

LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY FORMATION

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

THE CALL TO MINISTRY: FORMATION IN CONTEXT

All the baptized, in their particular contexts, are called to holiness to transform the world by witnessing the Lord they have encountered.¹ Many, moved by the Spirit, discern to respond to this call to ministry (*servitium*) in their local parishes as Lay Ecclesial Ministers.² The Church has used the term Lay Ecclesial Ministry because it reflects key elements of the specific lay vocation.³ The ministry is Lay for it is rooted in our baptismal call, we respond as lay women and men. The ministry is Ecclesial for it is discerned and appointed by the local shepherd, the Archbishop, to serve in close collaboration with the pastor and parish leadership to serve in communion for mission. It is ministry for it expresses the continuous mission of Christ through the Church.⁴

Those called to serve as Lay Ecclesial Ministers need a comprehensive formation with personal and communal accompaniment. This healthy pedagogy of formation fosters the development of a mature sense of our personal vocation.⁵ In the same way, the Code of Canon Law states that lay persons, in fact, have a right to acquire knowledge of Christian doctrine appropriate to the capacity and condition of each in order for them to be able to live according to this doctrine.⁶ The Archdiocesan Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation Program seeks to ensure that candidates have a solid foundational and ongoing knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church, an understanding of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Vision, a high degree of collaboration (*pastoral de conjunto*), and that they model the Culture of *Encuentro*. This comprehensive formation intends to deepen God's call which they have discerned and develops the relational and professional skills needed for ecclesial ministry in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. After successful completion of all requirements, His Excellency, Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSPS, calls forth and commissions them as Lay Ecclesial Ministers.

FORMATION PROGRAM AT GLANCE

In providing a consistent development process, the Archdiocesan Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation Program uses the four standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministry: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. These were defined by the National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers established by the Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers rooted in the USCCB *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*.

¹ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 11.

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

³ Cf. *Christifideles Laici*, 23.

⁴ Cf. *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, p11.

⁵ Cf. *Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n50.

⁶ *Codex Iuris Canonici*, 229.



ARCHDIOCESE
OF SAN ANTONIO

INSTITUTE FOR LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY AND SERVICE
MEXICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC COLLEGE
The Art of Forming Those Called to Ministry

Human formation aims to develop the lay ecclesial minister's human qualities and character, fostering a healthy and well-balanced personality, for the sake of both personal growth and ministerial service.

Spiritual formation aims to arouse and animate true hunger for holiness, desire for union with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, daily growing in love of God and neighbor in life and ministry, and the practices of prayer and spirituality that foster these attitudes and dispositions.

Intellectual formation seeks to develop the lay ecclesial minister's understanding and appreciation of the Catholic faith, which is rooted in God's revelation and embodied in the living tradition of the Church. While the sacred sciences are the main focus here, we recognize the value of these other disciplines and encourage their study and use whenever relevant for effective ministry.⁷

Pastoral formation cultivates the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that directly pertain to effective functioning in the ministry setting and that also pertain to pastoral administration that supports direct ministry.

Upon completion of the formation process, final determination of suitability is made as to the candidate's competencies for service in the Ecclesial Ministry of the Church. Archbishop Gustavo commissions them to minister in the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

COMPONENTS OF THE LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY PROGRAM

In order to offer high standards, effective methods, and comprehensive goals, the Archdiocesan Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation has the following components of formation.

Pastor Accompaniment. It is uniquely the role of the pastor to select those who will serve on his pastoral team. The pastor recommends the participant and is a companion on the participant's formation journey.

Formation Advisor. Formation advisors are seasoned leaders entrusted with the task of accompanying participants in the formation process.

Spiritual Direction. All participants are expected to seek spiritual direction with a qualified Director on an ongoing basis. It is recommended that visits are every six weeks.

Annual Human Formation Seminar. Human formation is meant to lead lay ecclesial ministers toward greater maturity as adults and as ministers of the Church.

Annual Spiritual Retreat. An essential component in participants' ongoing formation are the yearly retreats that seek to help them in their spiritual and prayer life.⁸

Annual Pastoral Formation Workshop. Participants will be in cohorts to be formed as a group. It is our hope that the formation program lay the foundations for a more collaborative ministry between parishes (*pastoral de conjunto*).

