

ASPIRANCY FORMATION

The Aspirancy Period is a year-long discernment and reflection period by the Church and the candidates. This includes ten full-day sessions held at St. Mary's Seminary. Standard topics include: qualities of diaconal ministry, four dimensions of formation (human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral), overview of diversity of diaconal ministry, understanding of the Catechism, presentations by deacons and wives, professional boundaries and protection of children, spiritual direction and theological reflection. Diaconal formation is demanding and challenging mentally and emotionally. The candidate must be ready to engage fully into formation and be willing to be formed. The candidate will be asked to take on a social ministry during this period.

Expectations of Spouse

The Candidate's Wife:

- Must be strongly supportive of husband's initiative;
- Participates in the application and interview process;
- Participates in psychological assessment (interview and testing with psychologist);
- Is required to attend the Monthly Sessions during the Aspirancy Period;
- Is welcome to attend the theological formation sessions to understand further the role of the deacon;
- Is required to attend any special workshops that may arise (ample notice will be given);
- Is required to attend an annual weekend retreat; and
- Must write a letter to the Archbishop at the time of ordination stating her support for her husband to be ordained.

Candidate Cost and Expense

There is no direct cost to the candidate. The Archdiocese of Baltimore assumes the cost of the theological sessions and the retreats. Each candidate pays approximately \$250 per year for books, though some parishes might cover this expense. The formation team is willing to contact the parish on the candidate's behalf. Each candidate assumes the cost of the spiritual director. The Archdiocese is willing to defray these costs to a candidate as well. A candidate also encounters certain other expenses such as the four-volume set of the Liturgy of the Hours, albs and books on the liturgical rites. There are also various expenses incurred at ordination.

The Office of Deacon Formation has numerous deacons and deacon candidates throughout the Archdiocese to assist in your discernment. Please do not hesitate to call anyone of these deacons or deacon candidates for more information.

Baltimore Area

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DEACON FORMATION PROGRAM ASPIRANCY AND CANDIDACY

ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE
CLASS OF 2019

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WHAT IS A DEACON?

A deacon receives the Sacrament of Holy Orders and therefore is no longer a lay person. He is a member of the clergy of the Catholic Church. By his ordination, the deacon is the interpreter of the needs and the desires of the Christian communities and the sign or sacrament of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. (Pope Paul VI)

WHAT ARE THE MINISTRIES OF A DEACON?

From the very early Church, diaconal ministry has focused on Love and Justice, the Word of God, and the Liturgy. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1570) makes this point quite strongly by stating that deacons “share in Christ’s mission....as servant of all.”

The Ministry of the Word

Through the ministry of the Word of God, the deacon teaches and provides catechetical instruction and Christian counseling. The deacon can offer spiritual direction and conduct retreats. Most importantly, the deacon preaches and proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Liturgy

The deacon assists at the Mass by proclaiming the Gospel, preaching, offering the general intercessions, preparing the gifts, and distributing Holy Communion. The deacon also administers the sacrament of Baptism, and the deacon witnesses the sacrament of Matrimony. The deacon may preside at the Rites of Christian Burial, at Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction, at the Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours (the Divine Office), novenas and other liturgical rites. In addition, the deacon has the ancient duty of bringing Viaticum to the dying.

The Ministry of Charity

The deacon is an animator and promoter of the community’s active love. The deacon must bring Christ’s healing power to the needy, whether the need is physical, economic, or spiritual. The deacon must present Christ’s power in the Church and in the marketplace.

DIMENSIONS OF FORMATION

There are four dimensions of Deacon Formation:

- Human Formation is the *foundation* of the other three;
- Spiritual Formation *informs* the other three;
- Intellectual Formation enables the *understanding of* the other three; and
- Pastoral Formation *expresses* the other three in practice.

WHAT ARE THE ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS?*

The following requirements must be achieved prior to acceptance into the four-year formation program.

Personal Requirements

You must:

- be a Baptized man who is Confirmed;
- be a Roman Catholic for a minimum of 6 years;
- be an U.S. citizen or a legal, permanent resident at the time of admission with a working knowledge of English;
- be at least 31 years of age at the time of admission to the program;
- typically be less than 60 years of age at the time of ordination;
- enjoy good physical and mental health with no condition which would impede diaconal ministry;
- have successfully completed high school and be able to handle college level course work;
- possess financial security with a history of steady employment in a position that does not require frequent travel or reassignment (deacons in the Archdiocese of Baltimore do not receive financial compensation for their ministry);
- be a registered parishioner within the Archdiocese of Baltimore;
- possess stability in your life regarding career, family relationships, etc., which is in concert with the Church’s values; and
- be willing and able to commit a significant amount of time, energy, and effort to the Deacon Formation Program.

