THE ASPIRANT HANDBOOK

2015-2016

Diaconate Formation Program
Diocese of Bridgeport
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Diocese of Bridgeport
Message from His Excellency, Bishop Frank Caggiano

October 1, 2015

Dear Aspirant and spouse,

The 2015-2016 Aspirant Handbook is to assist you in your journey to the diaconate. Unlike the handbooks in the past, this handbook is specifically composed for Aspirants and their wives.

The focus of this handbook is on the formation of ‘The Aspirant.’ The aspirant is one who is discerning his vocation with the assistance of his pastor, his spiritual director and the guidance of the formation team. The candidate, on the other hand, has made a preliminary commitment to service (diakonia) in the church as he continues his discernment with the blessing of the church and the continued assistance of his pastor, his spiritual director and the members of the formation team.

The aspirant is to refer to this handbook as often as he can so that he becomes knowledgeable of the history of the diaconate in the church. In addition, it is important for the aspirant and his wife to be fully aware that there are three paths of formation and five dimensions within the Aspirant Path. This handbook specifically refers to these divisions as well as indicates under each path the specific goals and objectives that the aspirant must achieve during formation as defined by the National Directory for the Formation and Ministry of Deacons in the United States.

The pastoral role of the deacon in the church today is a role that is not often seen or understood by the laity in the church today. The deacon’s faithful dedication to the People of God through pastoral outreach balances the known roles of the deacon as a minister of Word and Sacrament that often identify the deacon in a parish community. For this reason, aspirants share a common responsibility with the laity who are likewise called to serve their brothers and sisters and to nurture a love for pastoral ministry. Aspirants are to dedicate at least 5 hours per month or a total of 30 hours of pastoral outreach during the Aspirancy Period. This experience will help to ground the aspirant in his understanding of diakonia and his future role as a servant in the Church.

The challenge for all aspirants is to authentically and prayerfully immerse themselves through Lectio Divina in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ who came not to be served but to serve his brothers and sisters. The role of the future deacon in a parish community is to give witness as servant (diakonos) and to provide an example to all the baptized who likewise are called to serve their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

We pray that all who enter the Aspirant Path find in this handbook a helpful guide as they discern their vocation to follow Jesus, the servant.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop Frank Caggiano, D.D.
Bishop of Bridgeport
N.B. The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States provides these insights regarding the Aspirant Path:

Paragraph 182. “Upon completion of the initial inquiry process, the bishop may accept some inquirers into Aspirant Path. This path … corresponds to the “propaedeutic period” required by the Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education. The Aspirant Path is primarily 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.”

Paragraph 183. “The goal of aspirant formation is to enable the aspirant to demonstrate the possibility of a diaconal vocation and an appropriate level of readiness for eventual selection into candidate formation.”

Paragraph 184. “To create an environment conducive to adult Christian formation, the director of formation should prepare an aspirant handbook that details the components of the program, provides a rationale and guidance for assessment, and clearly delineates the expectations and responsibilities of the aspirant, including those regarding the wife of a married aspirant. This handbook is to be approved by the bishop.”

Paragraph 186. “Although some aspects of the aspirant path may be linked with other lay apostolate formation programs in a diocese, the aspirant path must be a distinctive program that provides a thorough discernment of a diaconal vocation. Therefore, it must provide (1) an appropriate initiation into diaconal spirituality; (2) supervised pastoral experiences, especially among the poor and marginalized; (3) and an adequate assessment of the aspirant’s potential to be promoted to candidate formation and ultimately to ordination.”

“...to create an environment in which a wife of a married aspirant can be appropriately prepared to give her consent to his continuation, and more essentially to ascertain her compatibility with her husband’s diaconal vocation and eventual ministry.”

Paragraph 187 “The aspirant is to be introduced to the study of theology, to a deeper knowledge of the spirituality and ministry of the deacon, and to a more attentive discernment of his call….This period is to ensure the aspirant’s regular participation in spiritual direction, to introduce him to the pastoral ministries of the diocesan Church, and to assist his family in their support of his formation.”
SECTION 1
THE DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
Diocese of Bridgeport

MISSION STATEMENT

The Diaconate Formation Program, a small, caring community where the dignity of the individual is valued, provides a four and a half-year formation that integrates the human with the spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and diaconal dimensions.

Through prayer, study and the grace of the Holy Spirit, the aspirant undergoes a transformation of heart and mind as he prepares to be a servant-leader (diakonos) of Word, Altar, and Charity to the People of God in the Diocese of Bridgeport.
SECTION 1
THE DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
Diocese of Bridgeport

A Newly Ordained Diaconal Profile

The aspirant begins formation in a small, intimate, caring environment where the dignity of the individual is valued. He actively participates in a four-year formation program that integrates the human with the spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and diaconal dimensions so that at the end of the four-year formation program the newly ordained deacon has:

- strengthened his prayer, meditative, and sacramental life through his faithful recitation of the Divine Office, the daily use of *Lectio Divina*, and his attendance at sacred liturgies as often as possible
- committed himself to spiritual direction throughout his post ordination ministerial life
- acquired a strong foundation in scripture, liturgy, dogma, moral and pastoral theology
- witnessed the Gospel values in his words and deeds by his outreach to the poor and marginalized
- became an evangelizer to people of all ages, of every ethnic / racial background
- become a compassionate, caring pastoral leader as he outreaches to those in hospitals, nursing homes, and under hospice care
- acquired pastoral skills so that he can resolve human conflict by peaceful solutions
- grown ever closer to Mary, Mother of God, whose life of service is a model for all aspirants and candidates
- and received permission from his informed spouse who is well aware of the impact diaconal ministry may have on her and their family life.
SECTION 1
THE DIACONATE OFFICE
Diocese of Bridgeport

MISSION STATEMENT

Committed to the pastoral ministry begun by Jesus, the deacon is ordained to the Ministry of Service (*diakonia*). He is a living icon of Jesus, the Servant (*diakonos*), who has come not to be served, but to serve the People of God in Word, Altar, and Charity.

He is, moreover, to be a sign of Christ's love (*agape*) to the adolescent and young adult; to those seeking the truth; to the married the single; and those consecrated to the Lord; to the infirm; to the elderly; to prisoners; and to all who are seeking to develop a closer relationship with the Lord.

