

# ALLIANCE FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS

## Testimony / Observation Form

### **Introduction**

Thank you for your willingness to assess this candidate for certification. You are one of three persons this candidate has selected to provide first-hand information on his/her competence and capabilities relative to the National Certification Standards and Competencies. Your assessment here will become part of the candidate's certification portfolio and will give testimony to the candidate's competence for ministry.

Certification is a credential that formally acknowledges an individual's competence for his/her particular ministry as a result of a serious and comprehensive assessment, relative to approved and established National Certification Standards, including specialized competencies relative to the specific ministry specialization of the candidate (e.g., catechetical leader). The National Certification Standards cover both broad and specific areas of ministerial competence that have been authoritatively identified by national professional ministry organizations as the norms by which an individual's ministerial competence may be assessed.

Before completing this assessment you are encouraged to review the National Certification Standards in order that you may use them to assess the candidate. The standards common to all the lay ecclesial ministries are organized into four categories, each with a descriptive statement and a vision statement, as included below in the assessment form. In addition to the common standards, there is a set of specialized competencies for each of the ministries for which certification may be granted.

This assessment is comprehensive and detailed, and will take some time to complete. The format of the assessment is as follows:

- There are six sections, four of which are devoted to each of the four common standards (human, spiritual, intellectual/theological, and pastoral), a fifth devoted to specialized competencies relative to a given ministry specialization, and a final summary section.
- In the first five sections you will be asked to write down your assessment of the candidate relative to the standards and competencies in that section and to render your judgment of the candidate's competence relative to those standards and competencies.
- In the final section you will be asked to write a summary statement of your assessment of the candidate's competence relative to the National Certification Standards and to render a final summary recommendation whether or not to grant certification to the candidate.

## Instructions

1. Review the [National Certification Standards](#), including the specialized competencies relative to the candidate's ministry specialization, and the [indicators](#) that have been developed to assist in assessing candidates for certification.
2. Work through the first five sections, writing down your frank assessment of the candidate's competence. At the conclusion of each of the sections you will be asked to render a final judgment regarding the candidate's competence relative to that section.
3. In the final section compose a summary statement of your assessment of the candidate's overall competence relative to the National Certification Standards, including the specialized competencies relative to the candidate's specialized ministry, and render your final recommendation regarding certification.

# Testimony/Observation Assessment Form

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Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Completing Form \_\_\_\_\_

Relation to Candidate (supervisor, colleague, parish volunteer, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Section One/Standard One: Human

### **1.0 Standard One**

Lay ecclesial ministers demonstrate the qualities of human maturity needed for fruitful ministry with the people of God.

### **Vision Statement**

Lay ecclesial ministers, as all ecclesial ministers, develop their human character and relational abilities so that they can be “a bridge and not an obstacle” for people in their encounter with Jesus Christ.\* This development entails the twofold dynamic of strengthening positive traits that foster ministerial effectiveness and lessening negative traits that hinder it. Accordingly, lay ecclesial ministers strive to deepen their knowledge of self and others, grow from experiences of suffering and challenge, maintain a balanced lifestyle and positive relationships, appreciate and value diversity, and demonstrate basic human virtues. Cultivating such traits and skills within a Christ-centered community contributes to the development of "a healthy and well-balanced personality, for the sake of both personal growth and ministerial service" (*Co-Workers*, p. 36).

### **Core Competencies**

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 1.1 Appreciate and affirm the dignity of the human person and the positive values of diverse cultures, races, and socioeconomic groups within their respective self-understandings.
- 1.2 Identify personal gifts and limitations through self-reflection, collaboration with others, peer feedback, supervisory assessment processes, and/or spiritual companioning.
- 1.3 Engage in programs or practices of continuing ministerial formation and lifelong personal growth.
- 1.4 Recognize both the reality of sin with its personal and social consequences and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation to heal persons and relationships.
- 1.5 Maintain a healthy lifestyle and a reasonable balance among the legitimate claims of

family, community, personal relationships, and ministry.

