



## Aquinas Ministry Formation Program Distance Learning Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry

### Program Description

The *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, says: “As sharers in the role of Christ, the Priest, Prophet and King, the Laity have an active role to play in the life and activity of the Church” (#10). The decree continues, “Indeed everyone should painstakingly ready himself or herself personally for the apostolate, especially as an adult. . .to exercise more effectively those charismatic gifts which the Holy Spirit has bestowed on all for the good of others (#30).

The U.S. Bishops in their 1999 report: *Lay Ecclesial Ministry* affirmed the importance of education and formation for lay ministers: “The statement in *Ecclesia in America* that ‘intra-ecclesial’ work by laity ‘should be undertaken only by men and women who have received the necessary training in accordance with clearly defined criteria’ (no. 44) echoes the words of canon 231 that ‘lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the Church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation which is required to fulfill their function properly.’ We share this concern about ensuring the quality of the preparation of lay ecclesial ministers” (conclusion 1).

### Purpose of the MAPM Degree

The Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry (MAPM) degree program has as its primary purpose the preparation of a cohort of men and women for leadership in a variety of pastoral ministries in the local Church. The program offers a broad overview of the theory and skills needed for effective pastoral ministry. The program is designed to engage and complement the unique gifts of experienced pastoral ministers as well as those who seek, for their own enrichment, graduate level theological and ministerial formation in the Catholic tradition. As a collaborative initiative between Aquinas Institute and the diocese, the goals, structure, and implementation of the MAPM degree will reflect both the unique pastoral needs of the local church as well as the standard requirements for graduate-level, accredited theological education for ministry in the Church.

### MAPM Program Goals:

The MAPM program aims at offering the following:

- A foundational knowledge of issues in theology, liturgy, and pastoral ministry needed for effective pastoral service within the diocesan church
- An integrated approach to teaching and learning that blends academic study with the development of skills in pastoral leadership through field education and classroom learning

- Ongoing formation of a spiritual life that will support a life of ministerial service
- A commitment to the study and practice of the integrating habitus of excellence in written and oral communication; close reading of texts; analysis of social context; theological reflection; and collaboration.
- Opportunities to develop the ecclesial consciousness and ministerial identity needed to assume a role of leadership in the diocesan church
- An understanding of ministerial formation as life-long, demanding a practical commitment to an ongoing process of self-reflection, faith development, and growth in theological knowledge and ministerial skills

### **MAPM Program Outcomes:**

The MAPM graduate will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of major theological, liturgical, and pastoral themes in Catholic theology through effective communication in classroom and pastoral settings
- demonstrate an ability to critically analyze major magisterial, theological, and ritual texts useful in pastoral theology
- demonstrate an ability to critically analyze the various religious and social contexts at work in the mission of the diocesan Church
- demonstrate among peers, fellow ministers, and members of the Church the ability to participate in a process of theological reflection that moves between ministerial praxis and theory, bringing into conversation the challenges of pastoral ministry and the wisdom of the tradition
- demonstrate among peers, fellow ministers, and members of the Church the personal and professional maturity needed to effectively collaborate with others in ministry articulate a theology of ministry which is both faithful to the Catholic tradition and sensitive to the unique needs and challenges of the diocesan church

### **Supervised Practice of Ministry Requirements (4 hrs.)**

The Supervised Practice of Ministry (field education) requirements are offered as two consecutive units taken during the second year of the MAPM program. The Aquinas Director of Field Education works with the program's on-site Director to determine a list of potential ministry sites and qualified supervisors. Students already working in ministry may continue working in their present position or choose another approved site, depending on their overall learning goals. During the on-site sessions of SPM the cohort meets with the Aquinas Director of Field Education, focusing on issues such as the art of pastoral supervision and the formation of the field education contract and for theological reflection based on their ministerial experiences.

### **Formative Spirituality for Ministry**

The formation component stretches throughout the entire course of the program. It includes regular meetings with the Formation Director for goal setting and feedback; spiritual direction; an annual retreat; and participation in the formation group itself. *Formative Spirituality for Pastoral Ministry I* extends over the first two years of the MAPM degree process. This seminar is concerned with fostering a deeper awareness of each person's personal spirituality and the role of ongoing conversion in the Christian life. *Formative Spirituality II* extends through the second half of the degree program. It emphasizes the development of ministerial identity and the

foundations of spirituality for ministerial service in the Church. It also builds on the students' skills in individual and group theological reflection. The members of the cohort, together with the Formation Director, play an important role in shaping the dynamics of this formation experience.

### **Teaching and Learning Model**

MAPM courses are offered sequentially and in an intensive model. Each course includes a blending of teaching and learning on weekends in the diocese and ongoing web-based instructional units at a distance. A typical course is designed around two face-to-face teaching and learning "moments:" an overnight *On-site I* [7 PM Friday evening-Saturday 4 PM], followed four weeks later by *On-site II*, an intensive teaching weekend [Friday-Sunday]. In the weeks between face-to-face sessions, students and faculty use course web pages to continue their work. The design of each course, developed by the instructor, is laid out in the syllabus. Online help in course design and technical assistance for students and faculty is available from Fisher's Net (<http://www.fishernet.net/>), a company that specializes in web-based teaching and learning in the theological disciplines.

### **e) Sample Course Schedule**

Sunday, May 21	Course launches on-line
Friday-Saturday, June 2-3	<i>On-site I</i> [7-9 PM, 9 AM-5 PM]
Friday-Sunday, June 30-July 2	<i>On-site II</i> [7 PM Fri-2 PM Sun]
Saturday, July 15	On-line closing session

Formative Spirituality seminars are a part of both *On-site sessions*.

There are two courses each in Fall and Spring semesters, and one course each summer. 4-week breaks are taken following each semester.