The deacon’s ministry is always in collaboration with the presbyterate and in obedience to the Ordinary of the Diocese of Bridgeport.
SECTION 1

+ Ten Commandments for a Deacon +

1. **Have a heartfelt love for the Catholic Church**, regardless of its stains or wrinkles, because it was founded by Jesus.
2. **Be a person of prayer.** Always find time for the rosary, confession, Mass, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, Morning and Evening prayer.
3. **Have zeal for souls.** Deacons need to help people get into heaven and avoid the "smoking section", which is hell. Your ministry can make the difference between heaven and hell for others.
4. **Balance** family, job, and church ministry, and enjoy life.
5. **Be faithful to the Magisterium and to the liturgical norms.** Be neither ultra-conservative or ultra-liberal. Remember, a bird needs both a right wing and a left wing to fly straight.
6. **Obey and cooperate with your bishop.**
7. **Work with, communicate with and respect your pastor.**
   Don't align yourself with those who disagree with him. Deacons have to be bridges of peace. Like Aaron and Hur, holding up Moses's arms when he needed support, you must support your priest.
8. **Respect sacred boundaries.** You are a public figure in the diocese. You represent the Church.
9. **Minister with truth and charity.**
10. **Be a "foot washer"**Remember the ministry of charity and ministry to the poor and the sick.

+These Ten Commandments were composed by Santa Fe’s Archbishop Michael Sheehan and distributed to deacons at their regional meeting.
SECTION 2
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The Bishop

\[ \text{Director of the Diaconate Formation} \]

- Academic Dean & Adjunct Faculty
- Admission Committee & Evaluation Committee
- Directors/Coordinators & Pastors/Sponsors
- Inquirers/Aspirants/Candidates & their wives
- Spiritual Direction & Pastoral Internship
- Wives & Family Program

The Bishop is the chief administrative officer of the Archdiocese and is ultimately responsible for the welfare of the souls in his Archdiocese. The Archbishop's involvement permeates every phase of religious and clerical life of the Archdiocese.

The Director of Formation "has the task of coordinating the different people involved in the formation, of supervising and inspiring the whole work of education in its various dimensions, and of maintaining contacts with the families of married aspirants and candidates and with their communities of origin.

"[Ratio fundamentalis institutionis diaconorum permanentium, § 21]. The Director meets regularly with the Rector of St. Joseph's Seminary to confer with him regarding changes in curriculum and staff; the assessment of aspirants and candidates; and the establishment and management of the Diaconate formation program budget.

The Spiritual Director is chosen by each inquirer, aspirant, and candidate and must be approved by the Bishop (or his delegate). His task is that of discerning the workings of the Spirit in the soul of those called and, at the same time, of accompanying and supporting their ongoing conversion; he must also give concrete suggestions to help bring about an authentic diaconal spirituality and offer effective incentives for acquiring the associated virtues. Because of this, inquirers, aspirants, and candidates are invited to entrust themselves for spiritual direction only to priests of proven virtue, equipped with a good theological culture, of
SECTION 2
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

profound spiritual experience, of marked pedagogical sense, of strong and refined ministerial sensibility. [Ratio, §23].

The Pastor "is called to offer to the one who has been entrusted to him a lively ministerial communion and to introduce him to and accompany him in those pastoral activities which he considers most suitable; he will be careful to make a periodic check on the work done with the candidate himself and to communicate the progress of the placement to the director of formation" [Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum..., § 24].

The Pastor is the direct supervisor of the candidate, and together with the Director of Formation, is responsible for the progress of the man in formation.

The Pastoral Formator is specifically responsible to supervise each aspirant and candidate in the field. A practical internship is provided for each aspirant and candidate to permit him to meet in the field what he has learned in his study. It must be gradual, tailored to the individual and under continual supervision. Care is to be taken that the aspirant and candidates be actively introduced into the pastoral activity of the diocese and that they have periodic sharing of experiences with deacons already involved in the ministry.

They are to be helped to be strongly aware of their missionary identity and prepared to undertake the proclamation of the truth also to non-Christians, particularly those belonging to their own people.

In the wide sense, pastoral formation coincides with spiritual formation: it is formation for an ever greater identification with the *diakonia* of Christ. (Ratio, §85, 86, 87, 88)

The Adjunct Faculty "contribute in a relevant way to the formation of the future deacons. In fact by teaching the sacrum depositum held by the Church, they nourish the faith of the aspirants/candidates and qualify them to be teachers of the People of God. . ." (Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum..., § 25].

The Mentor Couples are experienced deacons (minimum 3 years ordained) and their wives who walk with the couples on their journey through formation. Their role is to form caring and supportive relationships with deacon aspirants and candidates and their wives, guiding them in their spiritual development, and providing them with the encouragement they may need.
The wife is an equal partner in the Sacrament of Matrimony and is an individual with her own gifts, talents, and call from God. Children are included in activities such as family picnics, pot luck suppers, and casual gatherings, along with family days of reflection. These will provide opportunities for families to come together to support one another and grow in mutual love and respect.
SECTION 3
Administration and Adjunct Faculty 2015-2016
The Most Reverend Frank Caggiano, D.D.
Deacon Anthony P. Cassaneto, Ph.D., Director

Administrative Staff:
Adjunct Faculty:
SECTION 4
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
POSITION TITLE: DIRECTOR OF THE DIACONATE

I. POSITION CONCEPT
The Director has tri-fold responsibilities: (1) to oversee the Inquiry and Aspirant Programs; (2) to supervise a comprehensive program of integrated formation that includes the spiritual, theological, pastoral, diaconal and human formation for those preparing for ordination; and (3) to lead a post-ordination program where deacons and their wives are encouraged to continue to grow spiritually, theologically, pastorally, diaconally, and in human formation.

II. POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES
OVERVIEW:
1. To promote, recruit, and welcome inquirers who are discerning a call to the Diaconate through fellowship, reflection and prayer.

2. To administer the established formation program for men who are called to serve as ordained deacons in the Church. This includes the need to maintain the academic accreditation of the formation program through St. Joseph’s Seminary, Yonkers, NY and/or local Universities or Colleges.

3. To continue to support the ordained, overseeing their ongoing formational and ministerial formation.

4. To provide support to the deacons, their wives and the widows of deceased deacons by offering opportunities for social gatherings, prayer and fraternity. The Deacon Office will also serve as a resource to deacons facing any type of personal or ministerial difficulties.

A. PROMOTING AND RECRUITING OF POTENTIAL APPLICANTS
THE DIRECTOR:
1. develops and leads a robust vocation program that actively promotes the Permanent Diaconate.

2. collaborates with the Pastors and Vocation Director to advertize the process of discernment, inquiry, and application throughout the Diocese to include guest speakers, workshops, and family events where a broad cross-section of men and their families can be made more aware of the expectations of responding to
SECTION 4
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
POSITION TITLE: DIRECTOR OF THE DIACONATE

A. PROMOTING AND RECRUITING OF POTENTIAL APPLICANTS
THE DIRECTOR:
their call to the Diaconate.

3. enhances the evaluation process of applicants into the Diaconate by assessing spiritual, academic, and psychological levels and needs in preparation for a period of Inquiry followed by Aspirant formation.

