

PERMANENT DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM



Diocese of Scranton



8/20/2023

Table of Contents

PERMANENT DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM	1
REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCEPTANCE.....	5
ADMISSION PROCEDURE.....	7
ADMINISTRATION	9
ACADEMIC FORMATION	13
SPIRITUAL FORMATION.....	17
PASTORAL FORMATION	19
CANDIDATES' WIVES AND FAMILIES	21
STEPS TO ORDINATION	22
THE EVALUATION PROCESS.....	23
FINANCIAL PROVISIONS	24
<i>Addenda</i>	25
FACULTIES GRANTED TO DEACONS BY THE BISHOP OF SCRANTON	25

PERMANENT DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM

Diocese of Scranton

The diaconate had its origins in the time of the apostles and flourished during the first four centuries of the Church's history. For various reasons the diaconate then went into decline and in the Western Church became little more than a step on the way to the priesthood. It was the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that reestablished the Order of Deacon as "a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy" (LG 29).

With the permission of the Holy See the permanent diaconate was restored in this country in 1968. Today more than 18,000 deacons are serving in U.S. dioceses. In June 1988, Bishop James C. Timlin, D.D., established an Office for the Permanent Diaconate in the Diocese of Scranton at St. Pius X Seminary, Dalton. At that time, he appointed Monsignor David Bohr, S.T.D. as its first Director. On November 27, 1993, the first class of twenty-four permanent deacons was ordained. Another seventeen were ordained in 1999 and fifteen in 2004. In 2010, the Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L., was ordained and installed as the tenth bishop of the Diocese of Scranton. His analysis of diocesan chancery operations led to the reorganization of several diocesan offices and in July 2011, Bishop Bambera appointed Monsignor Bohr to once again lead this important ministry as Secretary for Clergy Formation, which includes directing the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program. Seventy-eight deacons now actively serve our diocese, some having transferred from other dioceses.

In November 1995, Pope John Paul II met with the members of the Congregation of the Clergy and their consultants and presented an address, *The Permanent Deacon's Ordination*. He focused his comments on the identity, mission, and ministry of the deacon in the Church "in view of the new evangelization on the threshold of the third millennium." (1) The Congregation for the Clergy and the Congregation for Education held *plenary assemblies* to study the diaconate. In turn, they subsequently published a *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* (DMLPD) and *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* (BNFPD). Both these documents were promulgated as a joint text by Pope John Paul II on February 22, 1998. Here in the U.S., the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2005 promulgated a new *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, which is based on the Vatican guidelines. Then, on November 13, 2020, Archbishop José H. Gomez, in his capacity as USCCB President, received correspondence from His Eminence Beniamino Cardinal Stella that the Congregation for the Clergy has approved ad quinquennium the Second Edition of the *National Directory* (ND2).

What the Permanent Diaconate is NOT

The deacon is not a "mini-priest". Nor is he a stand-in for the priest, nor an available approximation thereof in a time of a shortage of vocations to the ordained priesthood. The deacon is not an all-purpose assistant to the pastor or priests, although he will render much assistance in the performance of duties or functions which are common to both priests and deacons. The deacon is not to be distinguished mainly by what he cannot do (celebrate Mass, hear Confession, anoint the sick, etc.) nor by his status as a married man (with marriage seen almost as the reason disqualifying him from more vital roles). He is not a "lay deacon" either. A layperson is someone who is not ordained. A permanent deacon, even if he is married and has twelve children and forty-five grandchildren, is no longer a layperson. He is in Sacred Orders. He is a member of the clergy as a result of the permanent, sacramental character received on the day of his ordination.

¹ Pope John Paul II, *The Permanent Deacon's Ordination*, An Address to the *Plenarium* of the Congregation for the Clergy (November 30, 1995).

The Deacon within the Renewed Understanding of "Church"

The Second Vatican Council gave us a renewed "ecclesiology," that is, a more vibrant way of viewing the Church based upon a rediscovery of our ancient traditions, as found in Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Vatican II spoke of the Church as "mystery," "sacrament," "communion," and "mission" (2): "The Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and the unity of the whole human race" (LG 1). Through faith and baptism, each and every one of us becomes a member of the Body of Christ and shares in the continuation of Jesus' mission and ministry. Christ himself, in and through his Church, actually continues to give voice to his saving work and mission. The Church exists to evangelize, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed. The Church is the seed and herald of the kingdom of God; it is that dynamic principle which makes visible what God is doing in and for the world.

The Council's Decree on the Lay Apostolate tells us that "the laity, too, share in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ; and, therefore, have their own role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world" (AA2). Yet, over and above the baptismal vocation to holiness and ministry given to each of us, the Church has a need to define designated ministries as part of its official ministry. To this end, the Church "ordains" certain persons or groups from among the baptized to offer the service of leadership and sacramental nourishment, thereby empowering the whole community of the faithful to realize its mission in the world.

Vatican II points out, first of all, that "The order of Bishop is the successor to the College of the Apostles in teaching authority and pastoral rule" (CD 4). Through their union with each other and the successor of Peter, the College of Bishops is called to ensure the worldwide unity of the Church, and they jointly bear responsibility for its fidelity to the mission and teaching of Jesus. The Bishop, then, is both the focal point of the fullness of the ordained priesthood and the head of the College of Presbyters. Together, the Bishop and his priests constitute the College of Ministers who bring the ordained priestly ministry of Christ to his people. Within a diocese, priests assist the Bishop as his representatives in and to the local communities of faith. They do so through the ministry of Word and sacrament and through their leadership role in guiding the communities in fidelity and charity.

