



PERSONAL REFERENCE

Recommendation Letter Instructions & Guidelines

Early Application Deadline: December 1 | Regular Application Deadline: January 10

RECOMMENDATION LETTER INSTRUCTIONS: Personal Reference

You have been chosen by a student whom you know to recommend him/her for Echo, a program of the Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame (described on the second page of this document). Given the applicant's intention (application to *Echo Parish Catechetical Leadership* or *Echo Teaching Theology*), please speak to his/her aptitude for graduate-level theology work, in addition to work as a parish minister or theology teacher at a Catholic school. If an applicant is applying to *both* tracks, please speak specifically to his/her aptitude for each track separately.

To this end, please prepare a letter that assesses the applicant's strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth in the following areas:

graduate study

- leadership
- catechetical ministry and/or theology teaching
- communal living, and
- spiritual development

Furthermore, as someone who knows this particular applicant perhaps *more personally* than his/her professor references do, you will be able to specifically speak to the candidate's "**relationality**," in regards to how he/she **interacts with people of diverse ages, backgrounds, personality types, preferences, etc.** Additionally, the Echo selection committee hopes that your evaluation of this applicant will help to illustrate this applicant's **character**, especially relative to his/her **integrity, professional promise, spiritual richness, and ability to genuinely share oneself** with others. How **mature and responsible** is this person, and how **open** is he/she to a wide array of formation experiences?

Please feel free to include any other necessary or pertinent information that you deem helpful for the Selection Committee to know about the applicant in consideration. *Once the applicant has entered your name and email into the recommender field on the Graduate School Application, you will receive an automated email with a link requesting you to submit your letter electronically, following prompts from the Notre Dame Graduate School.* The Graduate School will also prompt you to complete an Evaluation/Questionnaire regarding the applicant. Thank you for your thoughtfulness regarding this request.

For more information: echo.nd.edu | 574.631.2877 | echond@nd.edu

ECHO PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Echo is a two-year graduate service program that offers participants the opportunity to earn an M.A. in Theology from the University of Notre Dame's Department of Theology, to serve the Church in parish catechetical leadership or as a theology teacher in a Catholic school, and to live in an intentional faith community while engaging in integrative spiritual formation.

Service to the Church

Echo participants engage in direct service to the Church in one of two program tracks: Echo Parish Catechetical Leadership (EPCL) or Echo Teaching Theology (ETT). For both the parish track and teaching track, Echo partners with dioceses around the country who, in turn, identify partner parishes or schools interested in receiving a parish apprentice or theology teacher.

Echo Parish Catechetical Leadership (EPCL)

Echo parish catechetical apprentices engage in leadership in a variety of parish catechetical ministries, including but not limited to RCIA, Religious Education, Youth Ministry, Adult Faith Formation, and Social Justice Ministry. Parish apprentices are matched with a mentor who is a catechetical leader on staff at their assigned parish to help guide their ministry experience and assess their professional development.

Echo Teaching Theology (ETT)

Echo theology teachers are placed in one of our partner Catholic high schools or junior highs and teach a variety of theological courses. A limited number of participants in the Echo Teaching Theology track are assigned to full-time high school campus ministry positions or dual theology teacher/campus minister positions. Echo theology teachers also engage in limited extracurricular activities to contribute to the school community outside of the classroom. Echo theology teachers are matched with a mentor teacher or administrator in the school with whom they meet weekly to discuss their teaching experience and assess their professional development.

Integrative Formation

In addition to their graduate study in theology and service in parishes or schools, Echo parish apprentices and theology teachers engage in communal, human, and spiritual formation that complements and integrates their study, service, and life of faith. This comprehensive approach helps Echo apprentices and theology teachers become skilled, theologically-informed leaders as well as authentic and inspiring witnesses of the faith to those they serve.

Communal Formation

Echo participants live together in an intentional faith community, pray together three times weekly, gather for a weekly community night that includes dinner, faith-sharing, and a community activity, meet monthly with an Echo Formation Assistant (EFA), attend a Day of Reflection with the EFA each fall and with the diocesan leader each spring, and develop a community covenant outlining their shared commitments for the year.

Human Formation

Echo offers participants several human formation workshops throughout their time in Echo, including understanding family systems, sexuality, human development, communication, conflict resolution, and healthy professional and personal boundaries, among others.

Spiritual Formation

In order to lead others in faith formation, ministers must continually engage in their own ongoing spiritual formation. Spiritual formation in Echo includes the development of an annual Formation Covenant outlining the participant's commitment to personal and communal prayer, required monthly spiritual direction, full engagement in parish life (whether placed at a parish or a school), and participation in a series of program retreats designed and directed by Echo staff.