B. LEADING ASPIRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES
THE DIRECTOR

1. assesses an academic plan for each man entering formation based on his level of education along with a cognitive assessment of his abilities

2. creates an individual plan of study based on an aspirant’s ability and need

3. coordinates with local University officials an opportunity for an appropriate college degree to allow entrance into the Diaconate formation program

4. assesses the need for self-study, self-paced programs, either online or in class to complete the required academic programs

5. maintains a collaborative relationship with Saint Joseph’s Seminary, Yonkers, NY, that will be sponsoring a majority of the academic courses in the formation program.

6. must be available for travel between venues (Bridgeport and Yonkers)

7. coordinates and mentors the Diaconate weekends

8. identifies qualified faculty

9. maintains the non-university based study program focusing on more general studies, spiritual enrichment, and building a fraternity among the men and their wives.

10. maintains a presence with the men in formation throughout the Diaconate weekend
B. LEADING ASPIRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES
THE DIRECTOR

11. allows for more practical human and pastoral formation by creating parish and diocesan internships, focusing on ministries of charity whenever possible.

12. conducts annual evaluations in the areas of academic, spiritual, pastoral, and human development

13. oversees the work of the evaluation committee that will coordinate the evaluation of pastors, faculty, and field supervisors

14. initiates programs on an annual basis that would allow for variation in the overall formation program dependent upon the aspirant’s needs.

C. GUIDING AND MONITORING THE ONGOING FORMATION OF DEACONS AFTER THEIR ORDINATION
THE DIRECTOR:

1. assists the Bishop and the Assignment Board in the proper placement of the newly ordained deacons.

2. ensures the ongoing growth and abilities as they function as deacons for the parishes to which they are assigned as well as for broader diocesan programs.

3. coordinates and monitors ongoing formation through self-paced continuing education course offered by the Leadership Institute.

4. liaise with the Center for Ignatian Spirituality to provide further formation opportunities.

5. assures that all newly ordained deacons meet the formation requirements associated with the first three years after ordination.

6. creates and administers an evaluation process for all deacons in coordination with their assigned parish leaders and the Vicar for Clergy on an annual basis. This evaluation should include an assessment of ongoing education, homiletic skill, ministerial effectiveness and general life experience.
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DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM

POSITION TITLE: DIRECTOR OF THE DIACONATE

C. GUIDING AND MONITORING THE ONGOING FORMATION OF DEACONS AFTER THEIR ORDINATION

THE DIRECTOR:

7. coordinates the administration of a Deacons’ Wives programs to promote spiritual growth and direct events focused on prayer life and support of the Diaconate.

8. creates a mentoring program for newly ordained deacons to allow for the greatest opportunities for acceptance into their new roles in their assigned parishes.

9. allows for the nurturing of strong relationships between deacons and priests.

10. responds to questions, problems, and concerns from deacons as needed.

RELATIONSHIPS
> The Director reports to the Vicar General and the Vicar for Clergy
> The Director collaborates with the Chancellor, Director of Vocations, and the Director of Catholic Leadership Institute.
> The Director overseas the following committees: Admissions and Evaluation
> The Director meets with the Mentor Couples Coordinator and the Program Spiritual Director.
> The Director supervises the Dean of Formation Program (proposal)
SECTION 4
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
POSITION TITLE: DIRECTOR OF THE DIACONATE

Personal Requirements
1. Ordained member of the Roman Catholic Clergy—minimum 5 yrs
2. Bachelor’s degree

A. Knowledge and Skills
1. Strong knowledge of the Catholic Church and its doctrines
2. Experience with budgeting, financial management and reporting
3. Exceptional active listening skills and communication skills
4. Strong public speaking/presentation skills

B. Attitude and Personal Attributes
1. A devout follower of Christ
2. A personal commitment to and passion for renewal of the Catholic Church
3. Significant knowledge of and ability to communicate the structure, teaching, beliefs, and attitudes of the Catholic Church
4. Able to connect with and build relationships with others
5. Unyielding integrity and confidentiality

Desired

A. Knowledge and Skills
1. Advanced studies in Theology
2. Experienced with managing change
3. Excellent management skills and experience (planning strategy and tactics, schedules and budgets)

B. Attitude and Personal Attributes
1. Able to be flexible and adapt in a changing environment


A Reflection

What will they say... about you?

It will sound strange to say this, but it is nonetheless a fact:

The most significant thing
that can be said of Mary
is that she gave in.
She gave in to God.
Mary bent her will to God's will
in all that she said and did.

"I am the Lord’s servant. May it
happen to me as you have said."
Luke 1: 38

When they come to tell your story,
your storytellers may have some
remarkable things to say about you.

They may say you were:
.a hard worker;
.an effective manager
.a brilliant student,
.a loving parent.

But, by far,
the most important thing they could say
is that you reverenced God's will
in all you said and did --
that you gave in to God!

by Rev. Msgr. James Tuno, Ph.D.
SECTION 5
THE OFFICE OF THE DEACON

Historical Highlights

"For the nurturing and constant growth of the people of God, Christ the Lord instituted in the Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body."¹

From the apostolic age, the Diaconate has had a clearly outstanding position among these ministries, and it has always been held in great honor by the Church. Explicit testimony of this is given by the Apostle Paul both in his Letter to the Philippians 1:1 (circa AD 60-62), in which he sends his greetings not only to the bishops, but also to the deacons, and in the First Letter to Timothy 3:8-13 (circa AD 65), in which he illustrates the qualities and virtues that deacons must have in order to be worthy of their ministry.

In the same way, deacons must be respectable men whose word can be trusted, moderate in the amount of wine they drink and with no squalid greed for money. They must be conscientious believers in the mystery of the faith. They are to be examined first, and only admitted to serve as deacon if there is nothing against them. In the same way, women must be respectable, not gossips but sober and quite reliable. Deacons must not have been married more than once, and must be men who manage their children and families well. Those of them who carry out their duties well as deacons will earn a high standing for themselves and be rewarded with great assurance in their work for the faith in Christ Jesus.

