

PERMANENT DIACONATE



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

Mission Statement

Permanent Diaconate Office

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

*The **Permanent Diaconate Department** of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, working under the Secretariat for Clergy, has as its primary mission the formation of candidates for the Permanent Diaconate. These candidates, along with their spouses for those who are married, undergo a program designed to respond to the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions of the diaconate in our times.*

Under the direction of the Archbishop of Philadelphia, and with fidelity to Vatican and National Norms, the Permanent Diaconate Department seeks to prepare deacons who will serve our Archdiocese through the ministry of the word, of the altar and of charity.

In order to carry this out, the Department is committed to a Program of Formation which provides:

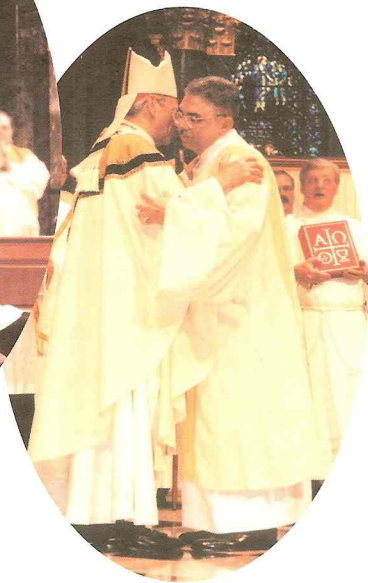
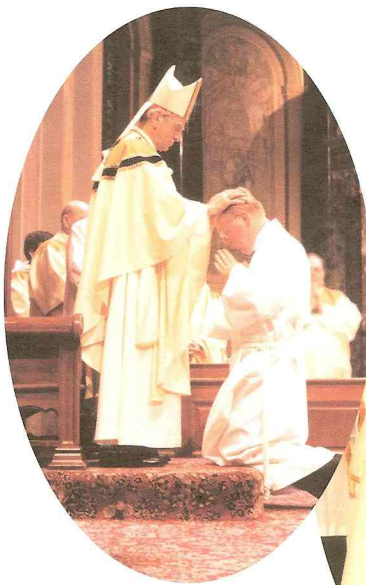
- ❖ **Spiritual formation** by means of spiritual direction, days of recollection, spiritual conferences and an annual retreat.*
- ❖ **Intellectual formation** through weekly classroom instruction.*
- ❖ **Human & pastoral formation** through workshops and practica.*

In addition, the Permanent Diaconate Department assists the Secretary for Clergy in providing pastoral care and continuing formation for deacons. All of these activities are undertaken with complete fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church and in complete communion with the Archbishop of Philadelphia.



"I call you to be like all the holy deacons throughout the Church's glorious history, who, by their lives, witnessed to the truth that Christ came, not to be served, but to serve."

Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua
Jubilee of Permanent Deacons
February 20, 2000



The Church Teaches

“At a lower level of the hierarchy are to be found **deacons**, who receive the imposition of hands ‘not unto the priesthood but unto ministry.’” At an ordination to the diaconate only the bishop lays hands on the candidate, thus signifying the deacon's special attachment to the bishop in the tasks of his ‘diaconia.’

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1569

Deacons share in Christ's mission and grace in a special way. The sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an imprint (“character”) which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made Himself the **‘deacon’ or servant of all**. Among other tasks, it is the task of the deacons to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and preaching, in presiding over funerals, and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1570

Since the Second Vatican Council the Latin Church has restored the diaconate “**as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy**,” while the Churches of the East had always maintained it. This permanent diaconate, which can be conferred on married men, constitutes an important enrichment for the Church's mission. Indeed, it is appropriate and useful that men who carry out a truly diaconal ministry in the Church, whether in its liturgical and pastoral life or whether in its social and charitable works, should “be strengthened by the imposition of hands which has come down from the apostles. They would be more closely bound to the altar and their ministry would be made more fruitful through the sacramental grace of the diaconate.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1571

By a special sacramental gift, Holy Order confers on the deacon a particular participation in the consecration and mission of Him who became the servant of the Father for the redemption of mankind, and inserts him in a new and specific way in the mystery of Christ, of His Church and the salvation of all mankind...The primary and most fundamental relationship must be with Christ, who assumed the condition of a slave for love of the Father and mankind. In virtue of ordination the deacon is truly called to act in conformity with Christ the Servant.

Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons, paragraphs 46, 47

"He will help the bishop and his body of priests as a minister of the word, of the altar and of charity. He will make himself the servant of all."

Homily, Ordination of Deacons



Minister of the Word

"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, & practice what you teach."

Rite of Ordination of a Deacon

- ❖ Proclaim the Gospel & preach
- ❖ Teach the Catholic Faith
- ❖ Evangelize both believers & unbelievers

Minister of the Altar

"According to the tradition of the Church & the provisions of law, deacons assist the bishop & priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries."

Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons

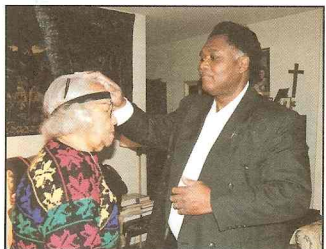


- ❖ Assist bishops and priests at the Liturgy
- ❖ Ordinary minister of the Eucharist
- ❖ Administer the sacrament of Baptism
- ❖ Preside at wake services & the rites of burial
- ❖ Preside over devotional services

Minister of Charity

"In the ministry of charity, deacons should conform themselves in the likeness of Christ the Servant, whom they represent, & above all, they should be dedicated to works of charity & to administration."

Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons



- ❖ Perform charitable, administrative & social welfare duties
- ❖ Visit the sick & feed the hungry
- ❖ Minister to the dying & the bereaved

Discerning a Vocation To The Permanent Diaconate

The applicant is a male who has received all the Sacraments of Initiation. If the applicant is a convert to the Catholic faith, he has been a fully initiated Catholic for five years.

He must be 35 years of age for ordination.

He resides within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

He enjoys good physical and mental health with no debilitating conditions.

He is a man of faith who professes what the Church teaches.

He possesses financial security with a history of steady employment. His employment does not require frequent travel.

If married, he has been married for at least five years at the time of admission to the formation program, and his marriage is a valid and stable one. He enjoys the full support of his spouse who will participate actively in the formation program.

If single, he enjoys a stable, settled life with a history of healthy relationships. He understands the commitment to celibacy.

He can give the time required for study and service without detriment to his family and employment.

He is presently active within his parish community and is recognized and accepted as a leader within the parish community.

He is able to work in a cooperative spirit with the pastor and other staff of his parish.

He has the recommendation of his pastor.

He is willing and able to make a life-long commitment to serve the Church of Philadelphia. He will be able to offer 10-12 hours each week in this service.

He is willing to promise obedience to the Archbishop of Philadelphia.

He is willing to accept any pastoral assignment that may be given to him.

Questions & Answers

Q: *How long does it take to become a Permanent Deacon in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia?*

A: The formation program is six years in duration. The first year is called 'Aspirancy,' which is a year dedicated to spiritual formation. This is followed by five years of classroom instruction, retreats and days of recollection, pastoral workshops and practicum sessions.

Q: *When & where are the classes held?*

A: The classes are held at St. Charles Seminary on Wednesday evenings from September to May, 7:00 P.M. - 9:30 P.M.

Q: *What courses does the candidate take?*

A: During the five years of formal classroom instruction, the candidate studies:

- ❖ Christology
- ❖ Church History/Fathers of the Church
- ❖ Old Testament
- ❖ Gospels
- ❖ New Testament Letters
- ❖ Sacramental Theology
- ❖ Moral Theology
- ❖ Canon Law
- ❖ Liturgy
- ❖ Liturgical Practicum

In addition, there are three years of Homiletics, which occur twice each month. The Pastoral Workshops are held on Saturday, as are the Days of Recollection.

Q: *Is my wife's consent necessary?*

A: Absolutely! Because diaconate effects and makes demands upon marriage and family, the support and consent of the wife is absolutely necessary.

Q: *Does my wife need to accompany me to class, workshops, etc.?*

A: It is our ordinary expectation that your wife express her support by attendance at as many formational activities as possible.

Q: *Is there tuition?*

A: At present, there is a modest tuition of \$300.00 per year paid by the candidate.

Q: *If ordained, where will I be assigned?*

A: Because deacons are clerics of the Archdiocese, they may receive an assignment anywhere within the Archdiocese. Personal and family considerations are joined with the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese for whom the deacon is ordained.

Q: *How do I apply for the permanent diaconate?*

A: Each year there is an information night when the entire formation program is explained in full detail. There are two phases of application: preliminary and formal.

Q: *What is preliminary application?*

A: Preliminary application involves the following:

- ❖ Interview with the applicant and, if married, his wife
- ❖ Letter of intent on the part of the applicant
- ❖ Letter of support on the part of the spouse
- ❖ Information questionnaire
- ❖ Impediment questionnaire
- ❖ Pastor's report
- ❖ Brief autobiography

Based upon this information, a decision is made as to whether the applicant may be moved into formal application.

Q: *What is formal application?*

A: Formal application is the process for those whom the Administrators of the program feel might have a call to the diaconate. This process is quite detailed, and includes:

- ❖ Application Form
- ❖ Sacramental certificates
 - Baptism
 - Confirmation
 - Marriage of applicant & spouse
 - Marriage of applicant's parents

- ❖ Military discharge papers (if applicable)
- ❖ Criminal History Record
- ❖ Photos
- ❖ Physical Examination Report
- ❖ Psychological Examination
- ❖ Letters of recommendation

Two letters from priests; two additional letters from others

- ❖ Interview with members of the Admissions Board in the home
- ❖ Interview with members of the Admissions Board at a neutral site

All of this material is then reviewed by the Archdiocesan Admissions Board for the Permanent Diaconate, which then makes a recommendation to the Administrator of the program.

Q: *How will I know whether or not I am accepted?*

A: You will receive notification of the decision by means of a letter. A copy of this letter will also be sent to your pastor.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT:**

Permanent Diaconate Office

100 E. Wynnewood Road

Wynnewood, PA 19096

610-664-2213


Fax: 610-664-3728

PRAYER

To The Blessed Virgin Mary



MARY



Who as teacher of faith, by your obedience to the word of God, has co-operated in a remarkable way with the work of redemption, make the ministry of deacons effective by teaching them to hear the Word and to proclaim it faithfully.

MARY

Teacher of charity, who by your total openness to God's call, has co-operated in bringing to birth all the Church's faithful, make the ministry and the life of deacons fruitful, by teaching them to give themselves totally to the service of the People of God.

MARY



Teacher of prayer, who through your maternal intercession has supported and helped the Church from her beginnings, make deacons always attentive to the needs of the faithful by teaching them to come to know the value of prayer.

MARY

Teacher of humility, by constantly knowing yourself to be the servant of the Lord you were filled with the Holy Spirit, make deacons docile instruments in Christ's work of redemption by teaching them the greatness of being the least of all.

MARY

Teacher of that service which is hidden, who by your everyday and ordinary life filled with love, knew how to co-operate with the salvific plan of God in an exemplary fashion, make deacons good and faithful servants, by teaching them the joy of serving the Church with ardent love.



Amen