Family Requirements

- For those who are married, you must be married at least six years and live in a stable and valid marriage, enjoying the full support of your spouse, and become celibate if your wife precedes you in death;
- For those who are single, you must enjoy a stable, settled life with a history of healthy relationships, and understand the implications of the charism of celibacy;
- enjoy a good reputation within the community; and
- be able to give the time required for study and service without detriment to yourself or your family.

Ministry Requirements

- be willing and able to make a life-long commitment to serve the Church of Baltimore as determined by the Archbishop of Baltimore;
- be willing to promise obedience to the Archbishop of Baltimore and be willing to accept any pastoral assignment that may be given to you by the Archbishop;
- be presently active in the Church and be recognized and accepted as a leader within the community; and
- be highly recommended by those who have worked with you in ministry and can attest to your potential to be an ordained minister in the Church.
- The formation team highly encourages all applicants to participate in the *Equip for Ministry* curriculum offered by the Archdiocese of Baltimore prior to or during Aspirancy (Two highly recommended core courses are: Theology for Ministry and Servant Leadership in the Church).

* The Deacon Formation Team will consider equivalencies or exceptions for any of these requirements.

APPLICATION, SCREENING AND ACCEPTANCE PROCESS

- Application due by February 28, 2015
- Each applicant (and spouse) who meets objective pre-requisites will be interviewed
- Inquiry to canonical freedom and impediments will also be conducted
- Office of Clergy Personnel will contact references
- Each candidate will have a full Psychological Assessment (Spouse also participates in a portion)
- Criminal Background Check and Fingerprinting will be completed on each candidate

BASIC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Class 2019	Application/Aspirancy 1	Aspirancy 1/Candidacy 2	Candidacy2/Candidacy3	Candidacy3/Candidacy4	Candidacy4/Deacon	Diaconal Assignment
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	Interview Applicants	Pastoral Formation Interview with a Lay Ecclesial Minister	Scripture Begin Institutional Assignment (submit monthly internship summary)	Liturgical Theology Begin Pastoral Assignment (submit monthly internship summary and Sunday homily)	Pastoral Theology Ordination Planning	
February	Interview Applicants	Impact on Marriage Psychological Assessment	Scripture	Sacramental Theology	Mariology Theology of the Saints Liturgical Practicums	
March	Interview Applicants	Ministries of the Deacon Catechism of the Church	Scripture Practicum for Reader	Sacramental Theology	Canon Law Liturgical Practicums	
April	Interview applicants	Protection of Children Theological Reflection	Scripture Installed as Reader	Pastoral Theology Preaching	Canon Law Candidates meet with Placement Committee	
May	Interview Applicants	Ordination Promises Psych Feedback	Spiritual Theology Annual Evaluations	History Annual Evaluations	Integrative Seminar Canonical Retreat Ordination	One Year Check Up
June	Interview Applicants Aspirancy Decision	Decision Letters for Candidacy	Annual Evaluation	Annual Evaluation		
Summer			Continue Institutional Assignment	Continue Pastoral Assignment	First Diaconal Assignment	
September	Aspirancy session begins <i>[The topics are not necessarily listed in order of presentation]</i>	Orientation to Academics Scripture Revelation (see insert box)	Pauline Theology Funeral Practicum Petition for Acolyte	Moral Theology		Schedule of Academic Class: 8:45 am Morning Prayer led by candidates with 'Sunday' homily 9:15 am Formation Hour with Team 10-12 pm Academic Class 12 pm Lunch 1-3 pm Academic Class
October	Human Formation Fingerprinting	Fundamental Theology Petition for Candidacy Retreat	Theology of John Retreat Acolyte Practicum	Moral Theology		
November	Spiritual Formation	Fundamental Theology	Ecclesiology Receive Acolyte	Church History Readiness for Orders		
December	Intellectual Formation	Theological Reflection Receive Candidacy	Christology Evaluation of internship	Preaching Evaluation of Internship		

INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

“The intellectual dimension of formation must be designed to communicate a knowledge of the faith and church tradition that is ‘complete and serious’ so that each participant will be prepared to carry out his vital ministry.” (Nat Dir., para. #118). The theological program is predominantly taught by the faculty of Saint Mary’s Seminary and University on 18-20 required class days per academic year. (Saturdays 8:30 am - 3 pm). A member of the faculty is the liaison with the Deacon Formation Team to facilitate the theological component of the formation program. The written work by the candidates is assigned, read, and evaluated by the formation team. This approach helps the team to assess more clearly each man’s progress.

