiritual direction, and retreats. Participation in the Institute is also recommended for those that are already certified by the diocese as an opportunity for ongoing professional development.

The complete *Manual for Lay Ecclesial Ministry* is provided in order to inform clergy and lay ecclesial ministers about the work, policies and procedures of the *Institute*, as well as provide a thorough description of the various professional roles lay people can hold within the Diocese of Pittsburgh as leaders for the *Church Alive!*

LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY

Parish vibrancy is nurtured by equipping selfless and energetic leaders to create effective ministries.

A LEM, a lay/religious woman or man, is called to be a disciple-leader who conveys authenticity, integrity, competence, and vision for the future. Disciple-leaders are called to follow Christ's example. Their leadership builds on their natural talents and spiritual gifts, and requires deep listening and the commitment to helping Catholics live out their vocation to holiness. Disciple-leaders greatly value the importance of relational ministry and learn how to develop, empower, and mobilize networks within their respective communities to transform culture. In order to assume the title of Lay Ecclesial Minister in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, an individual must meet the following requirements:

Degree and Certification

Preparation and formation appropriate to the level of responsibilities assigned. This usually includes a master's degree or at least a bachelor's degree in an appropriate field of study, along with spiritual, human/social, and pastoral/apostolic formation for ministry.

Employment

Hired in a parish/regional/institutional leadership position in one of the official LEM categories recognized by the Bishop in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Collaboration

Formal collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons.

Commissioning and Authorization

Authorization of the hierarchy to serve publicly in the local church. This authorization is carried out in the Mass for Commissioning and Authorization of LEMs presided over by the Bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

"It is the responsibility of the bishop, or his delegate, in accord with the norms of canon law, to identify the roles that most clearly exemplify lay ecclesial ministry. Application of the term may vary from diocese to diocese."

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, p. 11

LEM CATEGORIES IN THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

Catholic School Principal (Elementary and Secondary)

Campus Minister

Director of Adult, Marriage and Family Ministries

Director, Diocesan Pastoral Staff (directors for Lay Ecclesial Ministries)

Director of Evangelization

Director of Faith Formation

Director of Music Ministries

Director of Pastoral Care and Social Outreach

Director of Spiritual Formation

Director of Worship

Master Catechist

Parish Business Manager

Pastoral Associate

Pastoral Health Care Minister

Youth Ministry Leader

REQUIREMENTS FOR LEM CERTIFICATION IN THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

“The Church has always required proper preparation of those who exercise a ministry ... lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the Church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation which is required to fulfill their function properly”

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, p. 33

In the Diocese of Pittsburgh, this formation consists of:

1. An academic degree in the area appropriate to their ministry. Ideally, the degree is a master’s in their subject area. For some roles, the minimum is a bachelor’s degree in the subject area. With proper approval, they may complete their academic degree at a partner institution of their choosing while completing the Institute for Pastoral Leadership’s LEM Leadership and Evangelization Formation Program.

Those with ten or more years of supervised and assessed experience in a designated field of ministry may be exempt from this requirement if they a) possess an equivalent level of education in another field of study, b) complete the LEM leadership and evangelization formation curriculum (no. 2, below) and c) demonstrate the required personal competencies for leadership in the diocese.

2. The two-year LEM Leadership and Evangelization Formation Program offered by the Institute for Pastoral Leadership.

Each newly hired LEM has five (5) years to complete the entire certification process, including any degree required.

REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING COMMISSIONED AS A LEM IN THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

“Lay ecclesial ministers often express a sense of being called. This sense motivates what they are doing, guiding and shaping a major life choice and commitment to Church ministry. At the same time, they know that a self-discerned call by the individual is not sufficient. Their call must also become one that is discerned within the Church and authenticated by the bishop, or his delegate, who alone is able to authorize someone to serve in ecclesial ministry.”

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, p. 12

Upon completion of the certification requirements including the appropriate degree and the two-year LEM Leadership and Evangelization Formation Program, the LEM must be authorized and commissioned by the Diocesan Bishop at the Commissioning Mass. A LEM is commissioned and authorized once for each area of ministry in which they are certified. The Commissioning Mass signifies the LEM being sent forth into mission. At the same time it serves as a graduation ceremony, thus completing LEM Certification. Recalling that commissioning and authorization is one of the criteria for being a LEM, at this time the LEM aspirant officially assumes the title of Lay Ecclesial Minister.