

THE MINISTRY OF PASTORAL CARE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY IS THE DIOCESE OF KILLALOE PROMOTING THE MINISTRY OF PASTORAL CARE?

We have come through a period in our churches whereby the Ministry of Pastoral Care was both led and provided by the priest. It was the priest who chaired the Parish Pastoral Council and School Boards of Management. The priest was the visible sign of pastoral activity in the parish when he visited the sick and elderly. The priest was to one to accompany those near death. He was the one at hand at the time of a funeral to offer support to families and to organise and celebrate the different moments of the funeral liturgy. The priest was to one who visited school to assist the teachers in the sacramental preparation programme. While this may have been effective in its time it was not how the Second Vatican Council imagined how faith communities would be animated. The Diocese of Killaloe is commissioning Ministers of Pastoral Care so that there will be trained people in our Christian Communities, with the necessary skills and awareness, to take up some of these ministries, and ministries we haven't yet imagined. From the earliest times Jesus envisaged that we would work together, he even sent his disciples out in pairs. The diocese is promoting this ministry in an effort to reawaken the call we all received at baptism where we were called to be of service to God and to be of service to one another. This ministry training programme is also a response to Pope Francis' call for a Synodal Church in which the believing community would be co-responsible for all aspects of Church life. We are all called to share in the task of spreading the Good News of the Gospel. All the baptised are mandated to be agents of God's love and care. As Jesus reminded us *"when you do this to the least of your brothers and sisters you do it to me"*.

WHO CAN APPLY TO BE A MINISTER OF PASTORAL CARE?

This Ministry is open to any adult member of the Christian Community who has a desire to help animate some aspect of the pastoral life of their parish or pastoral area. While it maybe of particular interest to those already involved in the pastoral life of their parish or pastoral area it is also open to those of faith who long to find pathways into greater involvement in the pastoral life of the Church. Those who engage in this programme will be preparing to ministry with people. This requires a degree of faith, maturity and integrity. It also requires the capacity to listen and relate to peoples lived experience.

WHAT DOES A MINISTER OF PASTORAL CARE DO?

The primary focus for Ministers of Pastoral Care is to reflect God's unconditional love and compassion for the People of God. Minister of Pastoral Care are people who help animate the Christian community in very practical ways in living out Jesus' command for us to *"love one another"*. This ministry will take different forms according to local needs and the charisms of the Minister of Pastoral Care. With training and experience it is envisaged that Ministers of Pastoral Care will be involved in some of the following areas:

- Visiting sick or elderly people at home, in a nursing home or in hospital setting—where such visits are welcome.
- Having a concern for those who are isolated or on their own in the community.
- Supporting people and families around the time of a funeral by offering personal contact, warmth and support and guidance around the funeral liturgies where appropriate.
- Enabling people in prayer.
- Leading liturgies.
- Visiting schools and helping with the sacramental preparation programmes in a pastoral area.
- Ministry to Married couples.
- Support people in prisons and their families.
- Youth Ministry.
- Forming part of Pastoral Area Ministry Teams discerning where the pastoral needs of an area might be and how they might be answered.

HOW MIGHT I BE RECEIVED AS A MINISTER OF PASTORAL CARE?

From our experience to date, the Ministry of Pastoral Care has been received very warmly. Given that you will be ministering as part of a wider team of ministers you will be supported. Your ministry will be answering real needs within your faith community so anything you do will be very warmly welcomed. Because this ministry is situated within the wider ministries of the diocese you will be supported by fellow Ministers of Pastoral Care, the Bishop and the Priest of the Diocese in the service of the wider believing community.

WILL I BE WORKING ON MY OWN IF I TRAIN FOR THIS NEW MINISTRY?

As mentioned earlier nobody should be ministering alone. Within the structures of the diocese, you will be working as part of the Pastoral Ministry Team in your pastoral area. These Pastoral Ministry Teams meet regularly to plan and support each other in the work of pastoral ministry. You will also have the help and support of your fellow Ministers of Pastoral Care who meet regularly to reflect on their ministry, share ideas and to pray together.

WHEN IS THE TRAINING FOR THIS NEW MINISTRY BEGINNING?

Training for the Ministry of Pastoral Care in the Killaloe Diocese will begin in the Autumn. The first number of months will be a period of exploration, reflection and discernment. This is seen as an opportunity for both the person applying for the ministry and for the Diocese to mutually discern if this ministry is a good fit. It is hoped that the academic component will commence in February 2025.

WHAT WILL I BE STUDYING AND REFLECTING ON?

In the course of this programme the following themes will be explored:

- Personal and faith Development.
- Prayer & Spirituality.
- Liturgy and leading people in prayer.
- Scripture.
- Theology for Ministry.
- Understanding Today's Cultural Context.
- Skills for the Ministry of Pastoral Care.
- Pastoral Placements.

WILL THE COURSE BE ACCREDITED?

The academic component of the programme is accredited by Mary Immaculate College Limerick as a Level 6 Certificate in Pastoral Ministry.

WHAT KIND OF COMMITMENT IS EXPECTED FROM MINISTERS OF PASTORAL

This is a volunteer role so expectations need to be managed carefully. On completion of the programme, Ministers of Pastoral Care will be formally commissioned by the Bishop to a Pastoral Area to work alongside fellow Ministers of Pastoral Care and Priests in that Pastoral Area. Before you commence in your ministry areas of responsibility which are feasible given a person's availability will be agreed. Ministers of Pastoral Care that are commissioned by the diocese will be invited to commit initially for a period of three to five years. While there will be interim reviews at the end of the period of commitment both the Minister of Pastoral Care and the Diocese will reflect on their experience and on the possibility of extending the commitment for another period of time.

WHAT ABOUT COST?

All participants who are accepted onto the programme will have their course costs covered by both their sponsoring Pastoral Area and the Diocese of Killaloe.

IS THERE RENUMERATION FOR THIS MINISTRY

This is a voluntary role and as such you will not be remunerated.