

Personal Qualifications for Applicants at the Time of Application

1. Be at least 33 years of age but not older than 58 at the beginning of the four-year formation program.
2. Be a practicing Roman Catholic for five consecutive years or more.
3. Have been a resident within the Diocese of Sacramento for five consecutive years or more, and active in his parish.
4. Have demonstrated leadership ability either within his parish or community organization.
5. Be in good physical and mental health.
6. Have sufficient financial and employment stability.
7. 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.
8. Be sensitive to the time and needs of his family.
9. Have sufficient time for diaconal formation and ministry.
10. Possess the desire and capacity for growth, continued education, and developing skills for ministry.
11. Possess an eagerness for prayer and acceptance of spiritual formation.
12. Be faithful to the traditions / teachings of the Church; be open to the awareness of contemporary expressions in theology.
13. Be willing to make a commitment of talent and time.
14. Possess reading and writing skills in order to participate fully in the academic program.



Course of Studies Year of Aspirancy and Preliminary Formation

- T Basic religious formation through the Lay Ministry Institute, the Adult Education programs or other college programs.
- T After a process of inquiry and discernment the applicant may be admitted to a one-year study Program of Aspirancy followed by the four-year formation program.

Four-Year Formation Program

Year I

- Study of Theology
- Church
- Spirituality
- Basic Skills for lecturing and writing
- Ministry Skills I
- Christology
- Old Testament
- Morality
- Sacraments
- The liturgical year
- Liturgy Preparations
- Spiritual Direction

Year III

- New Testament
- Grace/Trinity
- Synoptic Gospels
- Gospel of John
- Homiletics II
- Christian Social Ethics
- Church History II
- Ministry Skills
- Sacraments of Initiation and Rite of Baptism
- Obedience
- Celibacy
- History of spirituality II

Year II

- History of Spirituality I
- Homiletics I
- Ministry Skills
- Psalms
- Covenant/Prophecy
- Wisdom/Apocalyptic
- Church History I
- Liturgy of the Hours
- Ministry to the Poor

Year IV

- History of American Catholic Church
- Letters of Paul
- Rite of Christian Burial
- Cultural Awareness
- Sacrament of Marriage and Marriage Preparation
- Critical Life Issues
- Sacrament of Holy Orders
- Annulments
- The role of the deacon in catechesis and evangelization
- Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue
- Mary and the Church

The Vocation of Permanent Deacon



Diocese of Sacramento

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In light of Gospel values as lived by the early Christian community the Diocese of Sacramento Permanent Diaconate exists to continue the effective ministry of the servant Christ, responding to human needs. Deacons are ordained for service, to fulfill an important role in the up building and activity of the local Church.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, taking seriously the role of the deacon to which St. Paul refers in his first letter to Timothy, remind us that that it was for serious pastoral and theological reasons that the Council decided to re-establish the Order of Deacons as a permanent rank in the hierarchy of the Church.

The Sacrament of Holy Order, marks deacons "with an *imprint* ('character') which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the 'deacon' or servant of all." For this level of Holy Orders, Christ calls and the Church asks the bishop to ordain deacons to be consecrated witnesses to service. In his post-synodal exhortation *The Church in America*, Pope John Paul II makes his own the words of the bishops of that gathering: "We see with joy how deacons 'sustained by the grace of the Sacrament, in the ministry (*diakonia*) of the liturgy, of the word and of charity are at the service of the People of God, in communion with the Bishop and his priests".

Pope John Paul II also notes that the deacon's tasks include that of "promoting and sustaining the apostolic activities of the laity." To the extent he is more present and more involved than the priest in secular environments and structures, he should feel encouraged to foster closeness between the ordained ministry and lay activities, in common service to the kingdom of God. Deacons, both married and celibate, serve God's People by their witness to the gospel value of sacrificial love, a quality of life too easily dismissed in today's society.

Following the decision of the Bishops of the United States, the Diocese of Sacramento inaugurated the Diaconate in the fall of 1977, and the first Deacons were ordained in 1981 upon completion of the Formation Program.

The Formation Program consists of preliminary formation through the Diocesan Lay Ministry Institute, the Adult Education programs or other college programs. The Program is then followed by a year of Aspirancy and then a four-year Formation Program with continued on-going formation and includes both the deacon candidate and his wife, if married.

The Program is designed to equip the candidate with a deeper knowledge of the faith, solid spirituality, love of the community and those skills and techniques that will assist him to minister to those whom he is called to serve. The program includes spiritual, theological and liturgical formation, and pastoral field ministry experiences.

What does a Deacon do?

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church speaks of three areas of diaconal service: Ministry of Charity, Ministry of the Word, and Ministry of Liturgy.

Ministry of Charity: The deacon is ordained to be a witness to the Gospel through a life of loving service to the needy. A deacon serves through his person-to-person encounters: he ministers to the poor, the aged, the sick and the imprisoned. He participates in programs dealing with community problems, such as, substance abuse, child abuse, poverty and justice. The deacon works with youth and young adults, in various parish and/or community programs.

Ministry of the Word: The deacon proclaims the Gospel and preaches at liturgical gatherings. He participates as evangelizer and teacher in the Church's mission of heralding the Word. He teaches in religious education programs and in sacramental preparation programs such as baptism and marriage preparation and RCIA.

Ministry of Liturgy: For the deacon, as for all members of the Church, the liturgy is the "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church's power flows. For the Church gathered at worship, moreover, the ministry of the deacon is a visible, grace-filled sign of the integral connection between sharing at the Lord's Eucharistic table and serving the many hungers felt so keenly by all God's children." (National Directory, USCCB) The deacon officiates at funeral services, administers some sacramentals and presides at prayer services.

By ordination, the deacon, who sacramentalizes the Church's service, is to exercise the Church's *diakonia*. Therefore, "the diaconal ministries, distinguished above, are not to be separated; the deacon is ordained for them all, and no one should be ordained who is not prepared to undertake each in some way." Fundamentally, however, there is an intrinsic unity in a deacon's ministry. In preaching the word, he is involved in every kind of missionary outreach. In sanctifying God's People through the liturgy, he infuses and elevates people with new meaning and with a Christian worldview.

In bringing Christ's reign into every stratum of society, the deacon develops a Christian conscience among all people of good will, motivating their service and commitment to the sanctity of human life.

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, wait on the 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 emerges out of the universal *diakonia* to stand 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