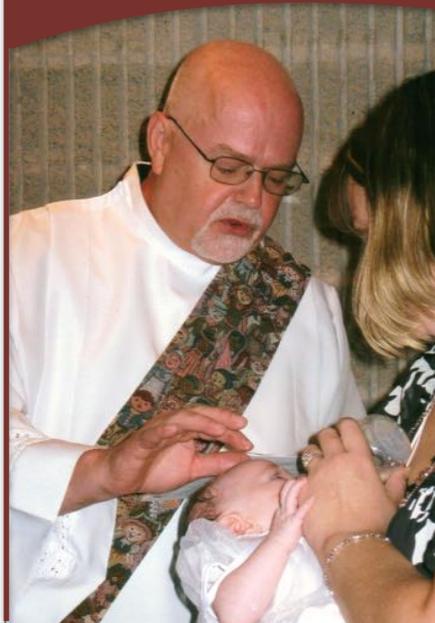


Office of Permanent Deacon Formation Diocese of Syracuse



Who is a permanent deacon and what does he do?

The Identity and Ministry of the Permanent Deacon

All members of the Catholic Church are called to share their gifts as Christ did. By virtue of baptism, each and every member of the Catholic Church enjoys new life in Christ, a sharing in His divine life. In light of this participation, all of the baptized share in His mission and priesthood - to sanctify, to teach, to guide, that is, to minister to others, according to the gifts each has received.

Ministry is a tapestry. We need all the threads to appreciate the richness and diversity of the whole, and each of these threads is woven together in Christ. We are a diocese that encourages all ministries, lay and ordained, for the building up of the Body of Christ.

God calls some men through the Church to ordained ministry: bishops, priests, and deacons. Bishops and priests are ordained to the ministerial priesthood; deacons are ordained for a ministry of service. All receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

<http://syracusediocese.org/offices/deacons/>

Thus, the deacon is an ordained minister of the Church. He is neither a layman nor a priest. The - deacon is a cleric ordained for the service of God's people in communion with the bishop and his body of priests. He works collaboratively with bishops, priests, and existing staff members of a parish or institution. They work together to build up the Body of Christ.

All ordained ministers in the Church are called to serve through Word, Sacrament, and Charity, but they exercise this service in various ways. As minister of Word, a deacon proclaims the Gospel, preaches, and teaches in the name of the Church. As minister of Sacrament, a deacon baptizes, leads the faithful in prayer, witnesses marriages, and conducts wake and funeral services. As minister of Charity, a deacon is a leader in identifying the needs of others and in calling God's people into service to meet these needs.

Becoming a deacon involves a vocation from God; it is not simply another volunteer job or ministry. Therefore, a person becomes a deacon not just out of personal desire or interest, but for the common good of the Church as determined by the bishop. It is for these reasons that the selection, discernment, and formation of deacon candidates are rigorous efforts. The entire formation process in fact, is a journey of discernment. Through systematic opportunities for prayer, spiritual direction, formal course work, and pastoral-skills development, the candidate is able to reflect critically on his life and the various ministries to which he might be assigned. This process of discernment continues to the very

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moment of ordination. Ordination bestows a permanent character on a person. Once ordained, the deacon is always a deacon, regardless of where he is or what he is doing, just as a bishop or a priest is always a bishop or a priest, regardless of where he is or what he is doing. The title “deacon” comes from the Greek word *diakonos*, which means “servant.” The deacon is an “icon,” or sacramental sign of Christ, who came “not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Once the bishop ordains the deacon he enters into a new set of relationships: he is permanently and publicly configured to Christ the

Servant; he shares in the overall responsibility of the bishop to care for the people in the diocese, and he becomes an integral part of the clergy of the diocese, assisting the bishop and the priests in serving the needs of the diocese.

Whatever specific services a deacon performs, they all flow from his sacramental identity. In other words, it is not only WHAT a deacon does, but WHO a deacon is, that is significant.

Deacons, both married and celibate, serve God's people by their witness to the gospel value of sacrificial love. In their secular employment, deacons witness to the dignity of human work. In their lives of service, deacons can often enable and empower others to exercise their own diaconal responsibilities, and witness more effectively to the Gospel of life. The deacon, as an ordained minister, has a permanent and a public responsibility for a ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Charity. Through ordination, he becomes an icon of Christ the Servant. When a person sees the deacon, the person ought to see and experience Christ in service to the world.



Formation programs for New Permanent Deacons

Three important milestones have been set:

Applications are available through the Permanent Diaconate Office and must be submitted annually by November 30th. Those men accepted into the program will be notified by the following June 30th. Studies begin bi-annually in the first week of September of even years (e.g., 2018, 2020, etc).

The permanent deacon is, in most cases, a married man with secular employment. His main concerns are his family, his job and his ministry, in that order.

