

## A Culture of Competence (Rita Thiron, FDLC)

All the faithful are called in various ways to share in the mission of the Church. This call stems from our Baptism and grows in “an ecclesiology of communion which recognizes diversity in union and acknowledges the Spirit as the source of all the gifts which serve to build up Christ’s Body” (*Coworkers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, page 20).

Today, in parishes and dioceses, schools and institutions, and various roles and offices, laity serve Christ and his people. These roles do not require sacramental ordination, but rather are sustained by the grace of Baptism, Confirmation, and often, Matrimony (CWVL, page 9).

While pathways to ministry vary, all lay ministers must be well-suited for the important work that they do. Ideally, each minister is intellectually well-trained, is sensitive to pastoral realities, is well-grounded spiritually, and possesses human traits which enable their call to ministry. These traits – intellectual, pastoral, spiritual, and human—are often called the “four pillars of formation.”

Five national organizations champion the certification and ongoing formation of its ministers. To do so, they have formed an “Alliance.” Together, they have twice revised and updated the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* and have developed procedures for the certification of those serving in specialized ministries.

FDLC -- Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

- Diocesan Director of Worship
- Parish Director of Liturgy

NALM -- National Association for Lay Ministry

- Parish Life Coordinator
- Pastoral Associate

NCCL-- National Council of Catechetical Leaders

- Diocesan Director of Catechesis
- Parish Director of Religious Education

NFCYM -- National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry

- Diocesan Director of Youth Ministry
- Parish Youth Ministry Leader
- Youth Ministry Leader with *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*
- Diocesan Youth Ministry Leader with *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*

NPM -- National Association of Pastoral Musicians

- Director of Music Ministries

### **Does the USCCB recognize this certification process?**

In October 2011, the USCCB’s Committee on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB-CCA) granted approval of the national certification standards and procedures for a period of seven years. The Committee formally reviews each organization’s progress each year. In 2018, the USCCB Subcommittee

on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service again reviewed and approved the Alliance's standards and procedures for the certification of lay ministers.

### **How do I begin the application process?**

Everything you will need to apply can be found within the pages of this website. Simply fill in the online application form. Then gather the necessary documentation and securely upload it to them website. This will include a copy of your baptismal certificate; verification that you have satisfied your diocesan child protection and criminal background check requirements; evidence of academic coursework and other formation opportunities; a ministerial autobiography (not more than five pages); and a signed and dated copy of your organization's Code of Ethics. Deadlines for applications are each **October 1 and May 1**.

### **Why is there a cost?**

The nominal application fee of **\$95** helps to cover the cost maintaining the LEM certification website, meeting costs, and the fees we pay each year to the USCCB – SCEMS.

### **How will I know if my application has been accepted?**

Each organization has a "Partner Certification Review Committee" (PCRC). At the initial level, they review documentation and credentials. They accept (or reject) an applicant's entry into the certification process,

### **Then what happens?**

Once the applicant has been advised to proceed, a mentor is assigned. This person advises them along the way on matters related to their coursework, essays, and documentation. Additional materials are submitted, including references from diocesan offices, supervisors, colleagues and people whom you serve.

The National Certification Review Committee (NCRC) is made up of representatives from each Alliance organization. It receives, reviews, and finalizes recommendations on portfolios forwarded by the PCRC. Finally, they forward recommendations with portfolios to the Alliance Commission.

### **Who is the Alliance Commission?**

The Alliance Commission (AC) is the governing body of the Alliance. It helps to maintain consistent application of the standards and procedures. In addition to its governance role, the AC reviews recommendations by the NCRC and is responsible for the final approval and granting of certification for each of the specialized ministries. Certification is granted in the name of the Alliance as well as the respective partner organization.

In addition, the Alliance Appeals Panel has been established to address grievances and appeals from candidates. In each case, the determination of the Appeals Panel is to be considered final.

**WELCOME! We admire and applaud your pursuit of ministerial excellence. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the leadership of your particular organization for further details or assistance.**