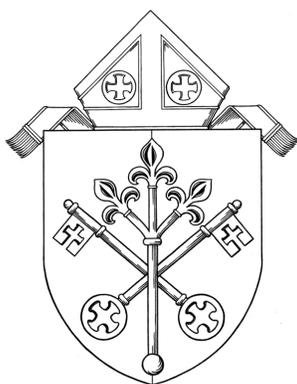




# THE FORMATION OF PERMANENT DEACONS

**in the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter**



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### Introduction

Through the imposition of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit, deacons share in Christ's mission and grace in a special way. The sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an imprint ("character") which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the "deacon" or servant of all. Among other tasks, deacons assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Word, in presiding over funerals, and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity.<sup>1</sup>

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**The permanent diaconate constitutes an important enrichment for the Church's mission.**

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Since the Second Vatican Council, the Latin Church has restored the diaconate "as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy," while the Churches of the East had always maintained it. This permanent diaconate, which can be conferred on married men who have reached thirty-five years of age and have the consent of their wives,<sup>2</sup> constitutes an important enrichment for the Church's mission. Indeed, it is appropriate and useful that men who carry out a truly diaconal ministry in the Church, whether in its liturgical and pastoral life or whether in its social and charitable works, should "be strengthened by the imposition of hands which has come down from the apostles."<sup>3</sup>

2. The standards and overarching program for the formation of permanent deacons have been approved and promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops which, in 2005, published the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*. This is the third edition of such standards, a fact which is important to note, since this edition is over twice as large as either of the previous editions. This indicates that, as the permanent diaconate has been reestablished in the Catholic Church, the Church has grown in her experience of the ministry of permanent deacons and therefore has been able to articulate more about their life and ministry, including how best to form them so that they are truly prepared to live out their vocation.

3. In the particular context of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St Peter, these standards have been adapted so as to form permanent deacons not in one local geographical diocese, but throughout the geographic expanse of the Ordinariate in the United States and Canada. As regards formation candidates for the diaconate in particular, the national standards are maintained while allowing a certain flexibility in the format and delivery of intellectual and pastoral formation modules. Likewise, the Ordinariate partners with local Dioceses, pastors, deacons, and with parishes in a variety of locations so as to tailor formation to the specific needs of individual candidates.

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1 Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1570.

2 *Code of Canon Law*, Can. 1031 §2; Can. 1037.

3 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1571, quoting the Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, 16 §6.

## Discernment and First Steps

4. The life of the parish community is the usual context in which a man begins to discern the vocational calling to ordained ministry in the Order of Deacons. The frequent celebration of the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist are essential in this period of formation and provide a foundation for ordained ministry in the Catholic Church. It is normal for men discerning the diaconate to be involved in the various aspects of parish life so as to nurture a relationship with the faithful and the other clergy assigned to that parish. A man discerning a vocation to the diaconate should be in regular conversation with his pastor and, where possible, identify a priest to serve as a regular confessor or spiritual director.

5. After prayerful reflection on the nature of the permanent diaconate and discussion with his pastor, the man discerning the diaconate should contact a member of the Ordinariate Vocations Team or the Director of Clergy Formation to discuss the vocation of the permanent deacon in further depth. Through the application process, the Director of Clergy Formation and the relevant member(s) of the Vocations Team will determine: (1) whether the applicant presents any impediments to ordination in the Catholic Church and (2) whether the potential candidate is generally fit for service as a permanent deacon. As part of its ongoing commitment to providing Safe Environments for children and vulnerable adults, the Ordinariate requires that all applicants agree to the appropriate background checks and receive online training in Safe Environment issues through *VIRTUS*. A personal psychological evaluation is required of applicants and, if the applicant is married, his spouse is invited into an ongoing conversation on how the exercise of ordained ministry will impact family life.

6. Once the application materials have been assembled, the Vocations Team together with its chair, the Director of Clergy Formation, will evaluate the dossier and make its recommendation to the Bishop. The Team is free to recommend that an applicant be accepted as a candidate for the diaconate and admitted into formation, or, should the situation warrant, be admitted into a period of Pre-Candidacy.

