

Diocese of Syracuse

Role Definition – Lay Ecclesial Ministers*

Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Lay ecclesial ministers are women and men whose ecclesial service (lay ecclesial ministry) is characterized by: authorization to serve publicly in the local church leadership in a particular area of ministry, close mutual collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons; preparation and formation appropriate to the level of responsibilities that are assigned to them. The following understandings should be kept in mind: The term "lay ecclesial minister" is generic. "Lay ecclesial minister" is not itself a specific position title. It is not used in order to establish a new rank or order among the laity. 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.

The term lay ecclesial ministry reflects certain key realities. Lay ecclesial ministry is: "Lay" because it is service done by lay persons. The sacramental basis is the Sacraments of Initiation, not the Sacrament of Ordination. "Ecclesial" because it has a place within the community of the Church, whose communion and mission it serves, and because it is submitted to the discernment, authorization, and supervision of the hierarchy. "Ministry" because it is the work by which Christians participate in the three-fold ministry of Christ, who is priest, prophet, and king and continue his mission and ministry in the world.

In parish life, the pastoral associate, parish catechetical leader, youth ministry leader, school principal, and director of liturgy or pastoral music are examples. Lay ecclesial ministers may also be found in hospitals and health care settings, on college and university campuses, and in prisons, seaports, and airports. Because it is the responsibility of the bishop to identify the roles that most clearly exemplify lay ecclesial ministry, application of the term may vary from diocese to diocese.

*See *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* - pgs. 10-11, 13