Moreover in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, commonly called the Didache (circa AD 70 or 90) we read, "...You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well tried. For their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers. You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honor among you."²

¹ Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church #18.
²
SECTION 5

THE OFFICE OF THE DEACON

St. Ignatius of Antioch, martyred circa AD106, declared that the office of the deacon is nothing other than "the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before all ages and has been manifested in the final time." He also made the following observation: "The deacons too, who are ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should please all in every way; for they are not servants of food and drink, but ministers of the Church of God."4

Correspondingly show the deacon respect. They represent Jesus Christ, just as the bishop has the role of the Father, and the presbyters are like God's council and an apostolic band. You cannot have a church without these."5

Finally, St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (born AD 69/70; martyred AD 155/156), in his Letter to the Philippians stated, "...the deacons should be blameless before his righteousness, as servants of God and Christ and not of men; not slanderers, or double-tongued; not lovers of money; temperate in all matters; compassionate, careful, living according to the truth of the Lord, who became "a servant of all."6

The first four centuries (AD 100 - AD 300), or from Ignatius of Antioch to Gregory the Great, are called the Golden Age of the Diaconate. It was during this period that deacons flourished in numbers and importance. They oversaw the pastoral care of the Church; were administrators of the church's charities; were assistants of its bishops, often succeeding them in office; and had a major role in the Church's liturgies. At the same time, deacons gave outstanding witness of love for Christ and the brethren through the performance of works of charity, the celebration of sacred rites, and the fulfillment of pastoral duties.

2 Didache XV, 1,2: Richardson: Early Christian Fathers 1, p. 178.
3 Ad Magnesios, VI, 1: Funk, Patres Apostolici 1, p. 235.
4 Ad Trallianos, II, 3: ibid., p. 245.
6 Ad Philippenses, V,2: ibid., p. 133.
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THE OFFICE OF THE DEACON

With the steady transformation of the presbyterate and the increasing importance of the presbyter as an individual apart from the corporate presbyterate, the diaconate begins to decline, though deacons continue for a long time as men of importance. By the latter part of the fourth century, for example, the deacons ceased to form the bishop's personal staff. As the presbyters took the place of the bishop in the churches of the "dioceses," the deacons became their assistants. Unfortunately, their relationship with the presbyters was never clearly defined. Vischer observes that this lack of definition caused repeated difficulties and rightly sees it as one of the major reasons for the decline of the diaconate in the Middle Ages.

From the Middle Ages (AD 475 - 1475) to the days of World War II (1930s - 1940s) the office of deacon was in eclipse in the Western Church. To be sure, it lingered in the twilight world of the mystic, but it really wasn't taken too seriously in its own right.

The human tragedy of World War II not only changed the map, but also the mind of Europe. In Germany, theologians who had been in prison at Dachau urged for the ordination of permanent and married deacons. As a result of their efforts, the Community of the Diaconate was founded in Freiburg-Breisgau in 1951.

In 1959 Caritas International requested that the diaconate be restored. From October 4 to October 16, 1963, the restoration of the Diaconate, for celibate and married men, was debated by the Fathers during Vatican Council II. On September 29, 1964, the Council Fathers approved the restoration of the Diaconate for the Latin Church. Lumen Gentium 29 specifically lists the sacramental and liturgical functions of the Diaconate but only hints at the pastoral need this ministry would meet in the future.
SECTION 5
THE OFFICE OF THE DEACON

During the next several years, Pope Paul VI implemented the Council's decision in three important steps. The Apostolic Letter, *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* (June 18, 1967), established canonical norms for the permanent diaconate. The new rites for the conferral of all three of the ordained ministries were authorized on June 17, 1968 in the Apostolic Constitution, *Pontificalis Romani Recognitio*. Finally, on August 15, 1972, Pope Paul VI published new norms for the diaconate in the Apostolic Letter, *Ad Pascendum*.

Following the publication of the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* on priestly formation and the Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests, the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Congregation for the Clergy devoted particular consideration to the permanent Diaconate. Both Congregations, having consulted the Episcopate throughout the world and numerous experts, discussed the permanent Diaconate at their Plenary Assemblies in November 1995. As a result, the final texts of the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis diaconorum permanentium* and the Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons were drafted by the two Congregations and faithfully reflect points and proposals from every geographical area represented at the Plenary Assemblies.

The documents are a response to a widely felt need to clarify and regulate the diversity of approaches adopted in experiments conducted up to now, whether at the level of discernment and training or at that of active ministry and ongoing formation. In this way it would be possible to ensure a certain stability of approach which takes account of legitimate plurality and in turn guarantees that indispensable unity, necessary for the success of the ministry of the permanent
 SECTION 5
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Diaconate which has been fruitful and which promises to make an important contribution to New Evangelization (pp.7-10).

Pope John Paul II approved the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis diaconorum permanentium* (Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons) and the Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons on February 22, 1998, Feast of the Chair of Peter.

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)**

*The Bishops of the United States petitioned the Holy See on May 2, 1968 to restore the Diaconate. In their letter, they offered the following reasons for their request:*

> to enrich and strengthen the many and various diaconal ministries at work in this country with the sacramental grace of the diaconate;
> to enlist a new group of devout and competent men in the active ministry of the Church;
> to aid in extending needed liturgical and charitable services to the faithful in both large urban and small rural communities;
> to provide an official and sacramental presence of the Church in many areas of secular life, as well as in communities within large cities and sparsely settled regions where few or no priests are available;
> to provide an impetus and source for creative adaptations of diaconal ministries to the rapidly changing needs of our society.

On August 30, 1968, an Apostolic Delegate informed the United States Bishops that Pope Paul VI had acceded to their request. In November 1969, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops established the Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate. By the spring of 1971, thirteen programs were in operation, with a total of 430 candidates. The first group of ordinations to the Diaconate took place in May and June of 1971.

Late in 1971 the Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate issued

**Permanent Deacons in the United States: Guidelines on Their Formation and Ministry.** These guidelines drew upon the experience and knowledge gained in the
SECTION 5
THE OFFICE OF THE DEACON

initial programs and served the American Church well as it began to assimilate the new ministry in the parishes and (Arch)dioceses of the United States. However, in 1981, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, motivated by the concern of diocesan bishops that existing formation and ministerial efforts be corrected based on the increased theological understanding and ecclesial practice of the Diaconate, requested that a national survey be conducted in order to update the existing 1971 Guidelines. After two revisions and consultation with bishops, supervisors, deacons, and the wives of deacons, the 1984 Guidelines were approved by the Committee on the Permanent Diaconate and forwarded to the NCCB Administrative Committee on June 20, 1984 to present to the general membership for action and publication. The 1981 Guidelines are presently used across the United States as the criteria for the establishment of a Permanent Diaconate Formation Program.