"In communion with the Bishop and priests, deacons are ordained for a distinct ministry, which is indicated by their name: they are ordained, says the ancient tradition (repeated at Vatican II), for **service**." (3) They are thus ordained, Vatican II tells us, "not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service.... they serve the People of God in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity" (LG29). The permanent diaconate is a sacramental sign of Jesus Christ who came among us "as one who serves the needs of all". As Pope John Paul II told the Permanent Deacons, whom he addressed in Detroit: "the service of the deacon is the Church's service sacramentalized ... By your ordination you are configured to Christ in his servant role. You are also meant to be living signs of the servanthood of his church."

2 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, Final Report, *Ecclesia Sub Verbo Dei Mysteria Christi Celebrans Pro Salute Mundi* (December 7, 1995).

3 National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Permanent Deacons in the United States: Guidelines on Their Formation and Ministry (1984 Revised), no. 24.

The Diaconate: A Ministry of Servant Leadership

In his Pastoral Letter, *Wounded and Loved, Regathering the Scattered*, Bishop Bambera shares his vision and hope for the local church in Scranton. Through this work, he reminds us that by our Baptism each of us is called to servant leadership, which helps us to transform our hurting world through compassion, solidarity, justice, and love. Service to God's redemptive plan and taking an active part in society belongs to the baptismal mission of every Christian; however, the permanent deacon has a special witness to give.

In explaining this special witness and in putting the role of the deacon within the Church into perspective, Bishop Bambera reflected upon the words of the Second Vatican Council and explained: "Strengthened by sacramental grace, you are called 'to serve' the People of God, in the *diakonia* of liturgy, word and charity, in communion with the Bishop and his presbyterate. As such, you are ordained to be a sign and instrument of Christ, who came 'not to be served but to serve,' and to give his life for the sake of the many. Your service to the People of God is threefold: service to the Word of God – service at the altar of the Lord – and service to the poor."

To this end, the deacon is a representative symbol of the inner connections of the three great areas of the Church's life: Word, sacrament, and service. Furthermore, Pope Francis said during the 2016 Jubilee of Deacons: "when you serve at the table of the Eucharist, there you will find the presence of Jesus, who gives himself to you so that you can give yourselves to others" (ND2, 35).

- a) ***The Ministry of Charity and Justice*** -- "From its beginnings, and particularly during the first centuries, the diaconate has been primarily a ministry of love and justice ... Early descriptions of the duties of deacons place them among widows and orphans, with the sick and at the graves of the dead, and serving immigrants and exiles The 1981 survey found deacons (in the United States) serving abused children, the aged, battered women, the bereaved, the blind, the deaf, the divorced, drug addicts, the dying, the handicapped, the homeless, the ill, prisoners, refugees, the rural poor, street people, victims of racial discrimination, etc. Deacons are meeting these people, in the name of the Church, and among them are representing the care of Jesus the Servant."⁽⁴⁾ "As by ordination, particularly and officially committed to service, the deacon is to inspire, promote and help coordinate the service that the whole Church must undertake in imitation of Christ."⁽⁵⁾
- b) ***The Ministry of the Word of God*** -- "The deacon's ministry of the Word is also a very far-ranging one. It may include proclaiming the Gospel at the liturgy, preaching, catechetical instruction and other forms of teaching, counseling, instruction of catechumens, giving retreats, outreach to alienated Catholics, parish renewal programs, etc... Besides these more or less formal occasions, deacons may also have many opportunities to speak about Jesus Christ more informally, especially as they carry out their ministries of love and justice. Deacons who have secular occupations also are able to witness to the Gospel in the marketplace, where they meet the demands of their work both as committed Catholics and as ordained ministers and use the opportunities their work provides to bring the gospel to bear on the concrete circumstances of everyday individual and social life."⁽⁶⁾

4 Ibid., nos. 35-36.

5 Ibid., no. 37.

6 Ibid., no. 39.

- c) ***The Ministry of Liturgy*** -- "The ancient tradition appears to indicate that it was because the deacon was the servant at the table of the poor that he had his distinctive liturgical roles of gathering the gifts and distributing communion at the Table of the Lord. Similarly, there is a reciprocal correspondence between his role as a proclaimer of the Gospel and his role as an articulator of the needs of the Church in the general intercessions. In his formal liturgical roles, the deacon brings the poor to the Church and the church to the poor. He thus symbolizes in his roles, the grounding of the Church's life in the Eucharist and the mission of the Church in the loving service of the needy." (7) "At the Eucharist, the deacon may proclaim the Gospel, preach, voice the needs of the people in the general intercessions, assist in the presentation of the gifts, and distribute communion. The deacon can also perform liturgical roles, such as solemnly baptizing, witnessing marriages, bringing Viaticum to the dying, and presiding over funerals and burials. In addition to these roles, he can also preside over liturgies of the Word, the Liturgy of Hours, exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, lead nonsacramental reconciliation services, conduct prayer services for the sick and dying, and administer certain of the Church's sacramentals." (8)

Through ordination, the Church publicly recognizes men whose lives of service at home, work, in the neighborhood and in the parish are already signs of *diakonia*. Training and ordination never make a deacon out of a non-deacon. Grace builds on nature, and the purpose of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program described herein is to call forth men with natural diaconal talent and to allow grace to build upon their already demonstrated talent and charism for Christian *service*.

7 Ibid., no. 28.

8 Ibid., no. 42.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCEPTANCE

- 1) **CANDIDATE:** A male who has been baptized and confirmed.
- 2) **AGE:** He is at least thirty-one (31) years of age and normally less than sixty (60) years of age at the time of his admission to the program.
- 3) **STATUS:** Married or single

If married, he has been married at least five years and lived in a valid, stable marriage prior to requesting admittance into the permanent diaconate formation program. He has the expressed consent and support of his wife who will be expected to participate actively in the formation program. He can give the time for study and service without detriment to young children in his family. *He understands that if widowed, he cannot marry again. (For those recently widowed, at least three years should elapse prior to their acceptance into the formation program.)*

If single, he enjoys a stable, settled life with a history of healthy relationships. He understands the implications of the charism of celibacy.

