

## The Sacred Order of Deacon



**The Deacon Cross**

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is comprised of the diaconate, the presbyterate, and the episcopate; in other words, the deacon, the priest, and the bishop, with the bishop having the fullness of the priesthood.

The diaconate, which essentially is ministry of service and of charity, goes back to the early Church, to the role of the “helpers” to the Apostles in Acts 6: 1-6. Just as these seven helpers were linked to the Apostles, the office and ministry of the deacon is of special service of the ministry of the bishop. Thus in the ordination ritual the deacon is spoken of as the bishop’s eyes and hands.

Restored by the Second Vatican Council, the permanent diaconate, is open to married men, over the age of 35, who are designated as “permanent” deacons, unlike “transitional” deacons who eventually are ordained priests.

### The Formation Process

#### 1. The Aspirancy Period

The formation program for the permanent diaconate in the Diocese of Hamilton lasts for four years.

A man is admitted as an aspirant, and the aspirancy period, also called the propaedeutic period, lasts for five months from September to January. This initial of “pre-formation” is also known as the spiritual period, in which the aspirant (together with his wife) will be focused on discerning God’s call to the sacred order of deacon, and whether the permanent diaconate is also what God intends for them as a married couple and their family.

During the aspirancy period, the couple will be guided to a deeper knowledge and reflection on the vocation, spirituality, human dimensions, and ministry of the permanent diaconate in the Church and in the Diocese of Hamilton.

#### 2. The Candidate Period

Following a successful aspirancy period, the aspirant is invited to begin the Candidacy period in February and last for three and a half years. Formation of the candidate for the permanent diaconate begins with theological study of and reflection on all the aspects of theology deemed necessary for the service of the church and pastoral ministry in the diocese.

In addition to the intellectual and theological component of diaconate formation, there is also emphasis on the human, spiritual and pastoral dimensions of formation, which are ultimately focused on being a preparation for ministry which is intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral.

Aspirants and Candidates meet at least once a month for a full Saturday of formation during the months of September to June. All diaconate formation sessions take place at the Chancery Office in Hamilton.

In addition to the Saturday formation sessions, aspirants and candidates meet in small groups for a couple of hours with a deacon-mentor couple for ongoing formation in the form of prayer, reflection, study, and discussion on three weekday evenings per month.

## The Application Process

### Initial Steps

Discuss your interest in the permanent diaconate with your parish priest (pastor). If he thinks that you should begin the discernment process of the vocation to the diaconate, and if you feel that you have his support and encouragement, ask him to notify (in writing) the diaconate formation office about you and your interest in discerning whether God is calling you to the sacred order of deacon for the service of the Church in the Diocese of Hamilton.

On receipt of a favourable letter (e-mail) from your pastor, you will be invited to meet with either Fr. Mark Gatto or Deacon Peter Gittens for an initial interview.

At the end of this meeting, an application packet may be given to you, to begin the lengthy application process

Among items to be prepared and collected for submission with the completed application form are:

- Baptismal Certificate
- Confirmation Certificate
- Marriage Certificate
- Diplomas/Transcripts of Education
- Medical Certificate of Good Health
- Police Records Check (Vulnerable Sector Screening)

- An Autobiographical Summary

In addition other assessment tools will be utilized such as an aptitude inventory for diaconate ministry, psychological screening, home visits, etc.

Reference letters will be required to be completed on a form sent to your pastor, another priest/deacon and your employer.



For more information, please contact:

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## PERMANENT DIACONATE FORMATION

## DIOCESE OF HAMILTON



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