

EfM

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY

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About EfM



Every baptized person is called to ministry. The Education for Ministry (EfM) program provides people with the education to carry out that ministry. During the Service of Confirmation we ask God to "Renew in these your servants the covenant you made with them at Baptism. Send them forth in the power of the Spirit to perform the service you set before them." EfM offers an opportunity to discover how to respond to the call to Christian service.

The Program

Our Call to Minister in the World

Lay persons face the difficult and often subtle task of interpreting the richness of the church's faith in a complex and confusing world. They need a theological education which supports their faith and also teaches them to express that faith in day-to-day events. As the emphasis on lay ministry has grown, EfM has come to play an important role by providing a program that develops an informed and knowledgeable laity.

The EfM program does not evaluate or recommend individuals for ordination. Many people think that one must be ordained in order to be "a minister." The fact is that all baptized Christians are called to be active participants in the church's total ministry. This TOTAL MINISTRY is nothing

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less than the exercise of the church's vocation to continue the ministry of Jesus. He reconciled the world to God. We are called to incarnate that reconciliation in our own time and in our own place through worship, service to others, and by proclamation of God's Word to all people.

The EfM program is preparation for the ministry to which we all are called. It is that vocation for which we pray at the end of the Eucharist: "And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord."

The preparation for ordination vows usually takes place at a residential seminary. There candidates develop their knowledge of Holy Scripture and theology and grow in the skills of preaching, leading worship, and administering the church's sacraments, as well as in their ability to be spiritual directors. The EfM program does not teach these skills.

The Seminar Group

The seminar group is the nucleus of the Education for Ministry program. A group consists of six to twelve participants and a trained mentor who meet weekly over the course of a nine-month academic year. These meetings are usually from two and a half to three hours in length.

Through **study**, **prayer**, and **reflection**, EfM groups move toward a new understanding of the fullness of God's kingdom. This process can be illustrated by a two-rail fence. One rail is the Christian tradition. The other is the collective experience of the group's members. The rails are linked by fence posts which represent the seminar sessions where life and study meet. The fence is grounded in the soil of regular worship which is vital to the life of the group.

Participants are given weekly assignments to study with the help of resource guides. Participants are responsible for setting their own learning goals. They spend between two and four hours in study and preparation each week. In the seminars members have an opportunity to share their insights and discoveries as well as to discuss questions which the study materials raise for them.

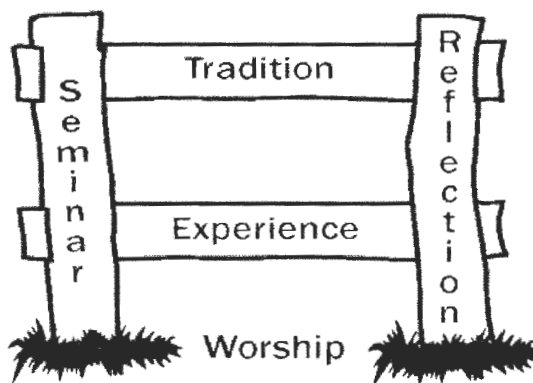
Through discussion and guided reflection, the seminars furnish an opportunity to deepen understanding of the reading materials.

More important is the development of skills in theological reflection. The goal is to learn to think theologically. By examining their own beliefs and their relationship to our culture and the tradition of our Christian faith, participants can learn what it means to be effective ministers in the world. In coming to terms with the notion that everything we do has potential for manifesting the love of Christ, we discover that our ministry is at hand wherever we turn.

The seminar is supported by a life of prayer and regular worship. EfM groups are encouraged to develop a pattern of worship appropriate to their situations. Liturgical materials are furnished with the course materials.

The Role of the Mentor

Seminar groups work under the leadership of mentors who contract to serve as guides and administrators. They are not teachers in the traditional sense who are expected to impart information about the Christian tradition. The role of the teacher is built into the program materials.



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As administrator of an EfM group, the mentor is the person through whom the group communicates with the Programs Center. A mentor must work as an enabler rather than as an informer of people. Mentors may be lay or ordained persons. Criteria by which mentors are selected include: having experience in serious religious study, having a familiarity with methods of biblical scholarship, possessing a mature faith, being able to live with the ambiguity within the interpretations of the biblical tradition, possessing skills which help a group to develop its own life, and demonstrating a willingness to perform administrative duties.

Contents of the Four Years

Participants in the EfM program study the entire sweep of the Christian tradition from the earliest period to the present. Participants learn the disciplines of biblical exegesis and interpretation, systematic theology, church history, ethics, liturgics, and ascetical theology.

The traditional content is not studied in a vacuum. Participants belong to small "communities of learning" in which the events of each person's life may be examined in the light of the materials being studied. While the course materials provide substantial academic content, the focus of the program is on life as ministry and understanding that ministry. EfM provides Christians with that basic skill which is the foundation of all Christian ministry -- theological reflection. In doing this, participants sharpen their skills of personal and cultural assessment and enhance abilities to be effective in a variety of ministries.

Outline of the Reading Materials: The program recommends thirty-six group meetings during the course of an academic cycle. New members begin with the first lesson of year one. Participants in the same group may be studying at different levels. They read thirty-four chapters of academic content and five common readings which help the group to get started, to learn to reflect theologically, and to develop its spirituality.

EfM Reading and Reflection Guides (Used by All Year Levels)

The Cycle of Guides

- 2013-2014 – Volume A: Living Faithfully in Your World
- 2014-2015 – Volume B: Living Faithfully in a Multicultural World
- 2015-2016 – Volume C: Living as Spiritually Mature Christians
- 2016-2017 – Volume D: Living into the Journey with God

Units in Each Guide

- Sharing Spiritual Autobiographies and Listening
- Thinking Theologically
- Developing a Sustaining Spirituality
- Integrating Belief and Behavior
- Vocation: Hearing and Responding to God's Call

Reading Texts

Year One: The Hebrew Bible

- *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd Ed., by John J. Collins (Fortress Press, 2014)

Year Two: The New Testament

- *Introducing the New Testament* by Mark Allen Powell (Baker Academic, 2009)

Year Three: Church History

- *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* by Diarmaid MacCulloch (Penguin Books, 2009)

Year Four: Theology, Ethics, and Interfaith Encounter

- *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* by David F. Ford (Oxford, 2013)
- *Mysteries of Faith* by Mark McIntosh (Cowley Publications, 2000)
- *The Christian Moral Life: Practices of Piety* by Timothy F. Sedgwick (Seabury Books, 2008)
- *My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation* by Jennifer Howe Peace, Or N. Rose, and Gregory Mobley (Orbis Books, 2012)

Interlude Texts (Read by All Year Levels)

- 2013-2014: Year A
 - *And God Spoke* by Christopher Bryan (Cowley Publications, 2002)
 - *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* by L. William Countryman (Morehouse Publishing, 1999)
- 2014-2015: Year B
 - *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed* by Eric H. F. Law (Chalice Press, 1996)
 - *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue* by Kwok Pui-lan (Paulist Press, 2012)
- 2015-2016: Year C
 - *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman (Beacon Press, 1996)
 - *We Are Theologians* by Frederica Harris Thompsett (Seabury Classics, 2004)
- 2016-2017: Year D
 - *Transformed Lives: Making Sense of Atonement Today* by Cynthia S.W. Crysdale (Seabury Books, 2016)
 - *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth* by Ilia Delio, Keith Douglass Warner, and Pamela Wood (Franciscan Media, 1999)

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