## The Pre-Candidacy Period

7. Formation for permanent diaconate presupposes a certain academic and experiential foundation upon

which to build. If the Vocations Team and Director of Clergy Formation determine that an applicant lacks a sufficient foundation, the applicant may be invited into a Pre-Candidacy period of preparation which focuses on catechesis, introductory theological education, and introductory spiritual formation. Factors which would motivate a recommendation for Pre-Candidacy include:

- The applicant does not have a university education or college degree;
- The applicant indicates a lack of clarity about his vocational discernment or understanding of diaconal ministry;
- The applicant has been in full communion with the Catholic Church for fewer than 5 years;
- The applicant has been away from formal education for a very lengthy period of time.
- The applicant exhibits a lack of effective maturity or other personal issues that would have bearing on effective ministry.

8. The Pre-Candidacy Period is normally two years in length. The first year is devoted to discernment, spiritual formation, and an extensive study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The second year has a more explicitly academic component and is meant as an introduction to biblical studies, to philosophy, to theological methods, and to the theology of the diaconate itself. The goal of Pre-Candidacy is to provide the proper foundation for university-level coursework that follows.

9. Pre-Candidacy also includes elements of pastoral and human formation, including a series of personality and marital indexes and discussions. For married candidates, the participation of the applicant's wife in these discussions is essential so that both may understand the nature and experience of diaconal ministry, thereby diminishing the stresses to family life which ordained ministry can create.

## Candidacy and Formation for the Diaconate

10. Once the Bishop accepts an applicant into the formation program, that candidate is admitted into a cohort of other candidates who will engage formation together as a group. If the Ordinariate has fewer than 15 candidates in formation, Ordinariate candidates

will be formed in conjunction with a cohort from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

Deacon formation cohorts in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston begin in the spring term of every odd-numbered year. Should, however, the Ordinariate admit at least 15 candidates, the formation cohort will begin in the academic term immediately following.

11. The standard duration for diaconate formation as articulated in the *National Directory* is 4 years. Thus, the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter considers 4 years the *normal* minimum formation period. The Bishop may make exceptions for candidates who already have substantial theological education and ministerial experience, particularly those who have previously served as ordained ministers in Episcopal/Anglican or other Ecclesial Communities.

12. Intellectual or academic formation for the diaconate generally proceeds according to one of two tracks:

Track 1: This track is designed for those candidates without an undergraduate college degree and will terminate in the conferral of a bachelor's degree.

Track 2: Those who possess an undergraduate degree will be asked to undertake a graduate-level course of study in theology, ideally culminating in the conferral of a graduate degree. The Bishop may also determine that another program is more suited to the individual needs of the candidate.

13. The Ordinariate partners with the University of St. Thomas in Houston for the intellectual formation of deacon candidates. Coursework is administered by the University's School of Theology and is available in an online, distance-learning format. While the partnership with the University of St. Thomas is the ordinary means of academic formation, the Bishop may determine whether another academic program better suits the needs of an individual candidate.

Courses offered through the University of St. Thomas School of Theology meet one or two evenings per week, depending on the level. The cycle of courses at each level is provided in an appendix.

14. Pastoral and Spiritual formation for the diaconate is essential for effective ministry. This type of formation is provided in monthly, Saturday formation sessions meant to compliment academic coursework. These monthly sessions, taught by distance-learning as needed, focus on specific topics such as pastoral theology, canon law,

marriage counseling, and liturgy.

15. Liturgical formation specific to the Ordinariate will be provided by means of a week-long intensive session led by the Ordinariate's Director of Worship and held at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Walsingham in Houston. This session will focus on the liturgical and sacramental life of the Ordinariate and ministry as prescribed by the rubrics of *Divine Worship: The Missal* and *Divine Worship: Occasional Services*. These sessions will also be an occasion to review the specific policies and norms operative in the Ordinariate, particularly as these often differ from those in the local Dioceses.

16. A final evaluation at the end of the program involves both instructors and all those involved in the formation process. Candidates are evaluated on the basis of academic performance as well as pastoral ministry and the ministry of charity – in other words, the evaluation is meant to be a holistic review of areas of formation articulated in the *National Directory*. The evaluation is submitted to the Bishop who, along with the Governing Council of the Ordinariate, issues the Call to Orders.