Intellectual Formation includes:

- Sacred Scripture
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Dogmatic Theology Catholic Morality
- Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue
- Thorough knowledge of the Catechism
- Homiletics (theory and practice)- written monthly homily in later years
- Two or three 5-page integrative papers per semester.
- Church Fathers and Church History
- Fundamental Theology Canon Law
- Spiritual Theology Liturgy
- Christian Evangelization

The Ecumenical Institute which is part of St. Mary’s Seminary and University works with the program to offer academic credit in certain circumstances for those who wish to continue their intellectual formation toward a degree in theology. Additional academic work and cost is incurred by these candidates.

PASTORAL FORMATION

Pastoral Formation entails the development of skills and competencies that enable deacons to serve their communities well. It is the practical side of theology. Deacons must keep themselves aware of the challenges of the people whom they serve. They should continue to enhance their pastoral skills by gathering new insights on how to minister and allowing themselves to be evaluated so that they can continue to be formed. They develop:

- Good listening skills and pastoral sensitivity;
- The ability to use various resources properly and to refer to others and to seek help from others who are experts in areas where one does not feel competent;
- A demonstrated sensitivity to ecumenical interfaith and social justice issues in the Church and in the world;
- A demonstrated ability to serve the needs of others;
- A demonstrated ability to make a commitment to diaconal ministry according to the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church;
- Competency in pastoral skills, especially in the proclamation of the Word of God and in leading worship;
- The ability to relate to a wide variety of people, e.g., adult women and men, teenagers, families, children, and peers;
- A demonstrated ability to work cooperatively and collegially with other ministers and to empower others to exercise their appropriate role; and
- Competency to work effectively with large and small groups.

Pastoral Formation includes:

- One-year supervised institutional internship (hospital, prison, outreach, nursing home, etc.) (8-10 hours per week);
- One-year supervised parish internship (not one’s own home parish) (8-10 hours per week);
- Liturgical Practicums (reader, acolyte, funeral, marriage, baptism, and diaconal ministry at mass);
- Theological Reflection;
- Pastoral Counseling; and
- Monthly written summary of internships.

HUMAN FORMATION

The goal of human formation is a fuller development of one’s humanity so that the person of the deacon can be a bridge for communicating Jesus to his people. The capacity to relate to others is fundamental for a person called to be in service for the community. The whole being (body, mind, heart and spirit) is involved in formation: psychological competence, communication skills, maintaining one’s physical well being, nurturing healthy relationships, and openness to the arts, sciences and politics of human life. Integrating all of this and more is essential to become a complete and holy person.

- Flexibility and openness, demonstrated by the ability to adapt to change; ability to be at ease with himself and others; coupled with a personal stamina which shows him to be a man of principles, conviction and empathy;
- Evidence of having made a personal decision to choose ordained ministry .
- A developed good sense of self-esteem and self-confidence with the maturity needed to be ordained;
- The ability to manage time and to administer his own life and the duties of ministry with efficiency;
- The ability to set limits and goals in life and make plans both for himself and for his ministry;
- The ability to be self-critical as evidenced by an internal sense of measurement and non-reliance on external approval;
- An appreciation of the need for recreation and relaxation seen in the ability to take appropriate days off and vacation time;
- Have an awareness of his own limitations and strengths and be willing to be formed;
- Have a healthy understanding of authority and obedience; and
- Non-involvement in substance abuse, sexual addiction, or severe psychological problems, the absence of any definable pathology.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The spiritual formation dimension of the Deacon Formation Program is rooted in the understanding that all people are made in the image and likeness of God. As Genesis 1:26 proclaims, God has spoken at creation, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” A deacon’s spiritual formation is also rooted in the knowledge that God forms all people. Again as Genesis 2:7-8 boldly proclaims, “The Lord God formed man out of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath life.” The spiritual life is a life drawing closer to God by always growing in awareness of God’s creative intimacy.

This understanding is the foundational principle of the spiritual formation aspects in the Deacon Formation Program. The *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* (Washington, DC: USCCB) expresses this very eloquently: “The spiritual life is, therefore, dynamic and never static.” The first goal of spiritual formation is the establishment and nourishment of attitude, habits, and practices that will set the foundation for a lifetime of ongoing spiritual discipline.”

- A well-developed faith and an established relationship to Jesus Christ;
- An established devotion to Mary, the Mother of God;
- A regular routine of daily personal and communal prayer, demonstrated in recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours, regular attendance at Eucharist, regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, reflection time on Sacred Scripture, and personal reflection time;
- A understanding of “the spirituality of the deacon” rooted in active service;
- An established pattern of on-going spiritual renewal demonstrated by attendance at annual retreats, regular days of recollection and other forms of spiritual renewal; and
- An established pattern of prayer surrounding the Church’s liturgical calendar as evidenced by regular reflection on the readings of the liturgical year.

Spiritual Formation includes:

- Recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours
- Assignment to a Spiritual Director
- Annual weekend Retreats (spouses required)
- Six-day Canonical Retreat prior to Ordination