

# Permanent Diaconate Formation Program

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## Overview

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Applying for the diaconate requires prayerful consideration of a number of factors as a means of deciding whether to complete an application for the Permanent Diaconate. The Office of the Permanent Diaconate will offer Information Nights during the spring of odd numbered years. A new group of candidates selected from those who apply begin formation classes in September of odd numbered years. Those interested may attend one of these nights.

For more information, contact:  
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## Program Overview

The first year, the Application Year, is a time of informal association with the deacon formation program to expand information, support discernment and begin the first stages of formation. The four years of formal formation following the Application Year are more rigorous and demanding.

Deacon formation occurs through academic courses, supervised experiences and workshops, organized around six areas:

- Academic formation
- Supervised ministry formation
- Pastoral formation
- Liturgical formation
- Spiritual formation
- Human formation

Academic formation occurs through the semester course system. Supervised ministry formation is achieved through field experience. Pastoral, liturgical, spiritual and human formation receive special attention through Saturday workshops.

The time commitment for the five years of formal formation is two nights per week (usually from 7-9 p.m.), four Saturdays per semester (usually from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.) and an annual three-day retreat. Of course, these refer only to times when physical presence is required. Study, reading and prayer time is over and above this minimum.

In each of the years, a number of assessments occur:

- A spring evaluation interview with the Committee on Admission.
- A yearly interview with a panel of deacons and wives.
- A spring interview with the formation director to decide about continuing in the formation program.

# Overview Of The Application Process

As an ordained minister of the Church, the deacon is a **public sign** of Jesus the Servant. How and why Jesus chooses any of us for service as ordained ministers in the Church is a mystery. Discerning that call takes time, and it involves many people in conversation and prayer: the candidate, his spouse and family, the Church as represented by the bishop and program directors, and people who know the candidate, especially his pastor, teachers and mentors along the way.

There are standards of admission to help the Church provide the people of God with the best possible ordained ministers. You are encouraged to carefully and prayerfully read through the following list of considerations, which represent the basics needed to enter the program. If you cannot answer these considerations positively, then the diaconate is likely not for you – at least, not at this time. If there are one or two considerations about which you are unsure, please talk with us about them. We will do our best to help you decide whether to apply at this time. If you can affirm these considerations, then return to prayer and ask the Lord to bless your next step of completing and mailing the application forms.

## The following considerations apply to all applicants:

- You must be a baptized and confirmed Catholic male normally between the ages of 30 and 55. By Canon law, the earliest you can be ordained is age 35. Men 56 - 60 years of age will be considered if in good health.
- You must be active in and in good standing with the Church and your parish. At a minimum, this means:
  - You are faithful in attending Mass and regular in Confession.
  - Prayer is integral to your life.
  - You have a relationship with Jesus.
  - You accept and support the Church in her teachings.
  - You are perceived as a man of integrity within the community.
  - You cannot have been Catholic, formally joined another Church and returned to Catholicism.
- You must be willing to serve the Church under the direction of the Archbishop.
- You must be in good physical health – sufficiently active and energized to endure the rigors of the formation program and later the demands of ministry. Physical stamina is essential.
- You must be a mature person, in good psychological health and free of addictive behaviors.
- You must be able to study and pass the courses. Courses are taught at a college course level. Academic achievement is important.
- You must be able to make a substantial time commitment to formation for a total of five consecutive years. Time commitments are two nights each week, plus several Saturdays each fall and spring semester and three weeks each in January and July. All classes meet twice weekly. You must reserve additional time for reading, studying and prayer. In addition, there is a weekend retreat each year that men and, if married, their wives are required to attend. Note: Time and availability are a **critical** key factor in deciding whether to continue the application process.
- You must already have a clear history and record of charitable service and outreach to others, especially those who are marginalized. This service can be within your parish or the Church and/or it can be civic outreach. Within your parish or Church, this is **beyond** any kind of help with Liturgies (reader, usher, extraordinary minister, etc.). Note: This also is a **critical** key factor in deciding whether to continue the application process.
- You must be stable in your employment.
- You must have three years of established residency in the Archdiocese. If you converted to Catholicism, we generally consider men who have been Catholics for five years or more.
- You must have the recommendation of your pastor.

## The following considerations depend on your marital status:

If you are married:

- You must be in a stable Catholic marriage of five years or longer. Questions regarding divorce and annulment situations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- You must have the active and willing support of your wife.
- Your wife must be willing to take an active part in those parts of the program required of wives.
- If your wife is Catholic, she too must be active in and in good standing with the Church and your parish. At a minimum, this means:
  - She is faithful in attending Mass and regular in Confession.
  - Prayer is integral to her life.
  - She has a relationship with Jesus.
  - She accepts and supports the Church in her teachings.
- If your wife is not Catholic, she must live the witness of a good Christian life.
- If you have older children at home, they must be supportive of you in pursuing the diaconate.
- If you have younger children, it is best if they are at least in the latter years of grammar school. Young children at home do not necessarily preclude admission to the program, but they are a very serious consideration since your first vocation is to your family.
- Your spouse must understand and accept that, should she precede you in death, you ordinarily are not free to re-marry.

If you are single or widowed, you must be willing to embrace celibacy freely as a permanent life.

## Application Process

**Program Details:** The process leading to ordination as a deacon consists of an **Application Year**, followed by four years of **Formal Formation** – for a total of five years. During the first year of the program, applicants are not yet officially admitted to the deacon formation. Formal admission to the four-year formation program follows successful completion of the Application Year.

**Application Year.** The Application Year is a time of informal association with the deacon formation program that expands information, supports discernment and begins the earliest stages of formation. It facilitates the prospective deacon and the Office of the Permanent Diaconate in getting to know each other.

**Formation.** The formational components consist of courses, **Introduction to the Diaconate** and **Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church**, each spanning two 12-week semesters and meeting one evening a week and a January mini-semester for a total of 50+ class sessions.

**Assessment.** A number of assessment components occur prior to admission to the Application Year. These include:

- A mid-summer psycho-social interview with a licensed clinical social worker.
- An evaluation interview with an Admissions Committee.
- An interview with the formation director to make a determination about entering the formation program.

## Family Involvement

Wives and families of prospective deacons are a most important feature of the formation program. In the early weeks of the Application Year, wives receive special consideration, with a focus on program expectations for spouses. While wives are always welcomed and encouraged to share in the formation process with their husbands, the times of *required* participation are few. These requirements are addressed early in the fall semester.