- 4) **NATURAL GIFTS:** He enjoys good health with no debilitating conditions. He is a man of proven maturity and balance, recognized among his peers as one having a genuine desire to serve the needs of others. He is very generous with his time and energy and is highly flexible to the needs and wishes of others.
- 5) **SPIRITUALITY:** He is a man of prayer willing to make personal sacrifices to be a sacramental sign of Christ's self-giving love. He is a man of faith who professes what the Church teaches and participates faithfully in the Church's sacramental life. He manifests Gospel values in his lifestyles, and is a man of integrity in family life, in business and work, and in all his relationships with others. *(Furthermore, five years should elapse between a convert's or returning Catholic's entry into the Church and his acceptance into a permanent diaconate formation program.)*
- 6) **EDUCATION:** An undergraduate university or college-level degree is preferable. Graduation from high school or its equivalent, however, is required along with the evident ability to complete the necessary studies during the formation period. Credit for theological studies previously completed will not be given except after personal evaluation by the Director, and then only for courses pertinent to the diaconate and recently completed.
- 7) **EMPLOYMENT:** He possesses financial security with a history of steady employment. It is expected that the diaconate will be a part-time, volunteer ministry for most deacons, so that each must have a regular source of income for supporting self and family. His employment, furthermore, should not require frequent travel or reassignments.
- 8) **CHURCH/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** The applicant should have a history of active, service-oriented involvement in the parish or community. He is able to work in a cooperative spirit with the pastor and other parish leaders.

- 9) **FORMATION:** Upon acceptance into the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program he will first do a period of Aspirancy and be successfully evaluated prior to being officially received as a Candidate for the Order of Deacon. He will then complete four more years of formation with ongoing evaluation before being called to ordination by the Bishop.
- 10) **DIACONAL MINISTRY:** The applicant should be able to discuss intelligently the deacon's role in parish life. He sees self-giving service as the priority of diaconal ministry and is sensitive to social justice issues and the plight of the poor. In addition to the time spent in liturgical celebrations, he must be willing to serve twelve hours each week in pastoral ministry without financial remuneration, in an assignment determined by the Bishop.
- 11) **COMMITMENT:** He is willing to make a life-long commitment to serve the Church and to promise obedience to the Bishop.
- 12) **CONTINUED GROWTH:** As an ordained deacon, he will be willing to develop his pastoral skills and knowledge of the faith through further study and participation in programs designated by the diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

- 1) Approximately six months prior to the start of each new formation class, pastors will be requested to nominate men whom they believe would be worthy applicants for the permanent diaconate. Those nominated will be invited to attend information sessions, which will explain the various aspects of the program. The participants will be instructed to take time to discern prayerfully God's call to them, and to include in this process their wife and children where applicable.
- 2) Only those men who have been first nominated by their pastor, another priest, or permanent deacon, and who feel they meet all the requirements, may request from the diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation an application form which is to be completed and returned along with the following items:
 - a) original, official college transcript (*or high school if applicant did not attend college*)
 - b) official baptismal record (*dated within the past six months*)
 - c) copy of confirmation record
 - d) copy of marriage record (*where applicable*)
 - e) letter from wife (*where applicable*) indicating her initial consent for her husband's application to the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program
 - e) two recent passport-sized photographs: one of the applicant alone, and if married, a photo of applicant and his wife together
 - f) typewritten essay (*200-300 words*) on "*What Is My Understanding of Diaconate Ministry?*"
 - g) results of criminal background clearances including PA State Police Criminal History, Act 33 Child Abuse History Certification and Act 114/FBI Federal Check with fingerprinting (*application and instructions will be provided*), and
 - h) the signature page (*included in the application packet*) agreeing to abide by the Diocese of Scranton Code of Pastoral Conduct.
- 3) After reception of the application and the return of the pastor's and other recommendation forms (*which will be sent out by the Office for the Permanent Diaconate upon the receipt of the application*), the applicant and his wife will be interviewed by a designated representative of the Secretary of Clergy Formation. The Admissions Committee will review each applicant's file and decide whether he should continue the process and be accepted into the *ASPIRANCY PHASE*, wait until a future time, or terminate the process. The decision of the Admissions Committee upon approval of the Bishop of Scranton will be sent to the applicant.
- 4) For those who are accepted into the Aspirancy phase (*year one of formation*):
 - a) A psychologist will meet with the applicant and his wife to administer a battery of standard psychological and personality-profile tests.

- b) The applicant will complete Safe Environment training to include both the *VIRTUS, Protecting God's Children Program* and PA Mandated Reporter Training (recognition and reporting of child abuse).
 - c) The applicant will also submit the results of a medical examination to the Director.
- 5) At the completion of the first year of formation the Admissions/Evaluation Committee will review the now completed application process and evaluate the Aspirant's progress during his first year. The Committee will make a consensus recommendation to the Bishop, who makes a final determination on whether or not to accept him into the **CANDIDACY PHASE** to prepare for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate. The Director will inform the Aspirant and his pastor of the final decision.

(The entire body of personal information gathered during the application process is held in strict confidence and will become the property of the Diocese of Scranton and will not be accessible to the Aspirant/Candidate.)

ADMINISTRATION

The Secretary for Clergy Formation is appointed by the Bishop of Scranton and serves as the Director of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program and Director of Ongoing Clergy Formation. The Secretary for Clergy Formation is also responsible to oversee the Diocesan Vocations Office and Seminarian Formation program.

With specific regard to the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program, the Secretary for Clergy Formation is responsible to consult with the coordinators of the spiritual, pastoral, liturgical formation, and candidates' wives and families programs, as well as the coordinator of the Hispanic Aspirants / Candidates.

