

Office of Ministries and Social Concerns



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Spiritual Purpose of the Office

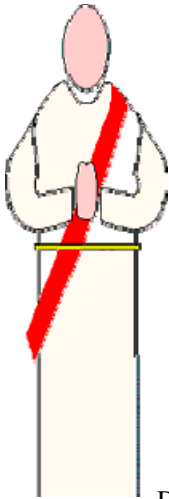
The Office of Ministries and Social Concerns seeks, through formation programs and other resources for lay persons and deacons, to help them permeate the world with Christ and his Gospel. It aims to equip and qualify them to bear good fruit in the parish, community, and social-political arena, with special regard for the poor, the suffering and the marginalized.

The Work of the Office

- Provides programs of formation and other resources for the laity, assists the Director of Deacon Formation in preparing candidates toward the diaconate, and oversees the continuing formation of Deacon Personnel.
- Consults with the Bishop on social and political matters and issues of rural life, and implements his direction in educating and mobilizing the faithful in these areas, beginning with respect for the sanctity of every human life.
- Collaborates closely with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse in fostering Parish Social Ministry (ministry on behalf of the poor, the suffering, the marginalized).
- Coordinates Hispanic Ministry in the diocese.
- Coordinates diocesan participation in the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and Catholic Relief Services (the U.S. Bishops' national and international relief efforts).
- Administers the Pastoral Formation Fund (matching grants) for the continuing education of persons giving service within the diocese.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.... This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.” – *John 4:5,12*

Deacon Formation Program



Deacon Stephen Najarian, Prefect for Diaconal Life and Ministry, teaches a formation class.

What is the Purpose of the Deacon Formation Program?

Permanent deacons are ordained members of the clergy, called in a special way to image Christ the Servant, the one who “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mt 20:28). Strengthened by the sacramental grace of ordination, they act in the service of the *liturgy*, of the *Gospel*, and of *works of charity*. The Deacon Formation Program exists to prepare them for their life and ministry. Permanent deacons often visit the sick and the homebound, prepare couples for marriage, teach in the RCIA and faith formation programs, preach the Gospel, administer baptism, officiate at weddings and wakes, assist at the altar, carry out administrative tasks, and more. But of all these forms of diaconal ministry, it is the service of charity that lies at the very heart of their vocation to the permanent diaconate.

What are the Components of the Deacon Formation Program?

The program of deacon formation for the Diocese of La Crosse, under the direction of Fr. William P. Felix, contains the following components:

- Five years in length (2 years Aspirancy, 3 years Candidacy)
- Thorough human, spiritual, theological and pastoral formation
- Meets once each month, Friday evening to Saturday evening, fall through spring
- Faculty drawn mostly but not exclusively from the Diocese of La Crosse
- Ongoing pastoral field education (assigned parish experiences)
- Participation of wives in program encouraged, occasionally required

Who is Meant to Take Part?

The permanent diaconate is a vocation to Holy Orders, to which God may call a man who is a practicing Catholic, married or unmarried. The discernment of that vocation is partly the work of the man himself, but it must be confirmed by the Church through a process of initial screening and continued monitoring throughout the period of formation. The man can be no younger than 35 years of age at ordination, and in our diocese generally no older than 65.

“The principal function of the deacon...is to collaborate with the bishop and the priests in the exercise of a ministry which is not of their own wisdom but of the Word of God, calling all to conversion and holiness.” – *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*, 23.

Lay Formation Institute



Lay Formation Institute Class of 2009

What is the Purpose of the Lay Formation Institute?

The purpose of the Lay Formation Institute (LFI) is to help lay men and women become a leaven in their parishes and in the world, drawing others to Christ. It does this by deepening their knowledge of the Faith and developing their pastoral abilities, so they may answer with confidence the call of the Second Vatican Council to spread the Gospel in word and deed.

What are the Components of the LFI?

