

Certificate for Lay Ecclesial Ministry (CLEM)

Lay Ministers who serve as Evangelization Directors/Coordinators, Catechetical Leaders (Director/Coordinator in Religious Education/Catechesis), Youth Ministers (Director/Coordinator Youth, Young Adult, or Campus Ministry), Liturgical Ministers (Director/Coordinator of Worship, Liturgy), Marriage and Family Life Minister (Director/Coordinator of Marriage/ Family Life), Pastoral Ministry (Director/Coordinator of Multiple Ministries)

The Mexican American Catholic College is currently forming volunteers and lay ministers to serve in leadership roles in the Church. The Certificate for Lay Ecclesial Ministry formation program is a three-year systematic process that forms all who the Spirit moves to serve in ministry as Lay Ecclesial leaders in their local parishes.¹ The Church has used the term Lay Ecclesial Ministry to reflect vital elements of the specific lay vocation.² As it supports the Southwest region, MACC engages dioceses to partner with and offer this vital program collaboratively.

The program includes a discernment process focusing on **five formation areas** (human, spiritual, intellectual, leadership, and pastoral). **Human formation** focuses on critical qualities to form wholesome relationships and a healthy, well-balanced personality; **spiritual formation** focuses on animating true hunger for holiness, promoting constant conversion fostering attitudes and disposition to the Spirit; adequate knowledge in theological and pastoral studies is the focus of the **intellectual formation**; **leadership formation** focuses on increasing competencies for ministers to lead groups and communities under Servant Leadership values; and **pastoral formation** cultivates the knowledge and attitudes—and skills—that directly pertain to effective functioning in a ministerial setting.³

For three years, candidates undergo a process of discernment and formation to serve the Lord in the Church's pastoral ministry. Besides this being a formation process for service in the Church, it is also a preparation to assist participants in their faith journey. Upon completing the formation process, a final suitability determination is made regarding their competencies for service in the Ecclesial Ministry of the Church. Finally, the local Arch/Bishop commissions them to minister in the Diocese.

Benefits of the Commissioned Lay Ecclesial Ministers:

- Effective ministry happens when qualified leaders are formed.
- As the laity becomes better formed, they contribute to the renewal of the local parish and diocese.
- Aid the pastor in the pastoral areas needed and can better serve on diocesan committees.
- Free the pastor to focus more on specific pastoral needs and the sacramental care of the people of God.
- Collaborate with the pastor to realize his vision for the parish and take leadership roles.
- Promote collaboration within the parish leadership team.

Components of the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation Program:

To offer high standards, practical methods, and comprehensive goals, the (Arch)diocesan Certificate for Lay Ecclesial Ministry (CLEM) needs to have the following components of formation shared between Mexican American Catholic College and the diocese:

The Partnering Diocese:

Diocesan Coordinator. Whenever possible, the partnering Diocese appoints a seasoned leader to oversee the formation of candidates to the Lay Ecclesial Ministry by:

- Maintaining a direct relationship with the Regional Director of the Certificate Lay Ecclesial Ministry at MACC to ensure the student's academic progress.
- Assisting Pastors in the discernment process of possible participants in the CLEM.
- Identifying and accompanying Formation Advisors (see a brief description of the Formation Advisor below).

¹ Cf. *Ecclesiae de Mysterio: Practical Provisions*, articles 1,2.

² Cf. *Christifideles Laici*, 23.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p 34.

- Appointing a Formation Advisor to each candidate.
- Assisting candidates in finding a Spiritual Director.
- Leading candidates' annual assessment process to ensure readiness for candidacy.

A Formation Advisor is a seasoned local leader entrusted with accompanying participants in the formation process. They meet with a participant once per semester to offer concrete feedback regarding their human development, spiritual growth, academic work, and pastoral progress.

Annual Evaluation. Each year, the Diocesan Coordinator meets with the participant's formation advisor and pastor to assess the participant's suitability and continuation in the formation program. A formal letter is sent to the candidate with a copy to the Director of the Regional Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry and Service at MACC. The director at MACC periodically communicates with the diocesan coordinator to ensure sufficient information is being shared during the year.

Pastor Accompaniment. It is uniquely the role of the pastor to select those who will serve on his pastoral team. All lay men and women involved in the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation Program must have the endorsement and support of their pastor and, of course, the bishop. Discernment for ministry is done with the community's cooperation and with the pastor's and direct supervisor's support and prayers.

The Service of the Mexican American Catholic College

Faculty: Besides teaching courses in theology, pastoral ministry, and leadership, faculty members maintain contact with the students and offer advice regarding academic progress.

Intellectual Formation that Facilitates Integration: Theological formation goes hand in hand with spiritual, human, leadership, and pastoral praxis. Undergraduate-level coursework is required for the core curriculum. The Certificate for Lay Ecclesial Ministry Program Director evaluates any prior undergraduate or graduate coursework. Nevertheless, all participants are required to meet with an appointed local Formation advisor to set annual goals in all areas of their discernment processes.

Cohorts: As much as possible, participants are part of cohorts formed as a group and meet online twice each semester with the program director at MACC. It is hoped that the formation program lays the foundations for a more collaborative ministry between the parishes they serve.

Academic requirements

Intellectual formation is foundational for ministry and intrinsically related to spiritual formation. Lay Ecclesial Ministers are expected to minister alongside priests and deacons. Therefore, their intellectual formation must be aligned with the local Arch/diocesan Pastoral Vision for effective pastoral service in the Church. The Certificate for Lay Ecclesial Ministry program requires the completion of 36 credits. All courses are in English and Spanish and available online through weekly synchronous meetings.

Financial Elements

The 2024 tuition cost for the Certificate for Lay Ecclesial Ministry program is \$740 per credit. Through current generous funding, 40% of tuition scholarships are available at MACC, making the yearly approximate cost less than \$5,700. Students take up to 12 credits, or four classes, per year. Candidates are responsible for a \$295 technology and registration fee per year, a one-time \$20 application fee, a one-time graduation fee of \$80, and books and other non-tuition-required materials needed for the program.