Responsibilities of those who facilitate the Formation Program are as follows:

A) **The Secretary for Clergy Formation as Director of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program**

- 1) Is appointed by the Diocesan Bishop and serves as a member of the Diocesan Curia.
- 2) Is accountable to the Bishop in matters pertaining to particular aspirants/candidates and regarding the nature and structure of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program.
- 3) Reports directly to the Vicar General in all temporal matters pertaining to the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program and in matters related to all inter-Secretarial efforts.
- 4) Is ultimately responsible for the coordination of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program.
- 5) Serves as the Coordinator of Academic Formation for the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program:
 - a. Designs and schedules academic courses for candidates.
 - b. Gathers and reviews the instructors' evaluation of the candidates' participation in the courses.
 - c. Counsels the candidates regarding academic matters.
 - d. Keeps a file for each candidate concerning his academic formation.
- 6) Participates in the evaluation of candidates and presents the recommendations of the Admissions/Evaluation Committee to the Bishop.
- 7) Interviews candidates yearly to assess their progress and accepts recommendations and observations regarding the program.
- 8) Coordinates the continuing education and spiritual formation programs for permanent deacons after their ordination.
- 9) Keeps priests and laity aware of the restoration and significance of the permanent diaconate.
- 10) Maintains contact with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, as well as the National Association of Diaconate Directors.

B) Coordinator of Spiritual Formation

- 1) Is always a priest with appropriate qualifications and experience, recommended by the Director and appointed by the Bishop, who is willing to serve in this capacity for the benefit and success of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program.
- 2) The Coordinator of Spiritual Formation is accountable to the Director and is responsible to:
 - a. Assist as needed with retreats, days of reflection, and other spiritual exercises for candidates.
 - b. Ensure in consultation with the Director that each candidate is assigned an appropriate spiritual director, who is also a priest approved by the Bishop, and meets with each candidate once a year to discuss his participation in the Spiritual Formation Program.
 - c. Counsel candidates concerning their spiritual life and meet with their spiritual directors on a regular basis in order to ensure that this element serves to integrate both the theological and pastoral dimensions of the formation program.
 - d. Participate as a member of the Admissions/Evaluation Committee but absents himself from the evaluation of candidates with whom he has met on matters that pertain to the internal forum.

C) Coordinator of the Candidate Advisor and Pastoral Formation Programs

- 1) Is a person with appropriate qualifications and experience, recommended by the Director and appointed by the Bishop, who is willing to serve in this capacity for the benefit and success of the Permanent Diaconate Program.
- 2) In collaboration with the Director, the Coordinator is responsible to:
 - a. Assign a permanent deacon of the Diocese as a Formation Advisor for every candidate and supervise this element of the program.
 - b. Assign and coordinate the field education experiences of the candidate during his third and fourth years of formation.
 - c. Meet with each candidate at least once a year to discuss his participation in this part of the Diaconate Formation Program.
 - d. Meet annually with the Formation Advisors to evaluate this element of the program.
 - e. Participate as a member of the Admissions/Evaluation Committee.

D) Coordinator of Liturgical Formation

- 1) Is a person with appropriate qualifications and experience, recommended by the Director and appointed by the Bishop, who is willing to serve in this capacity for the benefit and success of the Permanent Diaconate Program.
- 2) The Coordinator of Liturgical Formation works in collaboration with the Director and is responsible to:
 - a. Schedule courses and practicums pertaining to the candidates' liturgical training.
 - b. Attest to each candidate's readiness to assume his proper liturgical roles, including his preparedness to be given the faculty to preach.
 - c. Supervise the planning of all liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations of the formation program, including communal celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, Days of Reflection, retreats, etc.
 - d. Participate as a member of the Admissions/Evaluation Committee.

E) Coordinator of the Candidates' Wives and Families Program

- 1) Is a wife of a deacon with appropriate qualifications and experience, recommended by the Director and appointed by the Bishop, who is willing to serve in this capacity for the benefit and success of the Permanent Diaconate Program.
- 2) The Coordinator of the Candidates' Wives and Families Program is accountable to the Director and is responsible to:
 - a. Plan and coordinate special programs for the candidates' wives and families.
 - b. Meet with each candidate's wife once a year to discuss the effects of the formation program upon their marriage and family.
 - c. Participate as a member of the Admissions/Evaluation Committee.

D) Coordinator of Hispanic Aspirants/Candidates

- 1) Is a person recommended by the Director and appointed by the Bishop, who has knowledge of Spanish and Hispanic cultures, and who is willing to serve in this capacity for the benefit of the Hispanic Aspirants/Candidates in the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program.
- 2) In collaboration with the Director, the Coordinator is responsible to:
 - a. Meet with the Hispanic Aspirants/Candidates during each semester to see that, "In each stage of formation, essential resources — e.g., translation, textbooks, mentors, community support are provided" (ND2, 170).
 - b. Participate as a member of the Admissions/Evaluation Committee.

G) Admissions/Evaluation Committee

The Admissions/Evaluation Committee consists of the Secretary for Clergy Formation, coordinators and other committee members appointed by the Bishop of Scranton. It will review each candidate in keeping with the "Requirements for Acceptance" and the "Admissions Procedure" and make recommendations regarding acceptance to the Bishop. It will also review each candidate's progress biannually in consultation with his formation advisor, pastor, instructors, and other pastoral supervisors and in keeping with the Formation Standards recommended by the *National Directory*. The Committee will make recommendations to the Bishop regarding each candidate's promotion to candidacy, ministries of reader and acolyte, and ordination.

ACADEMIC FORMATION

The course of studies is designed to prepare candidates to exercise pastoral ministry. The aspirants/candidates are part-time students who come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds. Most of them are married men with primary responsibilities to their families and professions and/or employers. The purpose of the academic formation component, therefore, is to provide the candidate with a living and workable knowledge of the faith that will serve him well in his ministry of word, sacrament, and charity.

