

DIACONAL FORMATION

Stages of Formation

CANDIDACY

Introduction

The candidate path in diaconal formation is the occasion for continued discernment of a diaconal vocation and immediate preparation for ordination. Throughout this path of formation the candidate himself assumes the primary responsibility for his discernment and development. The candidate must show responsibility and dynamism responding with generosity to God's call and he should be determined to grow in life according to the Spirit and in conformity with the vocation received.

LENGTH OF FORMATION

In accord with Canon Law, the *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* and our diocesan needs, the period of candidate formation is four years. Readiness for ordination is assessed annually by both the candidate and formation personnel to ascertain what level of achievement the candidate has reached in his understanding of the diaconal vocation, its responsibilities, and its obligations. Assessment also includes his growth in the spiritual life, his competency in required diaconal knowledge and skills, his practical experience in pastoral ministry and his witness of human and affective maturity. If candidate is married, an appraisal of his wife's readiness and consent is also to be made.

CANDIDATE PATH: AN INTEGRAL AND SUBSTANTIVE PROGRAM

The objective is to guarantee the implementation of an integral and substantive program of formation that adequately prepares a candidate to represent the Church as a deacon. A substantive program includes:

- Class preparation, participation and attendance
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Field education projects
- Theological reflection
- Shared opportunities for spiritual growth
- Individual spiritual direction
- Other formation experiences

DIMENSIONS OF FORMATION IN THE CANDIDATE PATH

Human Dimension

The aim of this dimension is to continue to build on the human qualities already discerned during the aspirant period, developing them and adding necessary skills for an effective and responsible diaconal ministry. Emphasis in human formation is placed on:

- Relational and collaborative qualities and skills (strengths and limitations)
- Acknowledgement of personal gifts
- Development of the habit of authentic self-criticism in light of the Gospel
- Integration of personal, familial, work and ministerial responsibilities

Spiritual Dimension

The Spiritual Goal: help the candidate increase (grow) in holiness by equipping and motivating him to lay a foundation upon which he may continue his spiritual growth after ordination. The spiritual goal can be further divided, but not limited, to the following:

1. Help the candidate to increase in holiness by *deepening and cultivating his commitment* to Christ and the Church;
2. Assist the candidate in *discerning whether he has a vocation* to the diaconate;

3. Help him *deepen his prayer life*: personal, familial, communal, and liturgical;
4. Instill in the candidate a *commitment to pray daily for the Church*, especially through the Liturgy of the Hours;
5. *Strengthen* the candidate's *personal charisms* he has already demonstrated in his life;
6. Help the candidate *integrate his new commitment* to prepare for the diaconate with his previous commitments to his family and professional employment
7. Acquaint the candidate with the *relationship between spirituality* and his *commitment to the Church's ministry of charity and justice*;
8. Acquaint the candidate with *Catholic classical and contemporary spiritual writings* and the witness of the saints; and
9. Prepare the candidate for the *challenges of spiritual leadership* that his ministry will entail.

Primary Objective: assist the candidate in achieving a spiritual integration of his: 1) life; 2) family; 3) work; and 4) apostolic service. In order to accomplish this objective the candidate is thoroughly introduced to the theology and spirituality of work as a vocation, an apostolate, and a profession.

Spiritual Director: all through formation the candidate will have the assistance of a priest spiritual director who will help him to cultivate regular patterns of prayer and sacramental participation and to reflect spiritually on his ministry.

Formation Groups: all through formation the candidates will be small groups to engage together to reflect theologically on the challenges and opportunities of their ministries in relationship to the Gospel and magisterial teaching.

Perpetual Celibacy: throughout the formation process it is proper and suitable that the candidate's spiritual director and the formation team ascertain the candidate's understanding, willingness, and capacity to accept the Church's discipline regarding perpetual celibacy; this applies to both not married and married men.

Intellectual Dimension

The intellectual formation of the candidate is oriented toward *diakonia*, providing him with the knowledge and appreciation of the faith that he needs in order to carry out his ministry of word, liturgy and charity. The course of study is complete and in harmony with the magisterial teaching of the Church. The core content of studies seeks to provide the future deacon with sufficient knowledge to be a reliable witness of the faith and spokesperson for the Church's teaching. The intellectual formation will equip the candidate for leadership, participation in the new evangelization, and for effective heralding of the Gospel in today's society. Prominence is given to Scripture, liturgy, evangelization and missiology.

Core Content of Theological Studies

The core introduces the candidate to the essentials of Christian doctrine and practice. Foundational documents include: Sacred Scripture, Second Vatican Council Documents, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Code of Canon Law, *Compendium* of the Social Doctrine of the Church and General Directory for Catechesis.

Sacred Scripture	Dogmatic Theology	Moral Theology	Historical Theology	Canon Law	Spirituality
Pentateuch	Fundamental Theology	Catholic Social Doctrine	Patristics	General Introduction	Christian Spirituality
Prophets	Triune God		History of the Catholic Church	Canon Law and Marriage	Spiritual Theology
Wisdom					

Psalms	Christology	Fundamental Moral	Catholic Church in the United States	Obligations and Rights of Clerics	Theological and Moral Virtues
Synoptic Gospels	Theological Anthropology	Bioethics		Office of Teaching and Sanctification	
John	Ecclesiology	Social-Ministerial Ethics			
Pauline Letters	Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue	Human Sexuality and Sacrament of Holy Matrimony			
Introduction to Sacred Scripture : Composition; interpretation; inspiration	Sacrament of Holy Orders				
Biblical themes of justice and peace	Mariology				
	Missiology				
	New Evangelization				

Pastoral Dimension

Engagement in a wide diversity of pastoral field education placements will give the candidate greater awareness of the needs and mission of the diocesan Church and will assist him in the discernment and development of his own talents and gifts. The pastoral placements provide opportunities for theological reflection and integration of intellectual knowledge into pastoral service. Emphasis is also given to the study of the role of culture in human, spiritual and pastoral formation and candidates will get a significant grounding in the Church's social doctrine.

Liturgy	Homiletics	Pastoral Practica
Introduction to Liturgy	History and Theology of Preaching	Theological Reflection
Rite of Baptism	Introduction to Homiletics	Pastoral Counseling
RCIA	Homiletics and the Liturgical Year	Pastoral Care of Family
Rite of Holy Matrimony	Homiletics in a Multicultural Church	Ministry to the Sick
Rite of Christian Burial		Ministry to the Poor
The Eucharist		Ministry to the Incarcerated
		Catechetical Ministry