

## **Commitment to Chastity**

At the time of his ordination, a permanent deacon commits himself to the Church within the context of his present marital situation. Single and widowed candidates commit themselves to perpetual celibate chastity and married candidates commit themselves to continuing to live chastely within their married state (and, if later widowed, to live from then on perpetual celibate chastity.)

## **The Formation Process**

Candidates accepted into the program are required to undergo formation for a period of four years. In that period, they attend one weekend a month from September to June at the Chancery in Hamilton for **spiritual, academic and ministerial formation**. In addition they meet weekly in each other's homes for discussion, prayer and reflection. During the summer candidates are expected to engage in directed readings, and a designated service activity.

**Propaedeutic Period:** The first six months from September to February are devoted to the propaedeutic period, *i.e.*, a time of spiritual discernment of the vocation to the diaconate. At the end of this period of discernment, the candidate and the Church will decide on continuing the formation for the diaconate.

The **spiritual formation** process integrates doctrinal, theological, biblical and ministerial development for the expression of a life lived in Christian faith. The candidates are guided in methods of prayer, meditation and self-awareness. On study weekends each class meets for communal prayer, daily Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, and a shared reflection on a given theme. Candidates are required to make an annual retreat.

**The academic formation** encompasses foundational studies in the Old Testament, New Testament,

Christology, Ecclesiology, Moral Theology, Church History, Theology of Ministry (including homiletics), Liturgy, Sacraments, Spirituality and Canon Law.

The **pastoral formation** interfaces with the spiritual and theological formation of the deacon as it prepares the candidate for the Church's ministry of Word, Liturgy, and Charity. The pastoral formation builds on the assumption that one preparing for the diaconate has already been actively involved in the life and mission of the Church, emulating the spirit of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve.

## **Requirements for Admission**

A person can offer himself as a candidate for the diaconate but he must be called by the Church and its leadership before he can be ordained. The call to diaconal service is identified and affirmed over a period of years. In terms of qualifications, **the** Church seeks mature Catholic men who have demonstrated faith, service and leadership in their local Church communities. They must share the contemporary Church's view of its mission and seek to grow in understanding as well as holiness. Single or married men over 35 may be ordained. The wife of a married man is involved in the discernment process since a fully committed marriage underlies the ministry of married deacons. Applicants must enjoy the health, time and academic ability needed for the years of preparation. After ordination, they must make specific commitments of time and talent to the Church without compromising their family, marital or job responsibilities.

For more information about the Diaconate please contact:

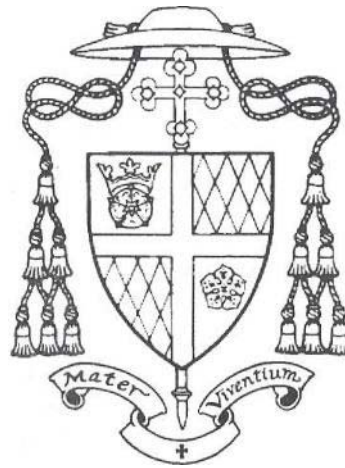
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# PERMANENT DEACONS



Called to Serve the  
Diocese of Hamilton

A Brief Description  
of  
Diaconal Ministry  
and Formation

## DEACONS:

### Minister of the Church

In the early Church, deacons responded to the needs identified by the bishops. Contemporary deacons also have a wide outlook. Ordained for the service of the diocese, they are recognized as collaborative associates of the bishops. The ministry of deacons, in parishes, and in special outreach ministries, by its very nature, calls for a team approach, complementary to the ministries of others.

### A Heritage of Service

Many deacons are numbered among the saints celebrated by the Church throughout the liturgical year. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was one of the original seven deacons in the Acts of the Apostles. Lawrence, among the great saints in the early church and on the list of martyrs venerated at Rome, was untiring in his efforts to serve the greatest treasure of the Church of Rome, its poor.

### Ministers of Service

Though all are servants by Baptism, the deacon is ordained as *a sacramental sign of Christ the servant*. In the name of Christ and the Church, the deacon makes evident the self-sacrificing love of the Lord. Deacons offer direct service to those in need, and also help church members to discover their participation in the ministry of Christ. Service is the trademark of the deacon wherever he goes.

## Ordained Ministers

Deacons share in the sacrament of Orders with bishops and priests. By ordination the deacon is brought into a new relationship with the Holy Spirit. Graced for ministry, the deacon is publicly acknowledged by the Church as one called by God to serve the community of believers and the evangelizing mission of the Church. He shares fraternity and sacramental ministry with the other deacons of the diocese, as well as with priests and bishops. The deacon commits himself to the responsibility of communicating God's word and announcing the reign of Christ in and through the Church.

### Distinctiveness of Service

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 his role as minister. Deacons are ministers ordained for tasks of service in the Church. They do not receive the ministerial priesthood, but ordination configures them to Christ with the tasks of the ministry of the word, divine worship, pastoral governance, and the service of charity. These tasks are to be carried out under the pastoral authority of their bishop. The distinctiveness of diaconal service is its sacramental character.

### Ministers of the Risen Lord

Restored after 1,500 years by the Second Vatican Council, the Diaconate is rooted in the experience of the New Testament Church. We read in Acts that the apostles chose deacons to help them respond to the pressing needs of the infant Church in Jerusalem and maintain fidelity to its mission of service. Deacons are called to embody the ideal of every follower of Christ, to be "one who serves." (Luke 22:27)

## What They Do

As disciples of Christ and members of the Church, a deacon's ministry evolves in response to specific needs and his God-given talents. There are three dimensions of diaconal service: Ministry of Love and Justice, Ministry of the Word of God, and the Ministry within the Liturgy. They care for the disadvantaged, the bereaved, the divorced, the dying and the imprisoned, those pushed to the fringes of society by sickness and poverty, crime or age. Deacons prepare the faithful to receive the sacraments and to carry out their vocations as baptized Christians. With proper authorization they are able to preach, teach, counsel and give spiritual guidance. They assist bishop and priests in liturgical celebrations. They baptize, witness marriages and preside at funerals. Whatever they do, deacons are acting on behalf of the servant Christ. Normally, this service that the deacon undertakes on behalf of the Church is done free of charge and without pay.

### Community and Family

Some deacons are single. Many are married and share their dedication to ministry with their wives and families. Thus the typical deacon attempts to balance three priorities in his life: the responsibility of husband and father, his job or profession by which he earns a living or supplements retirement income, and his ministry as an ordained deacon. The springboard of service and spirituality for most deacons is his life-long commitment to his wife in the Sacrament of Matrimony. A deacon is a servant at all times. Ministry is understood in a holistic manner. Service rendered in the context of the family may well be a much-needed ministry in our culture, which is enriched and challenged by it.