To this end, the candidate will be expected to complete 270 hours of formal courses over a five-year period. These courses will provide him with a sound theological overview of the Church and its teachings. Another 200 hours of spiritual, pastoral, and liturgical formation courses, including liturgical and homiletic practicums, will be offered specifically for the candidates, on eight Saturdays per year. Another 60 hours will be comprised of "Summer or Assigned Readers" discussed and completed in Regional Cluster meetings.

A) *Core Courses*

Each candidate will complete the following courses offered by the diocesan Permanent Diaconate Formation Program (unless exempted from a given course by the Director/Coordinator of Academic Formation for prior university-level credits in that specific area). He is expected to earn a minimum of three (3) credits each fall and spring. The curriculum should be pursued, as far as possible, in keeping with this preferred sequence:

ASPIRANCY PHASE:

- 1) ***Introduction to Sacred Scripture (3 credits)***
Inspiration and Inerrancy. Canonicity. Texts and versions. Hermeneutics. Modern Biblical Criticism and Exegetical Methods. Church Pronouncements. History of Israel.
- 2) ***The Catholic Church Through the Centuries (3 credits)***
Christian Antiquity: The Apostolic Era. The Church Fathers. Schisms and heresies, persecutions. The Constantinian Era. The Church of the Middle Ages. Cluny and the monastic reform. The Great Eastern Schism. The Crusades. Mission to the Western Hemisphere. The Inquisition. The Western Schism. The Reformation and Catholic Reform. The French Revolution to the First World War. The Catholic Church in the Twentieth Century.

CANDIDACY PHASE:

- 3) ***The Fundamental Teachings of the Church (3 credits)***
Revelation and Faith. The Creeds. Tradition and Scripture. The Triune God. Creation, the Human Person and the World. Original Justice and the Fall. Jesus Christ the Savior. Mary, the Mother of God. The Church. The Last Things.
- 4) ***Sacraments in General (3 credits)***
The Meaning of "Sacrament" and Sacramentality. The Sacraments in the Early Church. St. Thomas Aquinas and Medieval Church. The Reformation and the Council of Trent. Vatican II. Effects of the Seven Sacraments.
- 5) ***Introduction to the Theology of Christian Living (3 credits)***
The Spiritual-Moral Vision of the Scriptures. Christian Existence in the Writings of the Church

- Fathers. Prayer and Discernment. Fundamental Principles of Roman Catholic Moral Theology in light of Vatican II. An Introduction to Special Questions: Sexual Ethics, Bioethics, and Catholic Social Teaching.
- 6) ***Catholic Social Teaching (3 credits)***
The Biblical and Moral Foundations. Social Ministry within the Mission of the Church. Overview of the First Nineteen Centuries. Major Concepts: Social Justice, Social Consequences of Sin, Relationship of Justice and Charity. The modern Papal Social Encyclicals. Pastoral Letters of U.S. Bishops. *Compendium of the Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church*. Ecology and Care for the Environment.
 - 7) ***Introduction to Liturgy (3 credits)***
Fundamental Documents of the Roman Liturgy. The History and Development of the Mass and other Rites. The Proper Celebration of each Rite with special attention to the Deacon's Role. Rite of Baptism for Children. Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass. Rite of Marriage. Rite of Funerals.
 - 8) ***Catholic Sexual and Medical Ethics (1.5 credits)***
Significance of Male and Female. Theology of the Body. The Equal Dignity of Women. Celibacy. Christian Marriage: Unity and Fidelity, the Generous Fruitfulness of the Spouses. Extra-marital Sexuality. Chastity. Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia*. The Sanctity of Human Life. *Evangelium vitae*. Health Care. Abortion, sterilization, and artificial intervention in human reproduction. Prolonging Life: ordinary and extraordinary means. Euthanasia. The Christian Meaning of Death.
 - 9) ***Introduction to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) (1.5 credits)***
Historical, Liturgical and Theological Foundations of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. The Catechumenate in the Early Church. The New RCIA. Setting up a Parish Catechumenate: some practical considerations. Lectionary Catechesis.
 - 10) ***Canon Law, Marriage Preparation and Annulments (1.5 credits)***
Canon Law. Pastoral Aspects and Applications. Diocesan Policies and Procedures. Marriage Preparation. Dispensations required. Marriages involving Catholics in the Eastern Churches. Pastoral Care of Divorced and Remarried Catholics. Annulment procedures.
 - 11) ***Catholic Identity, Ecumenism, and Interreligious Dialogue (1.5 credits)***
The History of Ecumenism. Catholic Ecumenical Documentation. Catholic Identity and the Theology of Ecumenism. Ecumenical Principles and Formation. The Nature, Goal, and Reception of Dialogues. The Contribution of the World Council of Churches. Ecumenical Developments with the Eastern Churches. Anglican, Lutheran, and Catholic Relations. Relations with the Classical Protestant Churches. Evangelical and Pentecostal Communities. The Future of Ecumenism. Interreligious Dialogue.

Each credit represents ten hours of formal instruction. Candidates will be expected to maintain a "B" average (80% or above). In addition to the tests and assignments required of all for-credit students, the instructors are asked to administer an additional fifteen-minute oral exam to diaconal candidates (*in all 3-credit courses*) and to submit to the Secretary for Clergy Formation a special "Instructor's Evaluation Form" on each candidate.