The program consists of classes that meet one weekend per month (Friday evening to Saturday evening), September through May, for two years. A new cycle is begun every other year. The curriculum covers such areas as:

- Praying the Liturgy of the Hours
- Sacred Scripture
- The Profession of Faith
- Liturgy and Sacraments
- Life in Christ: Christian Morality
- Spirituality and Prayer
- Vocation of the Laity
- Vatican II
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Church History
- Introduction to Catechesis and Evangelization
- Outreach to the Poor and Suffering
- Introduction to Marriage and Family Ministry
- Overview of Youth Ministry
- Ministry in a Multicultural Church

Spiritual Formation: The goal of the Lay Formation Institute is to address not only the academic and practical formation of its participants, but their spiritual and community formation as well. For this reason, the program includes morning Mass on all the Saturdays, with LFI students assisting in the liturgies, Liturgy of the Hours prayed each morning and evening on the weekends, and other devotions.

Specialized Tracks: At the end of the two-year cycle, a “Leadership in Christ” weekend is devoted to specialized tracks focusing in more depth on areas of practical, pastoral service. Each participant is invited to select among these tracks, which include such areas as:

- Catechesis and Evangelization
- Adult Faith Formation
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
- Pastoral Care of Marriage and the Family
- Liturgical Ministry
- Catholic Social Action
- Youth Ministry
- Jail Ministry

Who is Meant to Attend?

The Lay Formation Institute is meant for lay persons who wish to deepen their knowledge of the Faith and develop their gifts. Participants are typically sponsored by their pastor and must receive his authorization.

“Their pastors know how much the laity contribute to the welfare of the entire Church. They also know that they were not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary they understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful and to recognize their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one mind.” – *Lumen Gentium*, 31

Leader of Prayer Program



Leader of Prayer Class of 2005 with Bishop Jerome Listecki

What is the Purpose of the Leader of Prayer Program?

The purpose of the Leader of Prayer Program is to see to it that no one lacks the opportunity to encounter Christ in the prayer and sacramental life of the Church. This program thus prepares and commissions lay persons to serve their parishes by bringing Holy Communion to the sick; conducting a Liturgy of the Word, possibly with distribution of Communion, on weekdays when a priest is unavailable (or on Sunday in an emergency); and by leading parishioners in prayer at times of illness or death. In nursing homes or healthcare facilities, when no priest is available, they may also conduct a *Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest*.

What are the Components of the Leader of Prayer Program?

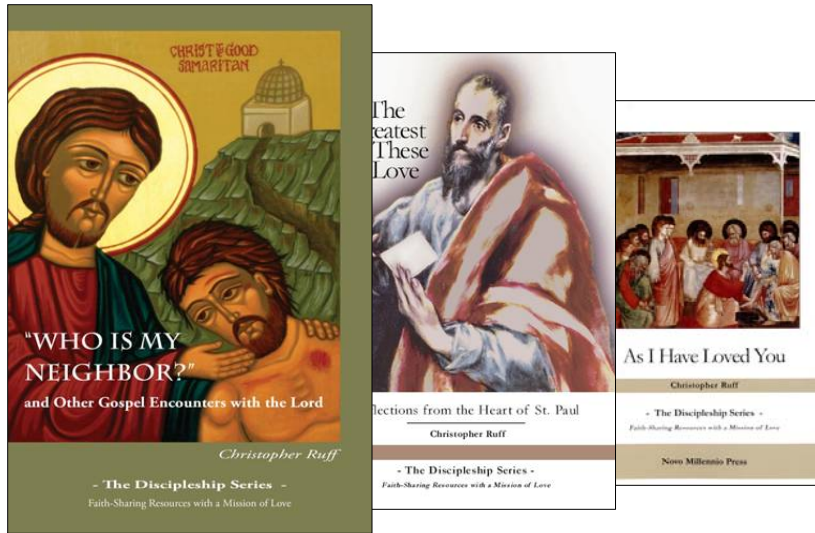
The Leader of Prayer Program consists of three formation/training sessions presented by a diocesan faculty. It runs three weekends every other summer (Friday evening-Saturday evening) and the fee is \$450, which covers tuition, books, meals and lodging. Leaders of Prayer are commissioned by the Bishop to serve in their parishes. The commission must be renewed every four years through a one-day program of continuing education.

