

Diocese of Syracuse

Guidelines Concerning the Ministry of Pastoral Associate

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

A pastoral associate is a professional minister who shares with the pastor, the parish life director or on-site pastoral team in the overall care of the parish. S/he is a member of the parish staff and is accountable to the pastor or parish life director. The ministry of the pastoral associate is comprehensive, relating to all aspects of parish life, with designated responsibilities, i.e., liturgy, faith formation, RCIA, spiritual direction, administration, pastoral care, social justice or other. The designated responsibilities of the pastoral associate are based on the needs of the parish and the gifts of the pastoral associate, as well as the gifts of the other members of the parish staff. This role is an application of Canon 519.

Rooted and centered in the baptismal gift and the grace of Jesus' call to discipleship, the pastoral associate is committed to service to the church. S/he promotes gospel values and growth in holiness, values collaboration and mutuality in mission and ministry, and recognizes the necessity for professional preparation and ongoing formation.

MINISTRY DESCRIPTION

Because the ministry of the pastoral associate is both comprehensive (relating to all aspects of parish life) and specific (to the needs of the particular parish and the gifts of the individual pastoral associate) any negotiation of a job description must begin in understanding the expectations outlined herein and specifically identifying the responsibilities and tasks particular to that parish and individual. A pastoral associate may be a deacon, religious or lay person. The diocesan bishop must approve the placement of a permanent deacon as a pastoral associate.

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Several areas that may be focus areas for a pastoral associate include:

A. Ministry of Administration

The pastoral associate:

1. Collaborates closely with and is under the supervision of the pastor/parish life director, collaborates with other members of the parish staff and represents the pastor/parish life director when necessary or requested;
2. Collaborates in the overall process of parish administration, spiritual growth of the parish, including needs assessment, pastoral planning, decision-making, implementation, financial management, building maintenance, etc;
3. Administers/supervises designated parish programs and staff;
4. Acts as director of one or more of the parish ministries and assists in the formation of new ministries as needed;
5. Attends all parish staff meetings and relates to diocesan structures (i.e., regions and pastoral care areas);
6. Works closely with the parish pastoral council; and
7. Participates in civic and ecumenical activities.

B. Ministry of Spiritual Life and Worship

The pastoral associate:

1. Collaborates with other parish staff in the preparation of parish sacramental celebrations and rites;
2. May lead communal prayer services, including vigils, final commendation and committal services, and ecumenical celebrations;
3. Preaches when appropriate;
4. Is a visible participant in Sunday Masses, parish events and programs; and
5. May represent the pastor when requested.

C. Ministry of Education

The pastoral associate:

1. Fosters the faith growth of all members of the parish;
2. Contributes to the initial formation and ongoing development of parish ministers and groups;

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3. Assists in the formation of the entire community in understanding the parish mission;
4. Collaborates with other parish staff in providing child, youth and adult faith formation; and
5. Shares in the responsibility for the communication of Church teaching and Canon Law.

D. Ministry of Parish Life

The pastoral associate:

1. Assists the pastor in fostering a sense of community within the parish in which all members feel a sense of belonging to each other, the parish and the larger church;
2. Participates in the pastoral care of individuals suffering from illness, grief, family crises or other circumstances;
3. Assists the pastor in developing social consciousness among the staff and parishioners, responding to the needs of and advocating for the poor and victimized in the community and beyond;
4. Affirms family life and assists parent(s) in their roles; and
5. Assists couples regarding marriage and annulment procedures, as directed by the Diocesan Tribunal Office.

QUALITIES OF THE PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

The pastoral associate shares many of the qualities of all lay ecclesial ministers. Because of the generalist nature of this position, the pastoral associate needs to possess adaptability and flexibility. This minister manifests a cooperative spirit and is able to adapt to specific responsibilities and/or activities. This implies the ability to relate to a wide spectrum of people, a willingness to participate in a variety of parish activities and the ability, with ease and grace, to let go of some responsibilities in order to enable other lay ecclesial ministers to take over. The pastoral associate is sensitive to others and is able to help them articulate their experiences in light of our faith. Because of his/her commitment to lifelong spiritual

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formation, the pastoral associate possesses the maturity, vulnerability, and flexibility that come from spiritual struggle and spiritual conversion and joy.

A summary of these qualities suggest that the pastoral associate:

1. Has a healthy self-image;
2. Possesses leadership ability;
3. Is cooperative;
4. Takes initiative;
5. Is flexible;
6. Manifests a hospitable attitude;
7. Relates well to others;
8. Possesses a sense of humor;
9. Is compassionate; and
10. Supports the mission of the Roman Catholic Church, the diocese and the vision of the local parish.

COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS

In addition to the competencies and skills needed by all lay ecclesial ministers, several are particularly important for an effective exercise of the role of a pastoral associate.

A. Knowledge

The pastoral associate:

1. Has an in-depth grasp of Church teaching, as well as current biblical and pastoral theology;
2. Is knowledgeable of:
 - Canon Law and Church history;
 - Stages of human and faith development;
 - Liturgical norms of the Church, including those of the Diocese of Syracuse;
 - Principles of organization, management, and team building;
 - Principles of communication and pastoral counseling, including referrals, boundaries, and applicable laws; and
 - Principles of collaboration.

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3. Has a well-rounded education with an appreciation of the humanities, arts, and literature;
4. Has a sense of the history of the parish, as well as knowledge of its current demographics, constituencies, and complexities; and
5. Is informed about the diocesan administrative guidelines and policies.

B. Administrative Skills

The pastoral associate:

1. Is able to make decisions and assume responsibility for delegated tasks;
2. Can negotiate and manage conflict;
3. Is able to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing;
4. Is skilled in public relations; and
5. Is able to work with others in a collaborative style.

C. Pastoral Skills

The pastoral associate:

1. Can recognize, address, and assist in shaping the parish vision;
2. Recognizes and respects the cultural and ethnic diversity of the parish and diocese;
3. Has good pastoral counseling and listening skills;
4. Is able to preach effectively (when canonically and pastorally appropriate) and lead communal prayer;
5. Is able to develop and administer programs to meet assessed needs;
6. Recognizes the need to continually update himself/herself through study, personal reading, etc. in order to provide appropriate direction to the pastoral groups; and
7. Has an ability to integrate ministry with prayer and sacramental life.

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V. FORMATION, TRAINING AND CRITERIA

The pastoral associate will:

1. Have completed in-depth theological and religious studies (a Master's degree or its equivalent) with a particular emphasis on the pastoral associate's area of interest and giftedness. Ordinarily, this would include one or a combination of the following: MA in Theology or Pastoral Ministry; Masters of Divinity; MA in a non-related field plus 12 academic credits in core theology; a BA/BS in Theology or Religious Studies, or a BA/BS in a non-related field plus 12 hours of Academic Core Theology. The requirement of academic core theology includes Scripture, Christology, Ecclesiology, Sacramental Theology and Moral Theology;
2. Have a variety of ministerial experience, with 5 years pastoral ministry preferred; and
3. Have an active faith life. Be an active participant in the work of the Catholic Church and be able to partake in the full sacramental life of the church.

Letters of agreement that contain a clear statement of expectations and duties, and annual evaluation will be signed by the pastor/parish life director and pastoral associate. A copy will be retained in the personnel file of the pastoral associate.