In 1986, the Bishops’ Committee on the Permanent Diaconate was authorized by the general membership of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to prepare a series of monographs as part of a structured catechesis on the permanent diaconate. The first monograph was issued by the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy entitled, *The Deacon, Minister of Word and Sacrament: Study Text VI*. The second monograph in the series, *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, was approved by Bishop Skylstad, chairman of the BCD, and written by Reverend Timothy Shugrue. The third document in the series, *Foundations for the Renewal of the Diaconate*, was approved by Bishop Melczek, chairman of the BCD, and Deacon Samuel Taub, executive director of Secretariat of the BCD. These documents provided an aspirant and candidate with important diaconal understanding of the role and ministry of the deacon as well as historical, pastoral,
and liturgical understandings that could be used by formation directors in their effort to best prepare men for the ministry.

In June 2000 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops approved and submitted its final draft of the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*. This document was the product of two national committees that had been convened to revise 1981 formation guidelines and to create the first national directory that would establish a unified core spiritual, pastoral, and theological program for formation programs throughout the United States. The 1998 documents issued by the Congregation of Catholic Education and the Congregation for the Clergy would serve as a basic outline for the future directory.

The National Directory is prescribed for the use of the diocesan bishop and those responsible for its implementation. After more than thirty years of experience with the restored diaconate, the National Directory is expected to guide and harmonize the various formation programs that... at times vary greatly from one to another.
The Diaconate Formation Program is structured to support the vocation and ministry of the deacon beginning at the earliest stage of discernment through his journey to ordination and beyond.

**Formation is a life-long period of accompaniment.** In Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, he states, “The Church will have to initiate everyone—priests, religious and laity—into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates, and encourages growth in the Christian life” (*Evangelii Gaudium* §169).

**From initial inquiry,** the diaconate formation program supports the Holy Father’s message while also supporting the man on his journey in understanding the theology of his “call.” In addition, as discernment progresses, the “call” to the diaconate is confirmed when the candidate realizes that his heart and mind come together not only within himself, but also between him, the formation program, and the Church. As future deacons, we must be *Sentire Cum Ecclesia*—“to think with the mind of the Church” (St. Ignatius of Loyola).

The diaconate formation program is structured around the four pillars of formation: the human, spiritual, academic and pastoral dimensions as defined in the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States (NDPD, 2003).

**Following the initial period of inquiry,** there is a **six-month Aspirancy Period.**

A **four and a half-year period** of continued theological education, spiritual growth, understanding of Christian identity, and appreciation for service and ministry follows.

Upon ordination, there is a three-year period of required ongoing formation/education. With the support of his pastor, the newly ordained deacons learns to serve his parish while growing further in his understanding of the Catholic Faith and his call to service within the Diocese of Bridgeport. “Each deacon will grow to appreciate the special bond of charity with his bishop,
allowing the bishop to care for those most in need through each deacon’s ministry of charity and service” (Diaconate Personnel Manual, 2015).

The basic academic portion of the diaconate formation program will be fulfilled at St. Joseph’s Seminary (SJS), Dunwoodie, NY. This allows the candidate to pursue a Master’s Degree, which is strongly encouraged.

In addition, a monthly program of theological courses will be taken within the Diocese of Bridgeport (DOB), generally on weekends. These weekends will serve to foster increased spiritual growth and discernment, and provide additional support in the areas of homiletics, liturgical practica, and other courses not offered as part of the SJS curriculum.

Lastly, the Wives and Family Program is designed to support their spiritual needs in a flexible way so that family responsibilities are not compromised. This allows the candidate to maintain the order of family, job, and diaconate formation, much like the order that should occur following ordination.
SECTION 7
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

OVERVIEW OF THE ASPIRANT PATH

The aspirant comes to formation with a history of interpersonal relationships—his wife, children, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. To assist him with his human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and vocational development, a list of goals under each dimension is followed by a self-assessment process that challenges the aspirant to reflect on certain aspects of his personality, his relationships, his experiences, and his knowledge of the faith. In September the aspirant will initially assess himself by answering each question in less than 100 words. The self-assessment is due by October 31st. In May, he will be asked to review the answers provided in October and make note of any significant changes that have occurred. The final report is due June 1st.

An important part of the discernment process is recognizing responsibility to make challenging and sometimes difficult decisions. Discernment requires prayer and conversation with all who support.

In the Aspirancy Program, the objective of the program is to assist those who discern in this important journey. Those in formation leadership will (1) provide tools that will help an aspirant listen to God; (2) walk with you on your journey, as they discern whether or not you are ready to train to become a deacon; (3) explore your primary vocation from Baptism to discipleship, viewing your state of life and your desired ministry.

You will be asked (1) who is the God we are listening to in discernment? (2) what is your image of God? (3) what is God’s will for you? and (4) are you willing to follow His plan?

The formation team will evaluate the attitudes necessary for discernment, while looking at your self-awareness.

We pray that during your journey you may experience an interior change and may decide, along with us, that you are called to the Permanent Diaconate.
SECTION 7
THE SIX MONTH ASPRIANCY PROGRAM

Each month will begin with an Informal Gathering, Morning Prayer, and Sharing. A brief description of these components follows.

Informal Gathering: the community will gather each weekend with the opportunity to get reacquainted over a cup of coffee. The weekend will thus begin in a relaxed and conversational way.

Morning Prayer and Sharing: the day will begin with prayer and an opportunity to share with each other where their call has led them since the last gathering. This could also be an opportunity to introduce Lectio Divina or another form of directed prayer.

THE SCHEDULE
ASPIRANT MONTHLY PROGRAM (SCHEDULE)

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>7:30-8:00AM</td>
<td>Informal Gathering</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00-8:30AM</td>
<td>Morning Prayer and Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30-9:00AM</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<td>9:00-9:30AM</td>
<td>Interviews/Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30-10:00AM</td>
<td>Dimensions of Formation: Spiritual, Theological, Human</td>
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<td>10:30-11:00AM</td>
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<td>Workshop/Spiritual Formation</td>
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<td>12:00-12:30PM</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Workshop/Reflection on the Journey</td>
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<td>Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00-2:30PM</td>
<td>Personal Prayer</td>
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<td>2:30-3:00PM</td>
<td>Liturgy of the Hours/Lectio Divina/Wrap Up</td>
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<td>Session</td>
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<td>Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30-4:00PM</td>
<td>Evening Prayer/Dismissal</td>
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</table>
**SECTION 7**  
**ASPIRANT PROGRAM (MONTHLY WORKSHOPS)**

**MONTH ONE**  
**Initial Interview:**  Allow the Director of the Diaconate Office, mentor couples, pastor, and others who can be helpful to evaluate the men and women as they enter the program. A list of questions would be asked and recorded. [Suggestions and directions could be given].

**Journaling Workshop:**  Journaling is a tool to grow in the spiritual life. Not all men have the understanding of how to journal so this would require a workshop to teach the basics. It is a tool that can be used to track one’s spiritual growth as an aspirant discerns his call to the Diaconate.