- 1.6 Manifest “*psychological health*, marked by integrity, appropriate interpersonal boundaries, and the ability to honor and safeguard the trust that people place in them as Church ministers” (*Co-Workers*, p. 36).
- 1.7 Understand the power inherent in positions of pastoral leadership and be diligent in the responsible exercise of such power regarding, for example, sexuality, confidentiality, supervision of others, and decision making.

\* Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis: I Will Give You Shepherds* (1992), 43.

- Your assessment of the candidate’s competence relative to Standard One: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Note below your judgment of the candidate’s competence relative to Standard One [check only one]. If you have reservations or cannot affirm the candidate’s competence, please explain in the space below the item you checked

I affirm the candidate’s competence relative to Standard One.

I affirm the candidate’s competence relative to Standard One, with reservations.  
Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

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I cannot affirm the candidate’s competence relative to Standard One. Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Section Two / Standard Two: Spiritual**

### **2.0 Standard Two**

Sharing in the common priesthood of all the baptized, a lay ecclesial minister demonstrates Christian spirituality as foundational to ministry, integrated in service with the people of God, and possessing a sacramental view of the world that recognizes the world can be a vessel of God's presence and God's transforming grace.

### **Vision Statement**

Having encountered the person and message of Jesus Christ, the hunger of the lay ecclesial minister for union with the Triune God is constant. The result of this hunger is the call to holiness built on the Word of God, experienced in the liturgy and sacraments, formed through suffering, nurtured in joy, and sustained in community with all the baptized and through the Church as Mystical Body. The minister gives witness to a well-formed spirituality through a rich and diversified prayer life, theological reflection, and action rooted in Catholic social teaching. Spiritual formation is grounded in the understanding that "if ministry does not flow from a personal encounter and ongoing relationship with the Lord, then no matter how 'accomplished' it may be in its methods and activities, that ministry will lack the vital soul and source needed to bear lasting fruit" (*Co-Workers*, p. 38). Therefore, open to the mystery of God's love and in touch with the world's realities, all actions of the lay ecclesial minister flow from "that fundamental conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one's life" (*Co-Workers*, p. 38).

### **Core Competencies**

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 2.1 Give witness to an integrated spirituality formed by Scripture, theological reflection, sacramental celebration, communal worship, and active participation in parish life.
- 2.2 Live a life of private and communal prayer that is both formed by and reflective of the breadth and depth of the Catholic spiritual tradition.
- 2.3 Bear witness to the profound significance of Eucharist in one's own life, in the life of one's parish, and in the life of the whole Catholic community.
- 2.4 Demonstrate sensitivity to the spirituality of the sacred arts, i.e., art, music, and architecture, and the value of their expression in liturgical and communal prayer.
- 2.5 Honor the call to ministry that is rooted in one's baptism by developing ministerial goals that flow from one's spirituality and reflect an integration of Gospel values.
- 2.6 Demonstrate an ability to discern the "signs of the times" and address current realities in the Church and the world in light of the Gospel.
- 2.7 Accept and articulate one's ministerial vocation as coming from God and confirmed by the ecclesial community.
- 2.8 Display openness to ecumenical prayer, work, and practices that promote Christian

unity, and acknowledge the gifts afforded the human community from the various world religions.

2.9 Model the spirit of Jesus in one's life and identify with and promote the universal Church and its global mission so that all prayer and ministerial activity flow from that mission.

2.10 Develop a spirituality sensitive to diverse cultural expressions based on conversion, communion, mission, and solidarity.

- Your assessment of the candidate's competence relative to Standard Two: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Note below your judgment of the candidate's competence relative to Standard Two [check only one]. If you have reservations or cannot affirm the candidate's competence, please explain in the space below the item you checked

I affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Two.

I affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Two, with reservations.

Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

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I cannot affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Two. Explanation: \_\_

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## **Section Three / Standard Three: Intellectual**

### **3.0 Standard Three**

A lay ecclesial minister demonstrates understanding of the breadth of Catholic theological and pastoral studies as well as the intellectual skill to use that knowledge in ministry with God's people from diverse populations and cultures.

#### **Vision Statement**

"Formation for lay ecclesial ministry is a journey beyond catechesis into theological study" (*Co-Workers*, p. 43). A lay ecclesial minister's faith and ministry is formed by the study of the Catholic theological tradition focusing on the following core elements: Scripture and its interpretation, dogmatic theology, Church history, liturgical and sacramental theology, moral theology and Catholic social teaching, pastoral theology, spirituality, canon law, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, the social sciences, humanities, and culture and language studies. Based upon this study, a theologically competent minister can articulate and interpret this Catholic theological tradition with disciples from diverse communities. A key dynamic of effective lay ecclesial ministry is the integration into ministry practices of the key documents and principal theories of pastoral ministry.

#### **Core Competencies**

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 3.1 *Scripture and revelation.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of revelation as embodied in Scripture, tradition, and creation.
- 3.2 *Dogmatic theology.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice Trinitarian theology, Christology, pneumatology, missiology, Christian anthropology, and ecclesiology.
- 3.3 *Church history.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a foundational understanding of the major events in the history of the Church, with special attention to the Second Vatican Council, and the perspective those events provide on the life of the Church today.
- 3.4 *Liturgical and sacramental theology.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice theologies of liturgy, worship, and sacraments.
- 3.5 *Moral theology and Catholic social teaching.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of the moral life, including Catholic social teaching for the transformation of Church and society.
- 3.6 *Pastoral theology.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of pastoral ministry as well as guiding principles for the practice of ministry in a given context.
- 3.7 *Spirituality.* Know and integrate the history and theology of Catholic spirituality into prayer and ministerial practice.
- 3.8 *Canon law.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a foundational understanding of canon law.

- 3.9 *Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a respect for other Christian communities and other religious traditions.
- 3.10 *Social sciences and humanities.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a foundational understanding of the social sciences and humanities.
- 3.11 *Culture and language studies.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice knowledge of intercultural communication and linguistic/cultural skills.

- Your assessment of the candidate's competence relative to Standard Three: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Note below your judgment of the candidate's competence relative to Standard Three [check only one]. If you have reservations or cannot affirm the candidate's competence, please explain in the space below the item you checked

I affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Three.

I affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Three, with reservations.

Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

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I cannot affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Three. Explanation: \_

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## **Section Four / Standard Four: Pastoral**

### **4.0 Standard Four**

A lay ecclesial minister demonstrates a range of leadership and pastoral skills needed for functioning effectively in ministry.

#### **Vision Statement**

As a response to their baptismal call, lay ecclesial ministers accept the grace of leadership and manifest a range of skills and pastoral gifts which allow them to function effectively in ministry. In their role as evangelizers, they operate in a parochial setting which has various dimensions—faith formation, worship, cultural diversity, community life, social justice, and apostolic service. They are effective listeners who foster respect and offer compassionate care within varied family, community, and cultural settings. In the spirit of the Gospel, they serve others as companions on the journey of faith. These ministers demonstrate good stewardship, work collaboratively with other lay and ordained ministers, and exhibit human resource and management skills. They have an ability to discern and nurture the gifts of all the baptized in order to build the Kingdom of God. Lastly, these ministers embrace a professional code of ethics worthy of Catholic ministry and abide by civil and Church law. “Pastoral formation cultivates the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that directly pertain to effective functioning in the ministry setting and that also pertain to pastoral administration that supports direct ministry” (*Co-Workers*, page 47).

