



THE COURIER

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FORMING LAY LEADERS FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND GOSPEL WITNESS

“There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places.... The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge.”

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #102)

The **INSTITUTE OF LAY FORMATION** (previously named the “Institute of Lay Ministry”) began in the Diocese in the fall of 1998, as the first class of 40 lay people gathered to begin their two-year formation program. Since that time, there have been six Institute classes, and over 300 lay people have participated in the Institute’s formation process – representing 70 parishes and four church institutions of the Diocese. In addition to these lay leaders, 17 of the deacons of our diocese participated in the Institute before entering diaconate formation.

The best testament to the Institute’s value is the witness and the ministry of our students and alumni. The community of faith Institute students build among themselves and the service they offer to their families, neighborhoods, and communities, and to the Church, are the very life of this unique, faith-filled experience. One of these alumni described her participation in the Institute as **“the most rewarding, faith-building, Spirit-filled experience of my life.”**

A NEW INSTITUTE CLASS...

Our diocese is now recruiting the seventh class of the Institute, to begin its formation this coming fall. In establishing this new class, the Institute continues its mission to form lay women and men for a deeper living out of their Christian vocation in the world, and to prepare them for more faithful and effective lay leadership in the Church.

The Institute addresses the lay vocation in its full sense. While a part of their vocation is directed to service within the formal life of the Church, the broader



aspect of the laity's vocation relates to proclaiming and giving witness to Christ within the secular world (i.e., within our workplaces, our families, our neighborhoods, our civic settings, etc.). In Pope Francis' words, we as lay people are to "bring the perfume of Christ's love not only in churches and parishes, but in every environment."

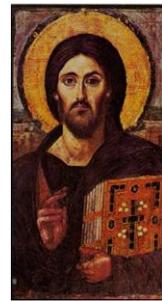
FORMATION PROCESS...

There are three aspects of the Institute's formation process: 1) **Catechesis** (Intellectual Formation); 2) **Lay Leadership** (Human and Pastoral Formation); and 3) **Prayer and Reflection** (Spiritual Formation).

Each of these areas of formation has a particular focus during the three-year process. For example, the focus for catechesis is on: "The Creed" during the first year; "The Sacraments and Prayer" during the second year; and "Christian Morality" during the third year.

And, each of the three years has its own name and particular identity:

- **CREDO ~ TOGETHER IN FAITH** (Year I)
- **OREMUS ~ TOGETHER IN PRAYER** (Year II)
- **CARITAS ~ TOGETHER IN SERVICE** (Year III).



FORMATION SESSIONS...

During each of its three formation years, the Institute program consists of eight Saturday sessions (from 9:00 am - 3:30 pm) held from September through April, and a weekend retreat at the conclusion of the year (from Friday evening through Saturday afternoon). Each Saturday session is devoted to prayer, instruction, discussion, and reflection. Students have the option of completing one, two, or all three years of the formation process.

During their years of formation, Institute students will study the Church's tradition and teaching. They will spend time together in prayer and reflection, and seek to discern how the Spirit is calling them to a life of deeper holiness and discipleship. Time will also be devoted to building their skills as lay leaders in such areas as evangelization, collaboration, and leadership.

After successfully completing their formation process, students are formally commissioned for lay leadership in service to the people of God in the Diocese of Winona. (Men discerning a possible vocation to the diaconate need to complete the Institute as a prerequisite for entrance to diaconate formation in the diocese.)

The **INSTITUTE OF LAY FORMATION** has a vibrant and strong history of calling the lay people of our Diocese to a deeper living out of their faith and their Christian vocation. This legacy will continue on as we form a new class of Institute students, and as they begin their formation journey together this fall. *Deo Gratias!*

"... The Institute forever changed the way I view and wish to live my faith in my day to day walk with Jesus Christ." (**INSTITUTE OF LAY FORMATION** student)