**So Enormously Blessed Workshop:**  A workshop to read and discuss Bishop Caggiano’s *Reflection about Prayer*. This session should help those discerning to see very clearly the importance of real prayer, and how to focus on a meaningful prayer life.

**Liturgy of the Hours:**  “The prayer of the Church”—a workshop will be conducted and ongoing practical guidance provided throughout the liturgical year. In addition, the Liturgy of the Hours will be prayed in community whenever possible.

**MONTH TWO**  
**Time Management Workshop:**  The diaconate requires an ordering and balancing of priorities. This workshop will help aspirants learn how to balance competing demands on their time, and place them in the proper order.

**Meditation Workshop:**  Meditation is a form of prayer that not all men are familiar with. It requires training and exposure to different methods. Two areas that should be emphasized are the Passion of Christ and the Eucharist.

**Examen Workshop:**  The examen is important to spiritual growth, but men may not know how to successfully use the tools of Ignatian spirituality. This requires regular ongoing discussion, and instruction to do this successfully. Other methods will also be introduced and each man will need to determine the best approach to grow in his prayer life.
**SECTION 7**

**ASPIRANT PROGRAM (MONTHLY WORKSHOPS)**

**MONTH TWO**

*Lectio Divina Workshop:* A workshop to teach the principles involved and how to do this alone or in group. It can be used during a break, personal prayer time or during the Morning Prayer and discussion.

**MONTH THREE**

*Virtues Workshop:* Workshop on the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) and human virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance). Virtues require a balance because we can have too little or too much of an attribute. There will be several workshops on individual virtues to allow for more in depth discussion of each virtue.

*Discernment Workshop:* Discernment is learned through the on-going experience of spiritual direction, theological reflection and shared opportunities for spiritual growth. Developing active listening skills and introspective journaling skills, coupled with recognizing one’s heightened awareness of God’s presence in word, sacrament, everyday life and people, lays the groundwork for formal instruction on the basics of discernment.

*Holy Habits Workshop:* Discussion/reflection experience to deepen the understanding and nurturing of good spiritual habits, the building blocks of the interior life. This discussion on spiritual habits is on-going during every year of formation. Throughout formation, new habits are acquired and old habits are honed or transformed. Focused discussion provide the benefit of reviving good habits and eliminating those habits that are no longer life-giving.

**MONTH FOUR**

*Service and Liturgy Workshop:* If a man is being called, he needs to develop a better understanding of what it means to serve as a deacon. This should be a regular discussion during Aspirancy with various deacons sharing where, when, and how they serve in charity, as well as what’s involved in the preparation of a homily, and understanding the role of serving at different liturgies.

*How to Keep the Fire Burning Workshop:* A workshop that will provide guidance on what to do during the dark hour when you don’t hear God’s voice or you doubt your call and what to do during times of discouragement or when your excitement dwindles.
SECTION 7
ASPIRANT PROGRAM (MONTHLY WORKSHOPS)

MONTH FIVE

Marriage Workshop: Most men are married, but some may not have learned important marriage principles. The purpose of this workshop is to help a man improve his marriage. When a man is discerning a call to the diaconate, he needs to continually grow in his marriage relationship. Diaconate marriages are a critical witness to the community and need to be strong, healthy, and vibrant. This is not so theologically focused as practically focused, for example, teaching the Marriage Encounter principle of establishing an emotional connection with your spouse daily may be useful.

Family Workshop: Similar to the Marriage Workshop but with a focus on the family.

“Calling” Workshop: a journey/journal to reflect on God’s presence throughout our lives and how steady He’s been so that we can learn to trust, surrender, and lean on Him as we move forward in life.

MONTH SIX

Evaluation Interviews: Reassess the men and wives to determine how they have progressed before recommending or denying for Candidacy.
SECTION 8
ASPIRANT PATH (HUMAN DIMENSION)

Goal: • To appreciate (have knowledge of) your personality (strengths and limitations)

Self-Assessment
Can you be self-reflective?

Can you reveal yourself appropriately?
  Sharing your experiences and attitudes with others, verified
  > in your interpersonal exchanges within the formation community
  > in your pastoral ministry
  > and in your self-assessment

Do you contribute to and utilize a support system?

Goal: • To be aware of appropriate boundaries

Self-Assessment:
Can you integrate and prioritize your personal boundaries (family, recreation, work, ministry, and time alone)?

Are you trusted to keep confidences?

Goal: • To appreciate your talents and gifts

Self-Assessment:
Do you take the initiative in self-study and in completing class assignments?

Goal: • To be a collaborator with others in ministry

Self-Assessment:
Are you considered by others as both a leader and a follower?
Can you use your knowledge and influence to encourage others to reflect and share their experiences?

Are you open to change?

Goal: • To appreciate the necessity for ongoing spiritual and academic development

Self-Assessment:
Can you demonstrate the use of appropriate resources for ongoing intellectual and spiritual development?
SECTION 8
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
ASPIRANT PATH  HUMAN DIMENSION (continued)

Goal: • To appreciate the importance of respectful listening and tolerance in
dialogue with others whose point of view may differ from yours

Self-Assessment:
Are you a good listener?
Do you respect each person?
Can you express your position candidly, neither intimidating nor being intimidated
in doing so?

SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Goal: • To use Lectio Divina in the formation of a strong Christian
spirituality

Self-Assessment:
Can you reflect theologically on your faith experience through regular spiritual
direction?
Can you pray the Scriptures, meditating on the mystery of God as our Father, Son,
and Holy Spirit?
Do you participate frequently in personal prayer and reading of the Bible, and
devotion to Mary and to the saints?

Goal: • To appreciate his commitment to Christian ministry as rooted in the
baptismal call

Self-Assessment:
Can you foster an appreciation of baptismal ministry among others, enabling others
to reflect upon their faith journey in relationship to their call?

Goal: • To have a personal and communal prayer life

Self-Assessment:
Do you have a regular commitment to a pattern of personal and communal prayer
through frequent praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially Morning and
Evening prayer?
Do you participate in the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a
regular basis?

Goal: • To appreciate God’s redeeming activity in his lifestyle, experiences,
and ministries

SECTION 8

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DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM

ASPIRANT PATH  SPIRITUAL DIMENSION (continued)

Goal: • To appreciate your state of life (married, single, widowed)
Goal: • To understand diaconal celibacy and other commitments

Self-Assessment:
(Married) Does your wife continue to support you during the formation process?

(Married) Does she have any concerns regarding your ability to balance job, family and ministry?

(Celibate) Do you understand the commitment you are about to make to perpetual celibacy?

(Celibate) Are you prepared to make this commitment for the rest of your life?