#### **Core Competencies**

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 4.1 Exercise sound practices of compassionate pastoral care.
- 4.2 Foster a pastoral ministry that empowers people to inculturate the Gospel in their own culture and to foster unity in diversity in the Catholic Church by utilizing human, spiritual, theological, and pastoral approaches proper to each culture.
- 4.3 Implement the principles and processes of evangelization and faith formation as outlined in national and universal Church documents.
- 4.4 Employ the use of modern means of communication technology to proclaim the Gospel.
- 4.5 Work effectively with others through utilizing leadership skills of collaboration, visioning, planning, communication, decision making, delegation, and conflict management.
- 4.6 Exercise effective supervision of employees (part-time or full-time) and volunteers.
- 4.7 Continually seek opportunities to improve skills.
- 4.8 Develop and nurture the prayer life of the community in which one serves.

- Your assessment of the candidate's competence relative to Standard Four: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Note below your judgment of the candidate's competence relative to Standard Four [check only one]. If you have reservations or cannot affirm the candidate's competence, please explain in the space below the item you checked

I affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Four.

I affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Four, with reservations.  
Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

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I cannot affirm the candidate's competence relative to Standard Four. Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Section Five / Specialized Competencies for a Pastoral Associate**

A pastoral associate is a professional minister who shares the overall care of the parish with the pastor or on-site pastoral team. He or she is a member of the parish staff, usually full-time, and is accountable to the pastor. The ministry of the pastoral associate is comprehensive, relating to all aspects of parish life, but with designated responsibilities, e.g., liturgy, faith formation and development, administration, pastoral care, or social outreach. The responsibilities assigned to the pastoral associate depend on the needs of the parish and the gifts of the pastoral associate as well as the gifts of other members of the pastoral staff.

A pastoral associate:

- PA 1 Exhibits a capacity for leadership and collaboration in all aspects of parish life and ministry including multicultural competencies appropriate to the diversity of the community.
- PA 2 Recognizes, addresses, respects, and assists with the implementation of the parish vision and mission.
- PA 3 Fosters the faith life of the community by providing opportunities that address the spiritual, moral, and lifelong formation of all parishioners.
- PA 4 Promotes evangelization as one of the primary activities of one's ministry.
- PA 5 Demonstrates a sensitivity to the multicultural concerns that affect the community and seeks ways to celebrate its cultural diversity.
- PA 6 Engages in appropriate and effective communication with persons of cultures other than one's own and recognizes the need to develop intercultural competencies.
- PA 7 Integrates Catholic social justice teachings within ministry by incorporating opportunities for justice and service to the Church and broader community including theological reflection on those opportunities.
- PA 8 Preaches effectively in appropriate pastoral settings in accord with national and (arch)diocesan norms.
- PA 9 Presides at liturgies, including Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest, in accord with liturgical principles and national and (arch)diocesan/eparchial norms.
- PA 10 Provides pastoral care and assistance to petitioners and respondents in marriage nullity cases.
- PA 11 Collaborates in the catechesis and pastoral care of those preparing for sacraments.
- PA 12 Exercises effective pastoral care of the sick, the dying, and the grieving in the parish community.

PA 13 Initiates, develops, and supports specialized pastoral ministries according to the needs of the parish community.

- Your assessment of the candidate's competence relative to the specialized competencies for a Pastoral Associate: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- Note below your judgment of the candidate's competence relative to the specialized competencies [check only one]. If you have reservations or cannot affirm the candidate's competence, please explain in the space below the item you checked.

I affirm the candidate's competence relative to the specialized competencies.

I affirm the candidate's competence relative to the specialized competencies, with reservations. Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_  
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I cannot affirm the candidate's competence relative to the specialized competencies. Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Section Six / Summary Assessment and Overall Recommendation**

- Your summary assessment of the candidate’s competence relative to the National Certification Standards, including the relevant specialized competencies:
- Note below your judgment of the candidate’s competence relative to the specialized competencies [check only one]. If you have reservations or cannot affirm the candidate’s competence, please explain in the space below the item you checked.

Based on my assessment of the candidate’s competence relative to the National Certification Standards, including the specialized competencies,

- I recommend this candidate for certification without reservation.
- I recommend this candidate for certification, with reservations. Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_  
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