



## Diocese of Sacramento Office of Clergy Formation

### The Vocation of Permanent Deacon



### What does a Deacon do?

The deacon is Minister of the Word, Liturgy and Charity:

- The Ministry of the Word includes proclaiming the gospel and teaching the doctrines and traditions of the church. The deacon provides oversight and direction to catechists and the faithful, who evangelize, teach and prepare people to receive the Sacraments. At the Mass the deacon proclaims the Gospel of Christ and instructs the faithful on the meaning of Scripture by preaching.
- As Minister of Liturgy the deacon is a visible and grace-filled sign of the integral connection between sharing at the Lord's Eucharistic table and serving the poor in the community. The deacon assists at Mass, may preside over the Rite of Baptism, witnesses the Sacrament of Matrimony, presides at Communion services, funerals, and Benediction and administers sacramentals and blessings.
- The Ministry of Charity is the Church's expression of our Lord's outreach to the poor, sick, the hungry, the imprisoned and otherwise afflicted and marginalized, confronting human injustice and protecting the dignity of human life from conception to natural death.

### What does a Deacon do?

The ministry of deacon is a ministry of service to the Church. The service of the deacon is the Church's service sacramentalized - a living sign of the servanthood of the Church. A deacon - ordained by the bishop - is an extension of the bishop's ministry of service and under his direction collaborates with the priest for the pastoral care of the faithful of the local Church. Within the diaconal ministry areas of Word, Liturgy and Charity, a deacon serves as Apostle of the New Evangelization providing oversight and direction to catechists and other faithful who evangelize and teach, as visible sign of the integral connection between the Eucharist and the poor and as Advocate of Mercy in his community.

### How do I know I am called to be a deacon?

There is no simple answer to this question. However, we believe that God's will can be discovered by the person of faith through personal prayer, competent spiritual direction and recognition that the Church has the obligation to discern if such a vocation is truly present.

Certain personal, social and spiritual qualities are required for ordained ministry. These are generally of two kinds: those that pattern the candidate in the likeness of Christ, and those required to meet the special needs of the local Church at a particular time and place. Anyone contemplating a vocation to the Diaconate should be actively involved in ministry in his local community and/or parish. A candidate's desire to be a deacon is never sufficient in itself. He must, in addition, await prayerful, enlightened decision of the Church.

### Criteria for Entry into Formation Program

Men seeking application into Diaconate formation come with an understanding that the Diaconate is a call to a dedicated life of service, to a specific vocation. The parish is the primary place where applicants experience Church. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the community and particularly of the pastor to invite and to present to the Church from among its members those who may be qualified to serve as ordained ministers.

The deacon stands in the midst of the community as one who makes present in his person and deeds the servant character of Christ and Church. Through the sacramental ordination the deacon becomes a public sign to the world that the Church is authentically servant. The deacon is the animator and promoter of the common service of the Church



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## **Personal Qualifications /Requirements for Applicants at the Time of Application**

- Be at least 31 years of age but not older than 62 at the beginning of the Aspirancy year.
- Be a practicing Roman Catholic and a resident within the Diocese of Sacramento, for five consecutive years or more.
- Have demonstrated leadership ability either within his parish or community organization for five consecutive years or more.
- Be in good physical and mental health.
- Have sufficient financial and employment stability to be able to pay the yearly tuition charged throughout the program.
- For married men: have been married in the Catholic Church at least five years, have the positive consent of his wife, and acceptance of his children, and a well-adjusted family life.
- Be sensitive to the time and needs of his family and have sufficient time for diaconal formation and ministry.
- Possess a High School diploma or equivalent and the ability to handle graduate level academic programs along with the desire and capacity for growth, continued education, and developing skills for ministry.
- Possess an eagerness for prayer and acceptance of spiritual formation and be faithful to the traditions / teachings of the Church.
- Have a Basic Catechist Certificate obtained through the Diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis.
- Have no irregularities & other impediments, i.e., committed heresy; committed an act of voluntary homicide or procured a completed abortion or positively cooperated in either; ever mutilated yourself or another gravely and maliciously or attempted suicide; ever attempted to exercise an act of orders reserved to bishops or priests, while either lacking that order or prohibited from its exercise by some declared or imposed canonical penalty; ever been ordained to the Priesthood or the Permanent Diaconate. (*Code of Canon Law c.1041*)

## **What to expect**

### **Inquiry Period:** (Duration— 1 year)

- Discernment with family and pastor
- Submission of Inquiry Form
- Recommendation from Pastor
- 4 Orientation sessions
- Interview with Director of Clergy Formation
- Submission of formal application
- Interview with Admissions/Scrutiny Committee
- Evaluations/recommendations submitted by pastor, etc.
- Psychological evaluation (applicant only)
- Recommendation for Approval, Rejection or Deferral by Admissions/Scrutiny Committee
- Approval for admissions by Bishop

### **Year One—Aspirancy** (Duration—1 year)

- 6 Formation weekends
- 8-10 small group meetings
- Deacon mentor shadowing (aspirant only)
- Spiritual Director consultations (spouse suggested)
- Ministry experience: Extraordinary Minister of the cup, Lector, ministry to the poor (aspirant only)
- Discernment and Theological reflection
- History and theology of the diaconate
- Fundamentals of liturgical theology (on-line classes)
- Fundamentals of church history (on-line classes)  
(On-line classes optional for spouses)

**Ends with 3 day retreat and Rite of Candidacy**

### **Year Two—Candidacy** (Duration—1 year)

- 6 Formation weekends
- 8-10 small group meetings
- Deacon Mentor shadowing (candidate only)
- Spiritual Director consultations (spouse suggested)
- Ministry experience: Extraordinary Minister of the cup, Lector, ministry to the poor (aspirant only)
- Pastoral field education: Ministry to the sick (candidate only)
- Discernment and Theological reflection
- Church History (on-line classes)
- Scripture (on-line classes)
- Liturgical theology (on-line classes)  
(on-line classes optional for spouses)
- Canon Law I (summer course) - Candidate Only
- Homiletics 1 (summer course) - Candidate Only

**Ends with 3 day retreat and Rite of Lector**

### **Year Three—Lector** (Duration—1 year)

- 6 formation weekends
- 8-10 small group meetings
- Deacon mentor shadowing ( candidate only)
- Spiritual Director consultations (spouses suggested)
- Ministry experience: Extraordinary Minister of the cup, Lector, ministry to the poor, Acolyte (candidate only)
- Pastoral Field Education: Ecumenical ministry experience (candidate only)
- Discernment and Theological reflection
- Liturgical theology
- Church History (on-line classes)
- Scripture (on-line classes)  
(on-line classes optional for spouse)
- Canon Law II (summer course) - Candidate only
- Homiletics II (summer course) - Candidate only

**Ends with 3 day retreat and Rite of Acolyte**

### **Year Four—Acolyte** (Duration—1 year)

- 6 formation weekends
- 8-10 small group meetings
- Deacon mentor shadowing (candidate only)
- Spiritual Director consultations (spouse suggested)
- Ministry experience: Extraordinary Minister of the cup, Lector, ministry to the poor, Acolyte (candidate only)
- Pastoral field education: Multicultural ministry experience (candidate only)
- Discernment and Theological reflection
- Church History (on--line classes)
- Systematic theology (on-line classes)
- Pastoral theology (on-line classes)  
(on-line classes optional for spouses)

**Ends with one week retreat and Rite of Ordination**

### **Post Ordination** (Duration—3 years)

- Twice a year one day Post Ordination class

### **On-Going Continuing Education/Retreat**

- Two continuing education days annually
- One annual retreat