17. Throughout formation, the candidate is to meet regularly with a mentor, ideally a deacon already involved in pastoral ministry. Mentors for married candidates should be a married permanent deacon. Each candidate should also have a spiritual director as well as regular recourse to their proper pastor.

## Ongoing Formation After Ordination

18. Growing in the grace of ordained ministry implies and necessitates formation which continues after ordination. Local Dioceses will offer opportunities for deacons to receive specific training, such as training in Natural Family Planning, marriage counseling, and the training required to be an advocate in the marriage annulment process. The annual Ordinariate Clergy Assembly is a further example of ongoing formation. Deacons should also be attentive for other retreats, seminars, and conferences which will help them grow in their pastoral effectiveness.

## Program Costs

19. The overall cost for formation for the diaconate over will vary depending on the type of academic program chosen and whether the applicant is admitted directly

into Candidacy or the Pre-Candidacy Program. At this point, the Ordinariate is not able to provide tuition scholarships for those in formation for the permanent diaconate. An agreement between the candidate and his sponsoring Parish or Parochial Community will need to be forged during the application process in order to determine the distribution of costs associated with

tuition and formation. The Ordinariate recommends that a sponsoring community provide at least 50% of the associated costs.

To the extent possible, the Ordinariate will assume the administrative costs of the formation program, as well as providing the week-long intensive sessions at the Chancery and Cathedral complex in Houston. ■

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## Appendix 1

Formation for the Diaconate  
according to the

*National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*

There are four aspects of diaconal formation:

1. Human Dimension
2. Spiritual Dimension
3. Intellectual Dimension
4. Pastoral Dimension

The norms in the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons* in the United States make it clear that there is overlap in these areas in that formation draws on past life experience, is meant to be integrative, and is directed towards pastoral application.

Each candidate, after being properly vetted, must have a spiritual director who must be a priest or deacon approved by the Director of Clergy Formation. The candidate should have active involvement of their pastor in their formation, perhaps mediated through a senior deacon, so that the candidate gets experience in pastoral ministry. Finally, there need to be periodic gatherings of the candidates, gatherings which also include deacons, so that there can be ongoing dialogue about what it is like to serve as a deacon and so that the social dimension can be discussed.

### 1. Human Dimension

A deacon must be a person who can relate well to others and whose personality does not prevent others from receiving their ministry. All human beings have their weaknesses, but the candidate should be actively working on minimizing the effects of those weaknesses, including marital weaknesses, that would negatively impact his ministry. It is also expected that candidates would exercise discretion in the use of social media. This aspect of formation is carried out through personal mentoring by one's pastor or a counselor, as well as through small group interaction.

### 2. Spiritual Dimension

During both the Pre-Candidacy and Candidacy stages there will be instruction in spirituality including *lectio divina*, the Liturgy of the Hours, etc. While frequent participation in the Mass and prayer of the the Liturgy of the Hours are, in a certain sense, the foundation of the spiritual life of the deacon, ongoing instruction in spirituality can be helpful in order to deepen the content and experience of liturgical and devotional prayer.

### 3. Intellectual Dimension

*The National Directory* provides guidance both in the content and manner of instruction:

- a. Sacred Scripture and its interpretation, including the role of Tradition and the Magisterium. This should be taught with a view to its application in spiritual formation, preaching, evangelization, catechesis, and other pastoral activity. Thus there should be at least courses in Old and New Testament content and theology, courses that include interpretation and application.
- b. Introduction to the Fathers of the Church and a basic knowledge of the history of the Church.
- c. Fundamental theology: Sources, the relationship between faith and reason, etc.
- d. Dogmatic theology: Trinitarian, Christological, pneumatological, ecclesial dimensions to be included; Christian anthropology, sacraments, eschatology, and Mariology. Note that the Church is a communion of Latin and Eastern Churches.
- e. Christian morality in its personal, familial, and social dimensions, including the social doctrine of the Church. That this be deeply grasped in its spiritual as well as intellectual aspects is continually emphasized.
- f. Spiritual theology, the spiritual traditions of the Church as applied to one's own spiritual journey, and the spiritual life of the faithful.
- g. Liturgy and its historical, spiritual, and juridical aspects, with particular emphasis on RCIA and the liturgical rites that the deacon will celebrate.
- h. Canon Law, especially those parts about the rights and obligations of clergy and those on Baptism, marriage, and Christian burial.
- i. Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue principles, norms, and dimensions in pastoral ministry. This, of course, overlaps some with Church history.
- j. Theology of Catholic evangelization (e.g. evangelization of cultures and the enculturation of the message of faith).

