



Help Wanted New Roles for New Times

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

(Matthew :37-38)



In “So What’s the Real Story – Facts on Numbers of Priests – Past, Present and Future” a summary was given of the present and projected availability of priests for parish work in our diocese, and we saw that number will likely continue to decline. What does that mean for parish life? How will the spiritual and sacramental needs of parishioners be met?

Everyone is called

Most importantly we have to remember that through baptism every person has a responsibility to serve one another and this is very often accomplished through activity in parish life. Each and every one of us is obligated, it is our duty as Christians, to be Christ for one another; to lead lives of prayer and service, and to help others do the same. Since the Second Vatican Council, the role of the laity in parish life has been further developed. As people embrace opportunities for participation, they advance the mission and ministry of the church. Taking Communion to the homebound, visiting the imprisoned, assisting in sacramental preparation, are all within the competence of the laity. This enables others to do work that only priests did before, freeing priests for other priestly duties. More will be written on this in upcoming documents but it is important to note that many parish ministry needs can be met – by the participation of everyone.

Religious Men and Women: Yesterday and Today

Since its beginning, religious men and women have made a significant contribution to the life of our Diocese. Each congregation characterized by a particular charism and spirit was invited to minister in the diocese by the Bishop. They responded and over the years established and staffed educational, health care and social service systems that have had a significant impact on the lives of the people and the mission of the Diocese. Some religious committed their lives entirely to prayer for all in our local church.

Today, although their numbers are fewer, religious work closely with the laity and continue to engage in ministries which respond to the needs of people today, especially to the poor and marginalized. Elderly and retired members, like the senior priests, continue their mission through prayer, presence, and a deep love for the people of this diocese.

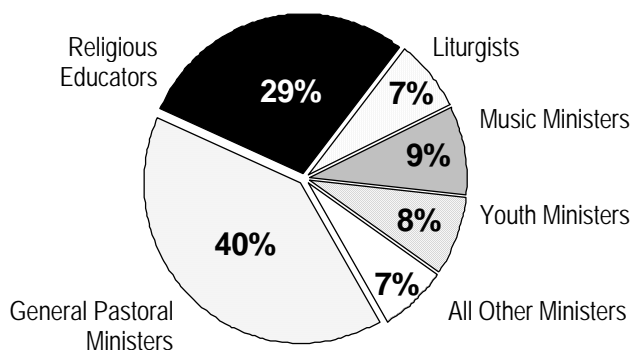
Parish Staff Possibilities

While the call mentioned above may be fulfilled by people volunteering their time and talent, the following are just some of the possibilities of positions for parish staff persons, or to share between parishes, to provide ministry. These positions require years of formation and professional training.

- **Parish Life Coordinator** is new to the Roman Catholic Church’s 1983 Code of Canon Law. It is rooted in Canon 517.2 – “If the diocesan bishop should decide that due to a dearth of priests a participation in the exercise of pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon or to some other person who is not a priest or to a community of persons, he is to appoint some priest endowed with the powers and faculties of a pastor to supervise the pastoral care.” In our Diocese there are 14 qualified deacons and lay ecclesial ministers who have been appointed to this office by Bishop Pilla to exercise the day-to-day pastoral care and administration of a parish where there is no resident pastor or administrator.
- **Deacon** is an ordained ministry, like the priesthood. The diaconal ministry is a threefold ministry of the Word, Sacrament and Charity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us “Among other tasks, it is the task of deacons to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and preaching, in presiding over funerals and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity” (1570). Currently there are 201 deacons in our diocese.

- **Lay Ecclesial Minister** is a vowed religious or lay person who works in close mutual collaboration with the pastoral ministry of the bishop, priests, and deacons; who serves as a leader in a specific area of ministry; who is authorized by the Church (bishop and/or pastor) to serve publicly in ministry; and who has received preparation and formation appropriate to the level of the responsibility they assume. The Diocese of Cleveland provides a comprehensive program for the Certification of lay ecclesial ministers, but not all lay ecclesial ministers serving in parishes in the diocese are certified. Of the 350 parish based lay ecclesial ministers serving in the diocese, 269 have been certified through the diocesan program for ministry. Lay ecclesial ministers may serve as Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministry Coordinators, Pastoral Associates, Directors of Liturgy and Music, etc. Other lay ecclesial ministers serve as diocesan office staff members, pastoral care ministers (health care and/or to the incarcerated), high school and college campus ministers, etc.
- **Director (or Coordinator) of Religious Education** provides leadership and resources for the faith formation for the entire parish. We currently have approximately 200 of these positions in our diocese.
- **Business Manager** is a more recently developed role in parishes and assists the pastor in handling parish finances, oversees the maintenance of buildings and grounds, parish recordkeeping, personnel training and supervision, parish communications and the office activity of the parish.
- **Liturgical and Music Minister** works closely with the priest, parish worship committee and various liturgical ministers to see that parish worship opportunities reflect Church practice and enhance the faith of the community.
- **Youth Minister** provides outreach, social, service and faith formation opportunities for the youth and sometimes young adults in the parish.
- **Other Ministers** – the possibilities are limitless depending on the needs of the local parish. Some of the other positions include: spiritual director, parish counselor, parish nurse, development director, family life minister, minister to seniors, etc.

**Distribution of Lay Ecclesial Ministers
in the Diocese of Cleveland by Category**
(Those working at least 20 hours per week in paid positions)



Going Deeper:

- What surprised you or was new to you as you read this document?
- How can we promote better understanding of and support for people in our different parish staff positions?
- What activities are currently done by a member of the staff or volunteer laity that had been done by priests in the past?
- What activities in the future could be done by staff or volunteer laity whether solely for your parish or shared with another parish?