

The Permanent Diaconate

The ministry of a deacon is similar to but different from that of a priest or bishop. A deacon is ordained and commissioned by Christ through the bishop to minister to the needy and the poor and to be a minister of Word and Sacrament, working in obedience to his bishop and in close fraternal cooperation with priests. While all Christians are called to serve others, the deacon is an official sign of this service and he solemnly promises to be a living example of such service for others.

The deacon should be a creative leader - an "inspirator" - one who gradually initiates a meaningful response of loving service from the community to those who are in spiritual or material need. Ordained PRIMARILY to be a minister of charity, he will hold himself accountable for such a service before God and the Church. He will draw his strength and his continuing motivation from the Holy Eucharist where- he is transformed by his reception of the Body and Blood of Christ.

A permanent deacon :

- May baptise,
- May act as deacon at the Eucharistic Liturgy and preach,
- May distribute Holy Communion and bring Holy Communion to the sick. If no priest is available, he may bring Viaticum to the sick who are dying,
- May be the minister of exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament,
- May impart those blessings which are expressly permitted to him by law,
- May officiate at marriages with delegation from the pastor of the parish where the marriage is to be celebrated,
- May lead prayers at a wake and officiate at burial services at a cemetery,

The deacon is called personally and ecclesially to serve after the manner of Jesus. He is first and foremost a Christian man in his usual employment and lifestyle, trained and formed by additional study and prayer for a special ministry to the community as an ordained minister. Consideration is given to the following as to a man's suitability for the Diaconate Formation Program:

- **Age:** At least 35 at time of ordination
- **Status:** A Roman Catholic, married or single, of sound moral character, mature faith and possessing a sense of vocation to service
- **Family:** If married, a partner in a stable marriage for at least eight to 10 years, who has the expressed consent and support of his wife, and whose children are of such an age and adjustment so as not to be unduly affected by their father's pursuit of a life that involves special apostolic commitments
- **Natural Gifts:** Demonstrates the basic potential to develop the ministerial skills of relating to people, speaking well and being a spiritual leader
- **Spirituality:** A man of prayer willing to make personal sacrifices to be a consecrated sign of God's love for others in his vocation to serve
- **Education:** At least two years of college or its academic equivalent
- **Employment:** A person who reflects prior stability in career or work
- **Church/Community service, Involvement:** A man living the Christian life who has demonstrated active apostolic involvement and leadership among the people of God.

The best credentials a candidate can bring to the diaconate is his past performance: personal, familial, professional, ecclesial and social.