Who is Meant to Attend?

Completion of the Lay Formation Institute is a prerequisite for acceptance into the Leader of Prayer program. In addition, candidates must be sponsored by their pastors.

“When necessity and expediency in the Church require it, the Pastors, according to established norms from universal law, can entrust to the lay faithful certain offices and roles that are connected to their pastoral ministry but do not require the character of Orders.... The ministries which exist and are at work at this time in the Church are all, even in their variety of forms, a participation in Jesus Christ's own ministry as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (cf. Jn 10:11), the humble servant who gives himself without reserve for the salvation of all (cf. Mk 10:45).” – Pope John Paul II, *On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*, 23, 21

Faith Alive Program



What is the Purpose of the Faith Alive Program?

The Faith Alive program seeks to help people experience Christ and his Gospel more vividly and to serve him more lovingly in “the least of his brethren.” It does this by gathering small groups around a set of written resources designed to foster shared prayer, reflection, fellowship and service. The ultimate goal is to have a growing, contagious effect in parishes so that they become truly living, vital centers of Christian love, leading to the renewal in Christ of the diocese as a whole.

What are the Components of the Faith Alive Program?

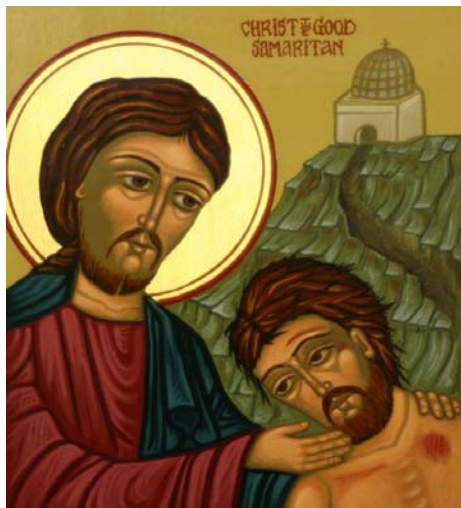
The Office of Ministries and Social Concerns provides bulletin inserts for recruiting parishioners to join Faith Alive groups, as well as the resources themselves - a set of three books, with more being written. There are six sessions in each book, and groups may meet weekly (especially during Lent) or monthly. Ideally, groups should consist of 5-12 members and have a facilitator for each session. This may be the same person each time, or members can take turns in this role. The Office of Ministries and Social Concerns provides concluding evaluation forms to measure the fruitfulness of Faith Alive.

Who is Meant to Participate?

The program is written in a concise and readable manner to be used easily by any and all members of the faithful of the diocese (and in fact it is being used increasingly beyond the diocese). It only requires a parish leader and the pastor’s permission to get the process of publicity and recruitment going parish-wide. Or a handful of interested persons can simply decide to form a group and begin meeting.

“The response to the Faith Alive resources has been extraordinary. I recommend them wholeheartedly to individuals, groups, parishes and dioceses that wish to foster a deeper, fuller discipleship in Christ.”
– Archbishop Jerome ListECKI of Milwaukee

Parish Social Ministry Convocation



What is the Purpose of a Parish Social Ministry Convocation?

The purpose of a Parish Social Ministry Convocation is to call together all those in the diocese who serve, or who desire to serve, their neighbor in need, to help them become ever more fruitful mediators of the love of Christ the Good Shepherd, who cares for his flock.