- To become a permanent deacon, the applicant must approach formation convinced of his call by God to serve the Church as an ordained deacon. His response to a call to the diaconate is the primary consideration for eligibility. The Deacon Formation Committee will assist each applicant in the initial discernment of that vocation.
- The Church is deeply concerned about supporting marriage and family life. Therefore, due to the serious commitment of time that formation and ministry will involve, applicants with young children may be asked to re-examine their decision to pursue formation for the permanent diaconate at this time.

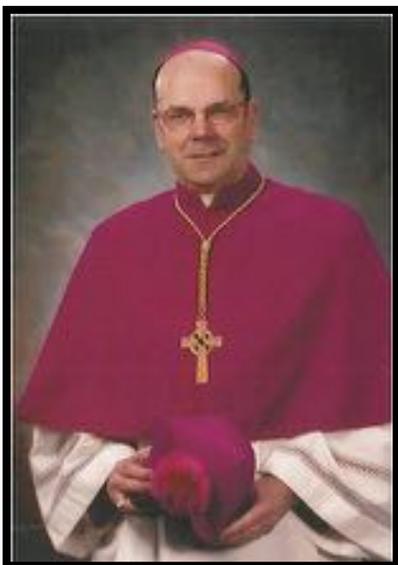
“The principal goal is to promote formation of the whole person: the human, the spiritual, the intellectual and the pastoral.”

- Church law requires that the applicant be no younger than thirty-five (35) years of age at the time of ordination and therefore, no younger than thirty-one (31) years of age at the time he is accepted as a candidate for formation.

- While there is no maximum age established for a candidate, the applicant’s health and suitability must be such that there is a good probability he will be able to serve in assigned ministry as permanent deacon for a period of ten (10) years. Therefore a candidate should be approximately sixty-five (65) years of age upon ordination.

The principal goal is to promote formation of the whole person: the human, the spiritual, the intellectual and the pastoral.

There are two parts to a four-year formation program. The first part is called Aspirancy. The second part, Candidacy, begins at the end of the Aspirancy years. A decision will be made whether or not the aspirant will be recommended to continue into two or more additional years of academic, spiritual and pastoral formation. The academic program will be demanding but is NOT a degree program. Other elements of the program include: annual retreats, a practicum in liturgy, an in-service project/charity and weekend workshops each year.



“The ministry of Deacons is a sacramental sign of the presence of the loving and caring Christ, the servant. My prayer is that new discerners to God’s call to this particular Order of the Church will know the prayer and love of our diocese and the assistance of my office in providing information and support as we eagerly welcome your discernment.”
-Most Rev. Robert J. Cunningham

May permanent deacons be either married or single?

Yes. A permanent deacon may be married or single. The Second Vatican Council decreed that the diaconate, when it was restored as a permanent order in the Church, could be opened to “mature married men.” This is in keeping with the ancient tradition of the Church, in which both single and married men were ordained into diaconal ministry. Also in keeping with ancient practice, if the wife of an ordained permanent deacon should die, he may not marry again. All single men who are ordained as permanent deacons must remain single, chaste and celibate.

What is expected of a permanent deacon’s wife?

The Church has determined that a married man cannot be ordained a deacon without the freely given, written consent of his wife. She is invited to participate in the formation program to the greatest extent possible. She will be required to attend several Aspirancy sessions, annual retreats, professional days and the psychological assessment. Her participation will enable her to give informed consent to her husband’s request for ordination should the bishop call him to it; it will also promote her own spiritual growth in discipleship and help to strengthen the bond within the diaconate community.

Is a permanent deacon ordained for the parish or the diocese?

Whenever a man is ordained, he is to serve the Bishop in the diocesan church. Permanent deacons are assigned by the bishop to parishes or institutions according to the pastoral need of the diocese. Normally, the deacon will be assigned to his home parish or to a parish institution within an approximate 25-mile radius of his place of

residence. During the ensuing years his assignment may be changed in light of the particular needs of the diocese and the permanent deacon.

How long is the formation process leading to Diaconate Ordination in the Diocese of Syracuse?

The quick answer is four (4) years: one year of Aspirancy and three (3) years of Candidacy (National Directory for the Permanent Diaconate, #205). The individual will be expected to complete twenty-eight (28) courses, most in the classroom and some online by way of ten (10) formation weekends annually and an annual retreat. Formation for the permanent diaconate is, of course, an ongoing process even after ordination.

Who pays for all of this?

The Diocese of Syracuse pays for the entire program of formation. Candidates have some incidental expenses for books, internet access, travel and the like.



If you believe that you are being called to this vocation, plan to attend one of the information nights:

Permanent Deacon Information Seminars

Information seminars are conducted throughout the Diocese. For specific dates and times please contact the Deacon Formation Office at (315) 470-1479

Any Other Questions?

Please call us at (315) 470-1479 or
Email the Director at
laiello@syrдио.org