Evaluation with Pastor. The Director will meet with the participant's formation advisor and pastor to assess the suitability of the participant and continuation in the formation program.

Unity of Formation.⁹ All participants are part of a cohort that walks together in this three-year formation process and beyond as every participant is expected to engage in an ongoing formation that continues after being commissioned.

⁷ Cf. *Ibid*, pp42-43.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid*, p42.

⁹ Cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n53.

COST OF THE LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY PROGRAM

Thanks to the vision of our local shepherd Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSPS, and the generous contribution of many women and men through the Archbishop's Appeal, the cost for the Lay Ecclesial Ministry three-year program is offered at a highly discounted rate.

The full approximate tuition cost for the courses for this program is \$27,291 but again, thanks to the Archbishop's commitment to the formation of the lay leaders, participants only pay a fraction of the cost. As of August 2026, the full tuition cost of one course is \$2,481, but students in this program are only responsible for 10% of it **which is \$248 per course or \$2,728 for the 11 courses**. This comprises the total cost of courses, seminars and retreats. This cost is recommended to be shared between the parish and the participant. These fees are paid by courses taken. Please note the tuition rate may have a small increase each year.

Participants are responsible for books or other non-tuition required materials needed for the courses and a graduation fee at the end of the program.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS¹⁰

Intellectual formation is foundational for ministry and it is intrinsically related to spiritual formation. Lay Ecclesial Ministers, in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, are expected to minister alongside priests and deacons. Therefore, their intellectual formation must be aligned with the Archdiocesan Pastoral Vision for an effective pastoral service in the Church.

The Archdiocesan Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation Program remains consistent with the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, U.S. Bishops guidelines stated in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*, the National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers, the Handbook of Pastoral US Institutes (FIP), and new national trends.

Most courses of the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation are taken together with candidates of the Diaconate Formation Program.

Core Courses

PHIL1310	Philosophy in the Catholic Tradition
PSTR1372	Intercultural Competencies for Pastoral Ministry
THEO2320	Catholic Biblical Interpretation: Old Testament
THEO2332	Catholic Biblical Interpretation: New Testament
PSTR2351	History of the Catholic Church
THEO2382	Sacramental Theology: The Faith Celebrated
THEO3381	Jesus Christ: God and Man (Christology)
THEO3385	Moral Theology: The Faith Lived
THEO4387	Ecclesiology

Ministry Specialization Courses (Two electives from next page)

- Elective (Ministry-specific)
- Elective (Ministry-specific)

¹⁰ Courses with identifying codes are currently being offered at MACC; courses and codes subject to change.

MINISTERIAL COURSES (MINISTRY-SPECIFIC ELECTIVES)

Catechetical Ministry

PSTR 1350	Foundation of Evangelization and Catechesis
PSTR 2352	Catechetical Content, Methods, and Curriculum
PSTR 3399	Children's Spirituality

Youth Ministry

PSTR 1350	Foundation of Evangelization and Catechesis
PSTR 2352	Catechetical Content, Methods, and Curriculum
THEO 3399	Catholic Social Teaching

Marriage and Family Ministry

PSTR 3356	Family, Culture, and Catechesis
PSTR 3399	Children's Spirituality
PSTR 3399	Grief and Trauma
PSTR 3399	Basic Counseling Concepts for Pastoral Ministers

Liturgical Ministry

THEO 1341	Introduction to Liturgy
PSTR 2325	Liturgical and Sacred Music
PSTR 3399	Rural Ministry and Liturgy

Pastoral Care Ministry

PSTR 3399	Grief and Trauma
PSTR 3399	Basic Counseling Concepts for Pastoral Ministers
THEO 4385	Catholic Spiritual Traditions: The Faith Prayed

For more information, contact:

Lizett Farias, MAPM

Director, Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry & Service
Archdiocese of San Antonio | Mexican American Catholic College

Direct line: 210-731-3140

Email: lfarias@maccsa.org

<https://maccsa.org/en/institute>