It is fairly common for people who are active in social outreach to have a particular cause that energizes them – be it hunger or homelessness, immigration reform, defense of the child in the womb, ministry to the incarcerated, outreach to the elderly and homebound, or any number of other causes. These Convocations will serve to show, in a harmonious way, the whole depth and breadth of social concerns in the diocese, and to connect them all with the Church’s teaching that we must respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person’s life. The Convocations will also provide an opportunity to examine the deepest spiritual core of what we do, the “soul” that gives it life and makes it more than just human social work.

What are the Components of the Parish Social Ministry Convocations?

Parish Social Ministry Convocations are sponsored jointly by the Office of Ministries and Social Concerns and Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse. They are a new initiative and the intention is to hold them at intervals of two to three years. They will typically feature one to two keynote addresses and a series of smaller talks or seminars. There will be opportunities for attendees to share their ideas, goals and service projects with one another.

Who is Meant to Attend?

A special invitation goes out to the Parish Social Concerns Coordinators, and any members of their committees. But the net will be cast wider. The Convocations will be for everyone in the diocese who participates in Parish Social Ministry, be it through a Social Justice Committee, or Justice & Peace Committee (or whatever a parish may ‘title’ that group), as well as pro-life groups, Catholic Worker groups, or whoever engages in the work of justice and charity.

“Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbor....Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison....Love of God and love of neighbor have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God” – *Pope Benedict XVI, God is Love, n. 15*

Gospel of Life Celebration



What is the Purpose of the Gospel of Life Celebration?

The Gospel of Life Celebration is meant to move those in attendance to joyfully and reverently embrace the great gift of life that comes to us from Christ, who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life”(Jn 14:6). It is also an opportunity to recommit ourselves to fighting for a culture of life in the midst of a world that has too often strayed from the truth and fostered a culture of death.

What are the Components of the Gospel of Life Celebration?

Last year for the first time, the Diocese of La Crosse was invited by a state pro-life organization to bring pro-life representatives to several regional receptions that featured top national speakers. The reception in October (Respect Life Month) was merged with our annual “Gospel of Life Celebration,” so that it included a 4:00 PM Mass celebrated by the Bishop, who then attended the reception. The plan is to continue to follow this precedent.

Who is Meant to Participate?

All the faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse are warmly invited to attend the Gospel of Life Celebration. Parish Pro-Life Representatives and others on pro-life committees are asked to make a special effort to be present on this important day of renewed commitment to, and celebration of, the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

“Man's life comes from God; it is his gift, his image and imprint, a sharing in his breath of life. God therefore is the sole Lord of this life: man cannot do with it as he wills.”

- *Pope John Paul II, The Gospel of Life, 39*

Hispanic Ministry



What is the Purpose of Hispanic Ministry?

The purpose of Hispanic Ministry is to see to it that Christ – his loving care, his Sacraments and his Church – is present to the increasing numbers of Hispanic people in the diocese

What are the Components of Hispanic Ministry?

Hispanic Ministry as coordinated by the Office of Ministries and Social Concerns sees to the sacramental and pastoral care of the Hispanic population (Catholic Charities has an attorney on staff who provides legal expertise). At present there are two Hispanic priests who travel and minister within the northern and southern halves of the Diocese respectively, and several Spanish-speaking diocesan priests who either pastor parishes with significant Hispanic populations and regular Spanish Masses, or assist in the celebration of Spanish Masses as needed. A list of Spanish Mass locations and times, as well as Spanish-speaking priests, can be found on the front page of the diocesan website (www.dioceseoflacrosse.com). The Office also reimburses parishes for the cost of resources and personnel that help to provide catechesis to the Hispanic community in the diocese. The Office of Ministries and Social Concerns also collaborates with other offices that lend their special expertise to Hispanic Ministry, such as the Office of Marriage and Family Life.

Who is Hispanic Ministry For?

Hispanic Ministry is for all the Spanish-speaking brothers or sisters in our midst. It is the mission of the Catholic Church to minister to the whole flock of Christ, irrespective of race or national origin.