B) Spiritual, Pastoral and Liturgical Formation Courses

In addition to the Core Courses listed above, special spiritual, pastoral, and liturgical formation courses will be scheduled for all the candidates on Saturdays, three times each semester. A broad selection of topics is covered during these courses, providing a sound theoretical basis for their spiritual life, liturgical and pastoral practice. These courses will be presented as follows:

ASPIRANCY (FIRST YEAR):

- 1) **Introduction to Spiritual Formation** (1.5 credits)
 - Spiritual Direction (October)
 - The Liturgy of the Hours (November)
 - Personal Prayer and Meditation (December)
- 2) **Ministry of the Deacon** (1.5 credits)
 - History and Identity of the Diaconate (February)
 - Ministries of Word and Sacrament (March)
 - Ministry of Charity/Justice (April)

SECOND YEAR:

- 3) **Pastoral Theology I** (1.5 credits)
 - Role of Theological Reflection in Pastoral Ministry (October)
 - Social Ministry: To the Poor, Migrants and Prisoners (November)
 - Ministry to the Sick and Dying (December)
- 4) **Proclaiming the Word** (1.5 credits)
 - Theology of the Word (February)
 - Lector Practicum I (March)
 - Lector Practicum II (April)

THIRD YEAR:

- 5) **Pastoral Theology II** (1.5 credits)
 - Communication: Group dynamics, and Conflict Management (October)
 - Pastoral Care, Assessment, and Intervention (November)
 - Ministry to Families & Relational Dynamics in the Family (December)
- 6) **The Ministry of Acolyte** (1.5 credits)
 - The Role and Institution of Acolytes (February)
 - Acolyte Practicum I (March)
 - Acolyte Practicum II (April)

FOURTH YEAR:

- 7) **Pastoral Theology III** (1.5 credits)
 - The Parish: Mission, Community, Structure (October)
 - Evangelization and Catechesis in the Parish (November)
 - Parish Social Concerns Committee (December)

- 8) **Liturgical Practicums** (1.5 credits)
 - Baptism of Children (February)
 - Marriage and Funerals (March)
 - The Deacon's Role in the Eucharist (April)
- 9) **The Deacon at Mass: Liturgical Practicum Weekend** (May/2 credits)

FIFTH YEAR: Preaching Preparation Courses

- 10) **Introduction to Liturgical Preaching** (1.5 credits)
 - Theology of Preaching (October)
 - Oral Interpretation (November)
 - Elements of Homily Preparation (December)
- 11) **New Testament Exegesis and Preaching** (1.5 credits)
 - Synoptic Gospels (February)
 - Pauline Corpus (March)
 - Johannine Literature (April)
- 12) **Preaching Lab** (2 credits/ 4x 2&1/2 hour sessions: spring semester)
 - Writing and delivery of four homilies. Videoing of each student delivering a homily, with critique of body movement, gestures, delivery. Preaching at Rites. Preparation for evaluation by Homiletics Board.

C) Summer Readers

While no formal courses will be scheduled during the summer months, the Candidates will be assigned to Regional Clusters which will meet at least three times in the course of the summer to discuss an assigned book. By September 15 each candidate will submit a 500-word reflection on the book and discussions to the Coordinator of Academics (6 credits / 1.5 credits each summer).

Aspirancy Year (First Year): *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Second Year: *Topic:* History of the Catholic Church in the United States

Third Year: *Topic:* Ethics in Pastoral Ministry

Fourth Year: *Topic:* A Theological/Pastoral Synthesis

D) Continuing Education

Reflecting upon his ministry in the light of faith is a lifelong task for the deacon. After ordination, therefore, he is expected to continue his theological and pastoral formation by attending courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences (in person or online) as designated by the Secretary for Clergy Formation.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The spiritual formation component is the element that integrates all the other aspects of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program. As with all other Christians, the deacon's spiritual life is rooted in his baptismal vocation and, thus, his ever-growing participation in Jesus Christ's paschal mystery. Through his spiritual life he is to unite himself ever more closely with the Servant Christ, building upon his prior commitments to wife, family, and occupation where applicable.

According to the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States (2021)*, the goal of the spiritual formation during the aspirancy period is “putting on the mind of Christ,” thereby establishing and nurturing attitudes, habits and practices that provide a foundation for the development of an authentic and ongoing spiritual life. (*No. 199*). During the candidate stage the goals of spiritual formation are the following:

- a) To help the candidate to increase in holiness by deepening and cultivating his commitment to Christ and the Church
- b) To strengthen his love for the study of the Word of God and his desire to pray with Scripture throughout a lifetime of ministry
- c) To assist the candidate in confirming his vocation to the diaconate
- d) To help him deepen his prayer life — personal, familial, communal, and liturgical — and to instill in the candidate a commitment to pray daily for the Church, especially through the Liturgy of the Hours
- e) To strengthen the personal charisms he has already demonstrated in his life
- f) To help him integrate his new commitment to prepare for the diaconate with his previous commitments to his family and professional employment
- g) To acquaint him with the relationship between spirituality and his commitment to the Church's ministry of charity, which includes the promotion of justice
- h) To acquaint him with Catholic classical and contemporary spiritual writings and the witness of the saints
- i) To prepare him for the challenges of spiritual leadership that his ministry will entail (*No. 226*).

A) *Spiritual Direction*

Each aspirant/candidate should meet regularly, at least monthly, with a priest spiritual director. Spiritual directors must be chosen from a list prepared by the Coordinator of Spiritual Formation and approved by the Bishop. The candidate is also encouraged to keep a "Journal" of personal reflections upon his academic course work and other formation experiences, which he shares with his spiritual director.