### 4. Pastoral Dimension

- a. The Church's ministry of the Word – e.g. homiletics, catechesis, in preparation for the sacraments
- b. The Church's ministry of liturgy – e.g. liturgical practice
- c. The Church's ministry of charity and justice – e.g. care for the poor, fostering reconciliation

These involve an instructional aspect, but they are focused on field education in which the candidate gets “hands on” practice, which should also include multicultural awareness.

## PRE-CANDIDACY DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM

SEMESTER YEAR	ACADEMIC	PASTORAL	SPIRITUAL
Spring Year 1	Scripture I: Old Testament Tradition I: <i>Catechism</i>		Discernment Day of Prayer
Fall Year 1	Scripture 2: New Testament Tradition 2: <i>Catechism</i>		Discernment Day of Prayer
Spring Year 2	Introduction to Biblical Studies Introduction to Philosophy	Introduction to Pastoral Studies	Introduction to Spiritual Formation Discernment Day of Prayer
Fall Year 2	Introduction to Theological Methods Introduction to the Theology of the Diaconate	Personal Piety and Popular Devotions	Prayer and Prayerfulness in Christian Discernment

## DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM

Standard Course Sequence | Diploma Track

SEMESTER YEAR	ACADEMIC (2 credit hrs/course)	PASTORAL (1 credit hr/course)	SPIRITUAL
Spring Year 1	Covenant and Kingdom (Gen-Kings) Fundamental Theology	Human and Religious Development	Human Formation: Personal Strengths
Fall Year 1	Prophets and Writings Introduction to Liturgy	Proclamation and Homiletics I	Self-Knowledge in the Spiritual Life
Spring Year 2	The Gospels Moral Theology	Pastoral Guidance and Counseling	Introduction to Christian Spirituality
Fall Year 2	Paul and the Letters Early Church Fathers	Catholic Social Teaching	History and Traditions of Christian Spirituality
Spring Year 3	Church History Doctrine of God	Canon Law I	Works of Mercy: Corporal and Spiritual
Fall Year 3	Christology Sacraments I	Canon Law II	Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation
Spring Year 4	Introduction to Church Sacraments II	Presidential leadership and Homiletics II	The Holy Spirit and Dimensions of Ministry
Fall Year 4	Anthropology and Eschatology Contemporary Moral Questions	Presidential Leadership and Sacramental Celebration	Ordination and Beyond
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>32 credit hours</b>	<b>8 credit hours</b>	<b>0 credit hours</b>

# DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM

Standard Course Sequence | Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies Track

<b>SEMESTER YEAR</b>	<b>ACADEMIC (3 credit hrs/course)</b>	<b>PASTORAL (1 credit hr/course)</b>	<b>SPIRITUAL</b>
Spring Year 1	Church History	Human and Religious Development	Human Formation: Personal Strengths
Summer	Theology & Themes Old Testament		
Fall Year 1	Foundations of Catholic Faith	Proclamation and Homiletics I	Self-Knowledge in the Spiritual Life
Spring Year 2	Patrology	Pastoral Guidance and Counseling	Introduction to Christian Spirituality
Summer	Gospels		
Fall Year 2	Catholic Morality	Catholic Social Teaching	History and Traditions of Christian Spirituality
Spring Year 3	Trinity and Incarnation	Canon Law I	Works of Mercy: Corporal and Spiritual
Summer	Paul & the Letters		
Fall Year 3	Mission of the Church (Ecclesiology)	Canon Law II	Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation
Spring Year 4	Introduction to Liturgy	Presidential leadership and Homiletics II	The Holy Spirit and Dimensions of Ministry
Summer	Sacraments in Parish Life		
Fall Year 4	Anthropology and Eschatology	Presidential Leadership and Sacramental Celebration	Ordination and Beyond
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>36 credit hours</b>	<b>8 credit hours</b>	<b>0 credit hours</b>

