



## An Integrated Diaconal Formational Program

Applying for the Diaconate Program requires a process of prayerful consideration of a number of factors. The following information could help with the initial process. The Diocese of Yakima follows the guidelines presented by the Congregation for Catholic Education, *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, as well as the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, and ongoing directives of the *National Conference of Catholic Bishops*. An

essential principle indicated by the NCCB is that the diaconate is a ministry, a way of serving the Church. The call to the diaconate is both a call from God to serve, and a call from the community of faith which is to be served. This call does not come to the individual alone, nor for his own sake. It is not a right but rather a call affirmed and recognized by his community of faith. Anyone who hears such a call must have the gift validated by the Church.

It is evident that more particular criteria will vary in accordance with the specific needs of the local diocesan Church and the general lines of its pastoral program. Hence, in assessing prospective diaconate candidates, the Diocese of Yakima selection process takes into consideration a variety of realities faced by the local church: ethnic diversity, the need to revitalize parishes, the immigrant situation, other concerns of the poor and marginalized, the aging communities, and much more.

The *National Directory* describes some of the qualities that a man should have to apply for the diaconate. They include: natural inclination of service to the Christian community, and to all in need; ability to share one's faith; generosity in service; sound faith; good Christian reputation; personal integrity, maturity, and holiness; regular participation in the Church's sacramental life; a positive and stable marriage, if married, or a mature celibate state of life, if single, and a deep spirituality and prayer life.

The Diaconate Formation in the Diocese of Yakima consists of a five-year program. Applicants for the program must have some time of hands-on service to those in need within their own parish, or in the larger community. Types of service would include helping the poor and homeless, ministry to those in jails and prisons, visiting those in hospitals or confined to their homes due to illness and caring for the bereaved.

The program has four main interrelated components: Human, spiritual, academic/theological, and pastoral/ministerial formation. Liturgical, spiritual and human formation receive special attention through the entire process culminating with ordination. Academic formation occurs through the yearly course system. Supervised ministry formation is achieved through field experience. During the formational year, those in formation are involved in reading assignments and special projects. They will meet with designated deacons (deacon couples) who are instrumental in the formation process by serving as mentors throughout the year. In each of the five years, the participants develop a sense of community through shared Eucharist, shared prayer, shared ministry, shared meals and relaxation, and shared conversation. The entire program will include presentations, assigned readings, shared reflections, and group processes. Each year has a Justice,

Charity and Peace component. Theological reflection is an important part of the overall program. After ordination the deacon and wife enter the ongoing Post Ordination program.

The time commitment for the five years of formal formation will take place about twice a month, (mostly Saturdays from 9 a.m.-3 or 5 p.m.), included some extra workshops, and an annual retreat. Of course, these refer only to times when physical presence is required. **Study, reading and prayer time is over and above this minimum.**

### **Why are the main four formational components necessary for the program?**

#### **Human Formation**

There are certain human qualities that should be fostered not only for the growth and realization of self, but also for effective ministry. The deacon should have the courage to speak out for the weak and defend their rights; the ability to manage conflict; collaborate and organize; the ability to communicate well and work with others; a spirit of sacrifice, strength and perseverance; and the aptitude for working in the fields of peacemaking, development, and justice.

#### **Spiritual Formation**

The spiritual dimension of formation helps the candidate to deepen his prayer life, both individual and communal; cultivate a commitment to service to God's word, the Church and the world; acquaint him with the Catholic spiritual traditions, affirm the Christian witness of matrimonial and celibate spirituality; and assist in the spiritual development of those whom he encounters (see# 113 ND).

The components of this spiritual formation include monthly meetings with a spiritual director, at least one retreat a year, developing the practice of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, and the integration of pastoral and intellectual components of formation.

#### **Academic/Theological Formation**

The National Directory states that "an increasingly educated society and new roles of leadership in diaconal ministry require that a deacon be a knowledgeable and reliable witness to the faith and a spokesman for the church's teaching" (#118). This "complete and serious" scope of intellectual formation has its foundation on the study of the Scriptures and the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

This academic and intellectual formation includes systematic theology, social justice, morality, church history, sacramental theology, canon law as well as practicums in listening, homiletics, and liturgical celebrations.

Components of Intellectual Formation include weekend days in locations to be determined. Candidates should plan on many hours for reading and theological assignments.