B) *Days of Reflection*

Candidates and their wives must attend two Days of Reflection during each year of formation. They will be held on a Saturday in September and January. The themes for each of these Days will

be as follows:

ASPIRANCY (FIRST YEAR):

The Universal Call to Holiness (*September*)
Discernment of a Diaconal Vocation (*January*)

SECOND YEAR:

Spirituality of Marriage (*September*)
The Eucharist (*January*)

THIRD YEAR:

Reconciliation (*September*)
The Mystery of Suffering (*January*)

FOURTH YEAR:

Charism of Celibacy (*September*)
Rejoicing in the Lord (*January*)

C) *Retreats*

Candidates and their wives must attend an annual weekend retreat (*from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon*) each year during the first three years of formation. A five-day pre-ordination, canonical retreat for the Ordinands only will be scheduled during the fall of the fifth year. These retreats will develop the following themes:

Jesus Christ: The Servant of God

Mary: Model of Discipleship

The Mystery of the Church

PRE-ORDINATION: The Sacrament of Holy Orders

D) *Continuing Spiritual Formation*

After ordination, the deacon will be expected to continue to meet with a spiritual director of his choice on a regular basis and to be faithful to his personal prayer life, which includes morning prayer and evening prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, and to spiritual reading. He will participate in a day of reflection and a make a weekend retreat each year. His wife, where applicable, will be strongly encouraged to participate in these days of reflection and annual retreats as well.

PASTORAL FORMATION

While the entire Permanent Diaconate Formation Program has a pastoral focus, including the academic component which in a systematic way provides both theory and skills for pastoral practice, actual engagement in a wide range of pastoral activities during his years of formation is essential for the candidate. Indeed, the demonstration of pastoral skills is a crucial element in the evaluation of his fitness for ordination.

A) *Formation Advisor*

Each candidate will be assigned a formation advisor with whom he will meet at least every eight weeks to review and discuss:

- 1) his physical well-being and that of his family
- 2) the integration of his responsibilities to his wife, family, and occupation with his participation in the formation program
- 3) his own attitudes toward the Church and diaconal ministry
- 4) his academic progress and his fidelity to spiritual direction
- 5) his experiences in pastoral ministry, and
- 6) all other areas of his formation that pertain to the external forum.

The candidates' formation advisor serves as his mentor and ministerial supervisor, and reports to the Permanent Diaconate Admissions/Evaluation Committee to make recommendations regarding his promotion to ministry, candidacy, and ordination.

B) *Pastoral Service*

Each aspirant/candidate is expected to engage in a wide diversity of pastoral service during the course of his years of formation for the permanent diaconate.

ASPIRANCY PERIOD:

It is expected that the aspirant will enter the formation program already involved in a number of service activities. During his period of aspirancy he will review and discuss with his formation advisor his continuing participation in these activities.

SECOND YEAR:

The candidate during this year will arrange with his pastor to be involved at least two hours per week in various areas of parochial service (e.g., pastoral care of sick in hospitals or at home; nursing home ministry; ministry to the disabled, the aged, youth and young adults; sacramental preparation programs, etc.).

THIRD YEAR:

Having received the Ministry of Reader, he will actively carry out the responsibilities of this ministry either in his home parish, or in one to which he is assigned by the Director, on at least one Sunday a month (and one weekday, if possible). The candidate during this year will also choose to concentrate his pastoral preparation in one area of assigned field education (e.g., soup kitchen and shelter work; hospital or prison ministry; bereavement counseling; hospice work with the terminally ill; ministry with troubled youth, with persons suffering various addictions, with the separated and divorced, etc.). He will be expected to undertake at least one hundred hours of supervised ministry in this designated apostolate or Ministry of Charity.

FOURTH YEAR:

Having received the Ministry of Acolyte, he will actively carry out the responsibilities of this ministry either in his home parish, or in one to which he is assigned by the Director, on at least one Sunday a month (and one weekday, if possible). The candidate during this year will be assigned to a parish where he will receive at least one hundred hours of pastoral supervision in the various general areas of parochial service (e.g. pastoral care of the sick in hospitals or at home; nursing home ministry; ministry to the disabled, the aged, youth and young adults; sacramental preparation programs, etc.). He will also choose a second area of field education as he did in his third year, for another one hundred hours of supervised ministry preparation.

CANDIDATES' WIVES AND FAMILIES

For married deacons, their wives and families come first not only in terms of time, but in terms of diaconal ministry. The *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States (2021)* tells us:

“In particular the deacon and his wife must be a living example of fidelity and indissolubility in Christian marriage before a world which is in dire need of such signs. By facing in a spirit of faith the challenges of married life and the demands of daily living, they strengthen the family life not only of the Church community but of the whole of society. They also show how the obligations of family life, work and ministry can be harmonized in the service of the Church’s mission. Deacons and their wives and children can be a great encouragement to others who are working to promote family life.” (no.73)

A) Candidates' Wives

In order that she may better understand her husband's ministry, her participation in it, and how it will affect their relationship and family life, the candidate's wife is strongly encouraged to participate as fully as possible in the entire program of formation.

- 1) She must attend Orientation Day and all days of reflection and annual retreats.
- 2) The candidate’s wife must give written consent to her husband’s promotion into candidate formation and his call to ordination.
- 3) A day-long, Saturday program for the candidates' wives will be held twice each year.
- 4) She is strongly encouraged to attend all classes with her husband. *

B) Candidates' Families

The children of the deacon also are uniquely affected by their father's ordination and diaconal ministry. To help them better understand and relate to this new reality that will deeply touch their lives, depending upon their ages, special family programs of a social-spiritual nature will be held.

***Diocesan Certificate in "Pastoral Studies"**

Wives of diaconate candidates who themselves take "for credit" and successfully complete all the course work (not including sacramental practicums and homiletic courses) required of their husbands will receive a Certificate in Pastoral Studies from the Diocese of Scranton.

STEPS TO ORDINATION

A) Candidacy (or the Rite of Admission)

At the completion of Aspirancy, this public ceremony celebrates a time of important decision-making for the candidate. He now declares his formal intention to pursue ordination to the diaconate; and the Church, in the person of the presiding Bishop, accepts and recognizes this man as a suitable candidate for the Order of Deacon.