“You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God” (Leviticus 19:34)

Rural Life Day



What is the Purpose of Rural Life Day?

Rural Life Day is an annual diocesan celebration by which we praise and honor God for his gift to us of the fruits of the earth. It is also a day in which we show our appreciation, gratitude and support to the farmers in our midst who are the good stewards of these fruits and resources. It is a day to highlight the uniqueness of rural life values and to rejoice in the way that rural life contributes to the Church at large.

What are the Components of Rural Life Day?

Rural Life Day and all other matters related to rural life are coordinated by the diocesan Rural Life Liaison, Dan Kitzhaber.

Rural Life Day is observed on or near the fourth Wednesday of September. Deaneries in the Diocese take turns in hosting this event. The day begins at 10:00 a.m. with Mass typically celebrated by the Bishop. An outdoor blessing of the animals, harvest and machinery follows the Mass. Lunch is served by the host parish followed by a program, including a keynote speaker. Other components of the program are:

Century Farm Recognition: As part of this annual celebration, farmers in the hosting deanery whose farm lands have been in continuous family ownership for 100 years or more will be recognized. All farmers who qualify as Century Farm owners are invited to submit their names for this recognition.

Strangers and Guests Award: This award has been given for the past 20+ years to a farm family who exemplifies Christian ideals in rural stewardship. The name of the award is taken from Lev. 25:23, “...for the land belongs to me, and to me you are only strangers and guests.”

Friend of Rural Life Award: A second and NEW award started in 2010 to recognize those individuals and/or groups who have made significant contributions to rural life, yet are not themselves engaged in production agriculture.

Who is Meant to Attend?

All the faithful of the diocese who wish to celebrate and pray with family farmers and those affected by rural life are invited to attend.

“All creation is a gift. Scripture tells us that “the earth is the Lord’s and all it hold” (Ps 24:1). All of us, especially those closest to the land are called to a special reverence and respect for God’s creation. Nurturing and tilling the soil, harnessing the power of water to grow food, and caring for animals are forms of this stewardship. The Church has repeatedly taught that the misuse of God’s creation betrays the gift God has given us for the good of the entire human family. While rural communities are uniquely dependent on land, water, and weather, stewardship is a responsibility of our entire society.” – *For I was Hungry*(USCCB) p.18

Pastoral Formation Fund



What is the Purpose of the Pastoral Formation Fund?

The Pastoral Formation Fund exists to assist employees and volunteers in Catholic parishes and institutions in the Diocese as they seek to enhance their service to Christ and his Church.

What are the Components of the Pastoral Formation Fund?

- Applicants may seek scholarship assistance toward their enrollment in certificate programs, undergraduate programs or graduate programs in fields/disciplines pertinent to their Church service. The scholarship is reserved to persons enrolled in programs costing a minimum of \$200.00 per year.
- Scholarships will be awarded in the form of matching grants. The pastor of the parish or director of the institution being served by the applicant (or, in the case of diocesan staff, the Bishop, through a separate funding source) must agree in writing to provide \$1.00 of assistance from the parish or institution for every \$2.00 of scholarship assistance sought from the Pastoral Formation Fund. A maximum of \$700 per fiscal year may be received from the Lay Formation Fund. The full funding of a request is not guaranteed.
- Hermits or members of institutes dedicated to contemplative prayer, whose means are limited and whose service to the Diocese consists chiefly in prayer, are exempt from the conditions outlined above.
- Scholarships from the Pastoral Formation Fund are intended solely for tuition costs, and not for added expenses such as room and board, travel, books, etc.

Who is Eligible to Receive this Assistance?

Applicants must be providing current and substantial service to parishes or Catholic institutions within the Diocese of La Crosse. The due dates for applications to the Pastoral Formation Fund are April 1, August 1, and December 1. A new application must be submitted for each period in which aid is desired. Application forms are available from the Office of Ministries and Social Concerns.

“Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth” – *Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with Catholic Educators, April 17, 2008*