(Celibate) Do you have family and friends to support you as you live out your commitment?

ASPIRANT PATH  INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION

Goal: • To appreciate and grow in knowledge of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Self-Assessment:
Can you discuss the primary teachings of the Church and discuss contemporary issues in light of this teaching?

Goal: • To appreciate and have knowledge of pastoral resources

Self-Assessment:
Can you refer others to appropriate pastoral resources as needed

PASTORAL DIMENSION

Goal: • To know theological resources that ground, interpret, and guide the activity that constitutes the pastoral life of the Church

Self-Assessment:
Can you name appropriate theological resources useful to ministerial study and service?

Goal: • Does he know how to approach theological study from within the context of his pastoral experience and ministry?
SECTION 8  
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM  

ASPIRANT PATH PASTORAL DIMENSION (continued) 

Self-Assessment:  
Can you discern how God is calling you into ministry and to link, in reflection, your pastoral and personal experiences to theology—apprehending God’s presence through touching the needs of the poor or afflicted?  
Are you an ADVOCATE for people in need?  
Are you a FACILITATOR of the community’s resources in response to human needs?

ASPIRANT PATH DIACONAL VOCATION AND MINISTRY 

Goal: • To appreciate his ongoing relationship with God as the source of his ministry and discernment of a diaconal vocation  
Self-Assessment:  
Can you discuss your relationship with God and the reasons for believing that you have a call to the Order of Deacons?

Goal: • To acknowledge his call and his personal commitment to live the Good News in all aspects of life  
Self-Assessment:  
Do you discuss your call and commitment to your spiritual director, and to the members of the formation team?  
Have you shared your call and commitment to all associated with your formation?

Goal: • To appreciate the role and ministry of the deacon within the faith community  
Self-Assessment:  
Can you identify, call forth, affirm, and support the gifts, strengths, and talents of others?

Goal: • To acknowledge the teaching that it is the Church that calls and affirms the vocation to an ordained ministry  
Self-Assessment:  
Do you participate collaboratively in all aspects of formation?  
Are you cooperative, open and respectful to all who journey with him?  
Are you receptive to the insights offered by the formation team, your wife and family, peers, and your pastor?
### Section 9
**Diaconate Formation Curriculum**
**Spiritual Courses and Workshops**

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<th>Course Title/Workshop</th>
<th>Inquiry</th>
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Section 9
Diaconate Formation Curriculum
Spiritual Courses and Workshop Descriptions

I. The following courses/workshops are scheduled throughout formation from Inquiry through Year 4.

Discernment...is learned through the on-going experience of spiritual direction, theological reflection and shared opportunities for spiritual growth. Developing active listening skills and introspective journaling skills, coupled with recognizing one’s heightened awareness of God’s presence in Word, Sacrament, everyday life and people, lays the groundwork for formal instruction on the basics of discernment. Opportunity is provided for prayer and reflection, one-on-one and within a group setting, in order to become accustomed to recognizing God’s will in one’s life. An experienced spiritual director with facilitation skills will manage this course throughout the formation process.

Journaling Workshop...provides an opportunity to learn or hone the skill of journal reflection. This workshop will allow the participants the opportunity to become aware of their inner thoughts and emotions, and then to articulate the same in a printed form.

II. The following courses/workshops are scheduled for Years 1, 2, 3, 4.

Holy Habits Seminar...Discussion/reflection experience to deepen the understanding and nurturing of good spiritual habits, the building blocks of the spiritual life. This monthly discussion on spiritual habits is on-going during every year of formation. Throughout formation, new habits are acquired and old habits are honed or transformed. Focused discussion provide the benefit of reviving good habits and eliminating those areas that are no longer life-giving. The spiritual growth of each man becomes readily apparent.
II. The following courses/workshops are scheduled for Years 1, 2, 3, 4.

Introduction to the Spiritual Elements of Diaconal Ministry...Diaconal ministries within and outside of the parish setting are many and varied. This workshop introduces the spiritual aspects inherent in these ministries: RCIA, Religious Education of children, including those with special needs, Adult Faith Formation, Youth Ministry, Singles' Ministry, Marriage Preparation, Marriage Enrichment, Ministry to the Divorced and Separated, Ministry to the Sick and Homebound (Hospitals and Nursing Homes), Prison Ministry, Lay Liturgical Ministry, Career Ministry, Retreat Ministry, Outreach to the Poor, People with Special Needs, Bereavement Ministry, Ministry to those with same-sex attractions, Evangelization Ministry etc.

Liturgy of the Hours...Experiential/informational course dedicated to nurturing and nourishing candidates’ experience of praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Afforded the monthly opportunity to pray in community the ancient prayers of the Church, the first year also includes small group sharing on the realities of each man’s daily practice. Throughout all four years of formation, each man is invited to share a prepared reflection on the reading. This experience positively affects homily preparation and presentation.

Prayer Practicum...Prayer is essential to the life of a deacon so a man’s prayer life needs to grow, and be exposed to various experiences, methods, and tools. Men will benefit from time provided on the formation weekend to learn new forms of prayer, be reminded of familiar prayer methods and, most importantly, to be given time to experience this prayer before returning to the busyness of everyday life.

This Prayer Practicum would include intercessory prayer, meditative prayer, Lectio Divina, various techniques (prayer of silence, litanies, rosary, etc.) to be used in adoration with a significant emphasis on
II. The following courses/workshops are scheduled for Years 1, 2, 3, 4.

Prayer Practicum (continued)
meditating on the mysteries of the rosary. The first three years of formation provide opportunities for personal prayer experience. The final year provides instruction and experience in leading communal prayer, such as adoration/benediction, Stations of the Cross, novenas (e.g. Miraculous Medal).

Sacred Reading of Scripture, specifically the Sunday Gospel...
Experiential/informational course dedicated to forming the skill of prayerfully reading, listening to and reflecting on the Gospels. Lectio Divina affords the experience of putting the listener into the Gospel scene and participating in that passage as one of the key persons, an observer or even as Jesus. Insights and reflections are shared in a small group setting. This is not an experience of instruction or discussion. The fruit of Lectio Divina is transformation. This experience will amplify the joyful experience of discerning God's call in one’s life.