B) Installation to the Ministry of Reader

Candidates for the permanent diaconate are installed as lectors at the beginning of their third year in the formation program. This ceremony is the Church's public commissioning of the candidate to serve the people as a reader of the Word of God.

C) Installation to the Ministry of Acolyte

At the beginning of his fourth year in the formation program, the candidate is called to be a minister of the Eucharist. The Acolyte (from the Greek word for "Attendant") is commissioned to assist priests and deacons by preparing the altar and distributing Communion during Mass, and to bring the Blessed Sacrament to the sick and elderly.

D) Ordination to the Diaconate

During his fifth year in the formation program the candidate is called by the Bishop to the Order of Deacon. The candidate declares that he is now "ready and willing" to become a visible, faithful, and effective sign of the Servant Christ to the people of God.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

A) Program Evaluation

The total Permanent Diaconate Formation Program will be subject to continuing evaluation by the staff, (director, coordinators, formation advisors, instructors), and by the candidates themselves. Constructive criticism will be sought concerning the nature and content of the courses, the pastoral formation program, the wives' involvement, and the overall procedures and policies of the program.

B) Candidate Evaluation

Candidates will be periodically evaluated in all areas -- spiritual, academic, pastoral, and liturgical. Staff, formation advisors, instructors, pastors, apostolic supervisors, and the Evaluation Committee will all share in the process of evaluation. There will also be provision for candidate self-evaluation. Participation in all aspects of the formation program, as well as attitude and personal growth, will be subject to review and evaluation.

Formation advisors will submit a progress report twice a year. All evaluations, reports, and other data, with the exception of confidential "classified" material, will be reviewed and evaluated by the Evaluation Committee at the end of each semester in keeping with the Standards for Formation found in the *National Directory*, and a report sent to the Bishop.

FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

The Diocese of Scranton itself will defray the costs of the screening and formation of aspirants and candidates, and the following arrangements will normally apply:

- 1) The Diocese of Scranton will assume the basic program costs; namely, course fees, registration, room and board for overnight sessions (when needed), and other administrative fees.
- 2) Textbook, course materials, and out-of-pocket expenses will be absorbed by the candidate.
- 3) Beginning with ordination, all mandated experiences and out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed by the parish or institution of assignment.
- 4) Where necessary, special arrangements will be explored.

Addenda

FACULTIES GRANTED TO DEACONS BY THE BISHOP OF SCRANTON

The diocesan bishop rightfully grants faculties for the exercise of Holy Orders in the sacred ministry to clerics who are either incardinated or domiciled and serving in his diocese. Deacons, “empowered to serve the people of God in the ministries of the liturgy, the Word, and charity” (*CIC* c. 1009 §3) are to exercise their diaconal ministry in communion with the bishop and priests of the particular church into which he is incardinated. Because the faculties that you would receive are from your bishop of incardination, you would possess these faculties everywhere, unless they are restricted by the competent ordinary of another particular church or in another jurisdiction.

Baptism

- To administer the sacrament of Baptism in accordance with the norms of *CIC* c. 861
- To administer the sacrament of Baptism to “infants” as defined by *CIC* c. 97 §2
 - An “infant” is one who has not completed their seventh year.
 - Because of the requirement to fully initiate one who has reached their seventh year, deacons are permitted only to baptize those who have not yet completed their seventh year.

Eucharist

- To assist at the celebration of the Eucharist according to the rubrics and prescriptions of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and other liturgical laws
- To distribute Holy Communion (*CIC* c. 910)
- To bring Holy Communion to the sick in the form of viaticum in a case of necessity or at least with the presumed permission of the pastor or chaplain according to the norm of *CIC* c. 911 §2
- To distribute Holy Communion outside of Mass or to lead the Christian Faithful in Eucharistic worship outside of Mass according to the approved rites for “Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass” and the norms in *CIC* c. 918
- To expose the Most Holy Eucharist and give Eucharistic benediction according to the same approved rites.

Marriage

- To conduct the required pre-marital investigation and preparation for marriage and to administer the necessary oaths
- Initiate the processes necessary for and to conduct the investigation into the processes for the convalidation of marriages, declarations of nullity, and/or dissolution of the matrimonial bond for cases of non-consummation, *Favorem Fidei* cases, or the invocation of the Pauline Privilege
- To assist at marriages within the confines of the parish where the deacon is assigned or where the deacon has received permission of the proper pastor
- Upon clear and explicit delegation given by the local pastor where the deacon is assigned, the local ordinary, or the Episcopal Vicar for Canonical Affairs: to witness marriages which are to take place outside of Mass
 - Because the requirements of Canonical Form prescribed in *CCEO* 1990 c. 828 §§1-2 requires the priestly blessing for validity, deacons are forbidden to witness marriages which involve at least one Eastern Rite Catholic.

Ministry of the Word

- As an expression of ecclesial communion and in service to the people of God, to assist in the ministry of the Word through teaching, catechesis, or other expressions of solidarity with the bishop and presbyters
- To preside at a Liturgy of the Word and The Liturgy of the Hours on appropriate occasions and when directed to do so by the local ordinary, proper pastor, or any presbyter

Christian Funerals

- To preside at vigils, funeral liturgies outside of mass, and rites of committal according to the prescribed liturgical books
- According to the norm in *CIC* c. 1183 §2, and with the presumed consent of the proper pastor, to provide ecclesiastical funeral rites outside of Mass for an un-baptized child if their parents intended to baptize him or her, but the child died before the baptism
- To inscribe all funeral rites in the death register of the proper parish where said rites are celebrated

Sacramentals

To impart those blessings which are designated for deacons contained in the Book of Blessings according to the norm of *CIC* c. 1169 §3

CIC: The code of canon law for the Latin Rite (the abbreviation from the Latin title of the Code: Codex Iuris Canonici)

CCEO: The code of canon law for the Eastern Rites of the Church (abbreviating the title Corpus Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium)