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Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service
Committee on Catholic Education

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A Thanksgiving Prayer and Updates

from the Office of Certification



May the blessings of this holy time of Thanksgiving, gathered and connected with loved ones and those dear to us, be a sacred time of renewal and rejuvenation in body, mind, and spirit!

November 23, 2021

Dear Co-Workers in the Vineyard,

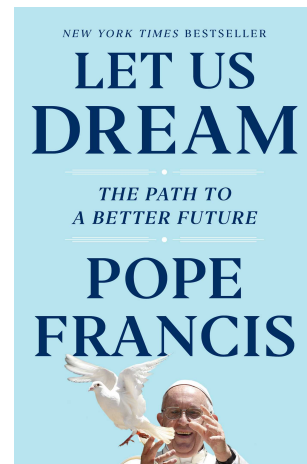
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and Service, as well as my colleagues in the Secretariat of Catholic Education, I wish you a very blessed Thanksgiving!

In Pope Francis' recent book, *Let Us Dream*, he commented on the enforced "stoppage" that COVID brought to the world and how, even in the midst of profound suffering, it enabled the possibility of gratitude and new vision. I find his reflections appropriate for Thanksgiving, and as we prepare to enter the season of Advent:

"A 'stoppage' can always be a good time for sifting, for reviewing the past, for remembering with gratitude who we are, what we have been given, and where we have gone astray. These are moments in life that can be ripe for change and conversion.... As in the Covid lockdown, those moments generate a tension, a crisis that reveals what is in our hearts...."

"[W]hen you're suffering an internal or personal crisis; you need to find people who are wise, who have been through the fire, people who can help you navigate what is to come. In every personal 'Covid,' so to speak, in every 'stoppage,' what is revealed is what needs to change: our lack of internal freedom, the idols we have been serving, the ideologies we have tried to live by, the relationships we have neglected. What is the greatest fruit of a personal Covid? I'd say patience, sprinkled with a healthy sense of humor, which allows us to endure and make space for change to happen." (pp. 35-36)



The Pope's remarks invite us all to reflect on our personal and common journeys over the past 20 months: Where is that space for patience, humor, and change in our lives? Where can we find or create that space in our ministry leadership?

It is often hard to find that stance of joy and patient waiting and discerning during such difficult times. Yet if we continue to take the risk to experience joy, and the risk of trust in the God of history - our faith tells us we shall never be disappointed.

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organizations and arch/diocesan programs with which we work on a regular basis.

In this time of thanksgiving, when I think of the good work of so many involved in the support of ministry formation and preparation in our church, I recall the words of St. Paul in Philippians 1:

"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ."

Even in the midst of the challenging impacts of our viral and social pandemics, the ministry of the Gospel is being accomplished - a cause for thanksgiving if ever there was one! The uncertainty and fear brought about by COVID-19 and all of its global impacts remains, but slowly, inexorably, we pray it is receding. In its wake, things are perhaps altered in ways we couldn't imagine before, and many challenges remain, but the dedicated work of many in our church is fostering new dreams and visions, new ministerial approaches and enormous creativity as well. Many developments in this area continue to be shaped by the work of each of us and give new hope and promise. We certainly give thanks for those developments!



This fall, our subcommittee [granted re-approval to updated chaplaincy competencies](#) developed by the **National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC)**. These updates also included new Diocesan Pastoral Care Competencies for the Sick, the Homebound and Older Adults. The subcommittee also [approved newly developed criminal justice pastoral care and prison ministries competencies](#) for a wide range of ministries among those affected by incarceration. These competencies were submitted by the NACC in collaboration with the **Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition (CPMC)**. Together

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country. To date over 100 diocesan prison ministries leaders have expressed interest! I encourage you to read more about these efforts in the links above. You can also download copies of the new competencies and learn more about these efforts on the websites of the [NACC](#) and [CPMC](#). We give thanks for the resourcing in pastoral care which is strengthened by these approved standards.

It is also important to note and give thanks this year for the work of the **Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers**. In 2007, four national ministry organizations - *the National Association for Lay Ministry, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry* - joined together as the Alliance to work together on two related projects: to maintain and update national ministry certification standards, and to create a process for national ministry certification. In 2009, the **Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions** became a fifth organizational partner of the Alliance. While each organization has and continues to contribute much in their own right to the formation and preparation of lay ministers and others in specialized ministry leadership roles, together as the Alliance, these organizations have provided an avenue for ministers to seek national certification in a wide variety of ministerial leadership roles.



For fourteen years, the Alliance organizations and their leaders have worked with our subcommittee to ensure quality common national ministry standards, along with more specific competencies for particular roles. These standards, which were re-approved by the subcommittee in 2018, are based on the four dimensions of formation deemed - in the 2005 USCCB statement *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* - to be essential for comprehensive preparation of ministers - human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral. Together, the Alliance also worked to ensure that these national standards reflected intercultural competencies to help prepare all ministers for work among the different cultural families which comprise the diverse U.S. church. The Alliance's contribution to the development of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States can rightly be called historic.

supported by these organizations separately, as will those who have been certified through the Alliance certification process. The organizations have all also expressed a strong commitment to continued advocacy for competent and professional lay ministry. I know I join my voice to those of others who are so grateful for the hard work of so many visionary leaders in these organizations over the past fourteen years. I add thanks to **Cathy Becker** who is the most recent convener of the Alliance. I look forward to walking together with the organizations to learn how our subcommittee may continue to support them in their good work.

In addition to NACC, CPMC and the Alliance organizations noted above, I gratefully also acknowledge these other ministry organizations and arch/diocesan ministry programs which offer certifications based on standards approved by our subcommittee, and for their ongoing support of ecclesial ministry formation:

- **The Catholic Campus Ministry Association**
- **Archdiocese of Chicago**
- **Archdiocese of Detroit**
- **Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston**
- **Diocese of Lansing**
- **Diocese of San Bernardino**

In related news, the subcommittee drew upon feedback from the national organizations and arch/diocesan formation programs to update and streamline our *Certification Approval Handbook* and related materials to assist those preparing to submit certification standards for review by the subcommittee. These items are accessible [via our website](#) along with many videos and other resources describing the work of the subcommittee. The subcommittee also updated our [professional ministry glossary](#), which has proved helpful in clarifying many terms often used in our work.

I also want to express deep gratitude to several leaders who have, or are, concluding their service in some of the arch/diocesan programs and organizations with which our subcommittee works on a regular basis. In your Thanksgiving prayers, please remember these leaders and those who are

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- **David Lichter** from NACC is retiring from his role as Executive Director, and is being succeeded by **Erica Cohen Moore**.
- **Maria (Maruja) Sedano** retired as Director of the Ministry Formation Institute in the Diocese of San Bernardino, and **Dr. Amanda Alexander** has assumed this leadership role
- **Steve Petrunak** concluded his service as Executive Director of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians in 2020 and was succeeded by **Jennifer Kluge**
- **Margaret Matijasevic** concluded her time of leadership at In Word & Witness.

I am grateful that I was able to represent the subcommittee in consultations or presentations with various organizations and to participate in various (mostly virtual) events throughout the past year. Each of these organizations and efforts, according to their own mission and work, has provided or expressed support of the work of ministry formation standards or has found value in the resources our subcommittee offers:

- *V Encuentro*
- Association for Graduate Programs in Ministry
- Association of U.S. Catholic Priests
- Catholic Apostolate Center
- Catholic Social Ministry Gathering
- Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition
- Diocese of Charleston
- Diocese of Syracuse
- *Federación de Institutos Pastorales*
- Federal Bureau of Prisons
- National Association for Lay Ministry
- National Association of African Catholics in the U.S.
- National Association of Catholic Chaplains
- Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life and the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers
- Crucial Conversations on "Sustaining a Healthy Ministerial Vineyard" hosted virtually by St. John's University, Collegeville

I am also grateful for the members and consultants of the subcommittee who demonstrate their dedication, care and interest in the work of ministry formation, certification and ecclesial service in their attentive pastoral care for the needs which come before the subcommittee. Please remember them in your prayers this Thanksgiving: **Bishop Gerald Kicanas**, our chairman, **Archbishop Alfred Hughes**, **Bishop Earl Boyea**, **Bishop Oscar Cantú**, **Bishop John McIntyre**, and **Bishop Jorge Rodríguez** who serve as members of the subcommittee; and **Bishop George Rassas**, **Fr. Wayne Cavalier, OP, Ph.D**, **Dr. Linda Couri**, **Sr. Maria Teresa Montes Lara, OP, D.Min**, **Dr. David Lichter**, and **Dr. C. Vanessa White**, who serve as consultants. Special thanks to Bishop Cantú, Bishop McIntyre, and Dr. Lichter as they conclude their time with the subcommittee this year. I am grateful, too, for the support of the USCCB Committees represented by the bishop members noted above - **Catholic Education; Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations; Communications; Cultural Diversity in the Church; Evangelization & Catechesis**; and **Laity, Marriage, Family Life & Youth**, and my staff colleagues in these departments who are always supportive of the subcommittee's work.

Special thanks also to my colleagues in the Secretariat of Catholic Education for their always generous support of our work: our Executive Director **Mary Pat Donoghue**, Associate Director for Policy **Jennifer Daniels**, Assistant Director for Higher Education **Barbara McCrabb**, and staff assistants **Paul Major** and **Mary Gigliotti**.

Finally, I give thanks for each and everyone of you who receive this and all of the ways your ministry brings joy, comfort, healing, peace, and Gospel witness in our Church and in our communities and society. In the midst of the many challenges that have marked the past two years, your dedication and service has brought to many others a reason for thanks. I pray that as you gather with loved ones this Thanksgiving, you will feel spiritually warmed by that blessed blanket of gratitude.

*"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever." (Psalm 136:1)*

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