

Global interest in leadership course for Catholic women

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ACBC

A specialised leadership program for Catholic women in Australia has been selected for inclusion on a Vatican website promoting best practices in lay formation.

The Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life recently chose Leadership for Mission, a course specifically developed by women and for women who are inspired by the Gospel vision of justice, freedom and the dignity of the human person, to be featured at the Dicastery's first Plenary Assembly in November.

The Australian program will feature on a website dedicated to promoting formation and highlighting some model programs from episcopal conferences, dioceses and private institutions worldwide.

Leadership for Mission is a joint initiative of the Council for Australian Catholic Women, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Mission and Australian Catholic University (ACU).

Andrea Dean, director of the Office for the Participation of Women, said: 'During a time of renewed calls within the Catholic Church for the participation and diversity of women's voices in decision-making, leadership and ministry, especially in light of the Plenary Council, this graduate program seeks to further embrace, enhance and theologically ground the leadership capabilities, skills and aspirations of women in the Church and the broader community.'

Ms Dean spoke about Leadership for Mission while attending an international consultation in Rome last year on the promotion and formation of the lay faithful.

'While I heard of many wonderful initiatives from countries as diverse as the Philippines and Canada, this program stands out due to its focus on young women and its blend of academic, faith and leadership components,' she said.

'Twelve young Catholic women will graduate the current program early next year and we are committed to cultivating capacity for leadership within and beyond the Church for the future.'

Professor Dermot Nestor, executive dean of the ACU Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, said a key feature of the program was that it had been designed to meet emergent needs.

‘We are delighted that the program has been selected (for the Vatican website) and that the efforts of the staff involved in its design and delivery are being acknowledged in this way,’ he said.

‘It gives full expression to the aspirations and desires of the participants as informing a Church for the new millennium.’

Professor Nestor said the curriculum presents an opportunity for participants to deeply reflect on their own faith, their personal mission and their vocation as a way of addressing the many challenges and opportunities facing the world.

‘This program, and the learning design that anchors it, is thus a direct contribution to the pastoral practice of an Australian and a global Church,’ he said.

Catholic Mission national director Fr Brian Lucas said Leadership for Mission has the ‘unique feature of integrating a theological and intellectual formation with a spiritual and human formation’ specifically designed to prepare young women for future roles in Church leadership.

‘The opportunity which the participants have to interact with each other, and to take advantage of the diversity of backgrounds, allows them to better appreciate the challenges of Church leadership in a multicultural and pluralist society and Church,’ Fr Lucas said.

‘I am delighted that Catholic Mission can join with the other sponsors so a new generation of young lay women can have a formation experience preparing them as missionary disciples for future leadership roles in the Church.’

Leadership for Mission is a sponsored two-year, part-time program, with the next cohort commencing in February 2020. It is structured across four residential sessions and supported through ACU’s online learning management system.

Applications are invited from women across Australia, aged from 25 to 35, with diverse personal and professional experiences.

For more information, contact Andrea Dean at director.opw@catholic.org.au or visit www.leadership4mission.com.au