#### **Pastoral Formation**

Although the entire program is focused on the pastoral dimension, the specifically pastoral component consists of supervision and evaluation of the candidate in a ministry of the Diocese with the goal of effectively developing a candidate's pastoral skills. Within the pastoral placement, candidates should strive to develop fresh, creative responses to the gospel message especially with regard to the requirements of justice and charity and to the needs of the diverse ethnic communities of our Diocese of Yakima.

## In the Diocese of Yakima

### Some Personal Qualifications /Requirements for Applicants at the Time of Application

- Be at least 35 years of age but not older than 62 at the beginning of the *four-year plus formation program*; exceptions are considered on case basis.
- Be a practicing Roman Catholic and a resident within the Diocese of Yakima, active in his parish, for five consecutive years or more.
- Have the endorsement of parish pastor
- For married men:** have been married in the Catholic Church at least five years, a positive and stable marriage, have the affirmative consent of his wife, and acceptance of his children, and a well-adjusted family life.
- For unmarried or widowed men:** have a mature celibate state of life.
- Be sensitive to the times and needs of his family and have sufficient time for diaconal formation and ministry.
- Be in good physical and emotional health, and be willing to be scrutinized.
- Applicants must be able to pass legal background checks.
- Have no irregularities & other legal or mental impediments.
- Committed to stewardship of talent, time and treasure.
- Have demonstrated leadership ability either within his parish or community organizations; be a believer of a “Shared” ministry with ability to be a “team” worker.
- Applicants who are accepted must agree to the formation process and the requirements established by the Diocese
- Possess an eagerness for prayer and acceptance of spiritual formation and be faithful to the traditions / teachings of the Church.
- Possess the desire and capacity for growth, continued education, and developing skills for ministry.
- Have a Basic Catechist Certificate, or the equivalent, and/or have or are participating in the *Magnificat* Program, or other accredited programs by the beginning of formation.
- Have sufficient financial and employment stability.

#### PLEASE NOTE:

**Acceptance in the formation program is not a guarantee of ordination; no one has a right to ordination; each diocese — sets its own criteria for ministry.**

#### Admission Process

**The selection of diaconate candidates for the Diocese of Yakima** follows the guidelines presented by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. An essential principle indicated by the NCCB is that the diaconate is a ministry, a way of generously serving the Mission of Christ in the Church.

**The call to the diaconate is both a call from God to serve, and a call from the community of faith which is to be served.** This call does not come to the individual alone, nor for his own sake. It is not a right but rather a call affirmed and recognized by his community of faith. Anyone who hears such a call must have the gift validated by the Church.

The Diaconate Formation is a comprehensive ministry formation process involving the four pillars of theological, pastoral, spiritual, and human formation.

**The whole process consists of four paths: Inquiry, Aspirancy, Candidacy and Post-Ordination.**

**INQUIRY:** The inquiry process provides information to those men who feel they are being called to the Order of Permanent Diakonia. An official invitation will be sent to each individual who has expressed an interest in learning more about the diaconate.

**ASPIRANCY:** a time to discern the capability and readiness of an aspirant to be nominated to the bishop for acceptance as a candidate for diaconal ordination. The goal of Aspirancy is to enable the aspirant to demonstrate the possibility of a diaconal vocation and an appropriate level of readiness for eventual selection into the candidate formation. This process takes about a year.

**CANDIDACY:** This is a process for continued discernment of a diaconal vocation, and a deepening theological and pastoral formation in preparation for ordination. The formational and transformative period must last at least three years, in addition to the period of inquiry and Aspirancy.

**POST-ORDINATION:** This is a follow-up process to check and sharpen pastoral and sacramental skills and encounters. The goal is to responsibly address the various aspects of a deacon's ministry, the development of his personality and, above all, his commitment to spiritual growth and pastoral service. The primary source for post-ordination formation is the ministry itself with spiritual reflection.

### **Interested?**

- Please talk to your pastor first and prayerfully discuss it him.**
- Then together — you can officially apply to the program.**
- Please use the official application as found in the Diocesan Website ([www.yakimadiocese.org](http://www.yakimadiocese.org)), or your pastor should have such application in the parish.**
- Please send application and other pertinent documents to the Office of the Deaconate.**

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