III. The following course/workshop is scheduled for Year 1

Spiritual Reading Workshop...A compendium of approved contemporary and traditional spiritual authors/titles will be available for personal reading and facilitated group discussion. This listing also includes encyclicals and apostolic exhortations. Candidates are encouraged to include spiritual reading in their Holy Habits lifestyle. Readers and non-readers can learn to do Spiritual reading. The purpose is not to complete a book, but to provide an opportunity to slowly digest and apply the spiritual lessons from authors, some of whom are saints. Group discussion exercises are opportunities for reflecting on and sharing growth in love and friendship with God as Trinity.
Section 9
Diaconate Formation Curriculum
Spiritual Courses and Workshop Descriptions

IV. The following course/workshop is scheduled for Years 1,3

Praying the Psalms...Experiential/informational course dedicated to learning to read, understand, and appreciate the poetry, imagery, literary styles and Church tradition of the Psalms. This experience will amplify the joyful experience of praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

V. The following course/workshop is scheduled for Years 2,3

Spirituality course...A two-year class presenting an overview and experience of Franciscan, Carmelite, Ignatian, Benedictine, and Augustinian spiritualities as led by members of these communities. This course would introduce and allow for the spiritual practice of the Desert Fathers and contemporary spiritual leaders. This course would provide the opportunity to become conversant with several contemporary spiritual movements including Cursillo, Charismatic Prayer, Centering Prayer, and Padre Pio Prayer groups.

VI. The following courses/workshops are scheduled as Timing Flexible

Novenas...The power, diversity and benefits of enhancing one’s prayer life with a novena. This seminar will introduce the various novenas and suggest ways to introduce them into one’s prayer life.
VI. The following courses/workshops are scheduled as Timing Flexible

**Sacred Music and Sacred Art Workshop**...A means to introduce other senses to the beauty of God’s creation and to see the spirituality in the world around us.

**Spiritual Rosary Workshop**...This is an opportunity to explore the power of enhancing the rosary with the scriptures, and allow the participants an opportunity to experience the beauty of this prayer.

**Stations of the Cross**...Walking a variety of the Stations to draw closer to Christ and his victorious walk for our Salvation.
Section 10
Permanent Diaconate Formation Program

Spiritual Direction

“Spiritual Direction is, in reality, nothing more than a way of leading us to see and obey the real Director—the Holy Spirit in the depth of our soul.”

Thomas Merton, Trappist Monk, USA

The Diaconate program provides a spiritual director to each man upon entering the Aspirancy stage of discernment. Spiritual Directors are assigned with care and prayer. Spiritual direction is a crucial resource for any person committed to the spiritual journey and most importantly to the process of discernment. It’s an opportunity to discuss and reflect on how the Holy Spirit is calling, directing, and moving one along the journey.

Spiritual direction guides a person in the discovery of how God is acting in his life, and facilitates that person’s creative, loving response to God. One must be open and willing to communicate with the spiritual director who helps the directee make the faith journey which can never be made alone, especially during a time of discernment.

In order to be available to others in ministry, those seeking spiritual direction must be centered and as focused as possible.

The functions of the Spiritual Director Program will include the following:

The Aspirant and spiritual director shall meet at a minimum of once per month.

The Coordinator of Spiritual Direction shall be available to any man who may need to change spiritual directors in order to ascertain what they need and the reasons for the change.

The Coordinator of Spiritual Direction shall meet with each man on the first and last months of the Aspirancy Program to evaluate where his discernment is initially, and to what level his discernment has grown.
The Coordinator of Spiritual Direction will be on the evaluation team, and will assist and recommend which men are ready for Candidacy.

The Coordinator of Spiritual Direction shall meet with all spiritual directors to gather feedback, oversee training, discuss trends and make adjustments to ensure that the spiritual well-being of the men is life-giving.

The Coordinator of Spiritual Direction will work with the diaconate staff, sharing resources that ensure sufficient, qualified spiritual directors are available to the diaconate community.

The Coordinator of Spiritual Direction will work with the Center for Ignatian Spirituality of Fairfield University to promote candidates for the Spiritual Direction Program, recruit candidates and act as a liaison with the program.

All spiritual directors will immediately communicate any concerns or problems that arise for any man in formation, and suggest a course of correction.

“We define Christian spiritual direction as help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.”

William A Barry SJ and Will J. Connolly SJ, Center for Religious Development, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
Inquiry Period....There is no course work. However, academic needs assessment /evaluation is conducted by the academic dean.

Aspirancy Period...There is no course work.

Upon Commitment and Acceptance...There are two philosophy courses undertaken by the candidates at the Diocese of Bridgeport. They are:
1. Ancient/Medieval Christian Philosophy (Summer intensive)*
2. Modern/Contemporary Philosophy (Summer intensive)*
   *Both courses are metaphysically-centered

Theology...The candidates attend St. Joseph’s Seminary and the Diocese of Bridgeport.

### THEOLOGY CURRICULUM FOR CANDIDATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Semester</th>
<th>St. Joseph's Seminary Yonkers</th>
<th>Diocese of Bridgeport</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year FALL</td>
<td>Intro to Scripture</td>
<td>Themes of Christian Philosophy (Ethics, Anthropology, Cosmology)</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Year SPRING</td>
<td>Intro to Old Testament</td>
<td>Trinity Spirituality 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Year FALL</td>
<td>Intro to New Testament Christology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Year SPRING</td>
<td>Fundamental Moral Theology</td>
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# THEOLOGY CURRICULUM FOR CANDIDATES

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>Ecclesiology</td>
<td>Moral Theology 2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pauline Literature</td>
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<td><strong>Third Year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SPRING</td>
<td>Sacramental Theology</td>
<td>Homiletics 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intro to Church History</td>
<td>Liturgical Practicum 1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fourth Year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>Intro to Canon Law</td>
<td>Eschatology</td>
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<td>Intro to Liturgy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fourth Year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SPRING</td>
<td>Johannine Literature</td>
<td>Liturgical Practicum 2</td>
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<td>(includes Music)</td>
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Section 10
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
Diocese of Bridgeport
ASSESSMENT PROCESS

“Readiness for ordination is assessed annually by both the candidate and formation personnel to ascertain what level of achievement the candidate has reached in his understanding of the diaconal vocation, its responsibilities, and its obligations; his growth in the spiritual life; his competency in required diaconal knowledge and skills; his practical experience in pastoral ministry; and his witness of human affective maturity.” USCCB National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States (Chapter 6, §205).

Assessment is an integral part of vocational discernment. The internal vocational decision must be validated by the Church. A vocation is a call from God, but an aspirant/candidate cannot be the sole judge in his own case. The Church has a responsibility to determine the authenticity of the call by making careful inquiry in the external forum: "Can this man act and live as a special sign of the servant Christ?

Admission is only a first step in the formation program. Those appointed by the Ordinary will examine and evaluate the progress of each man, each year, to determine if he should be recommended for the next step. It may prove beneficial that a certain candidate be advised to pursue his baptismal call to holiness in another form of service to the Church. Thus, the guiding principle in the evaluation process is twofold: What can be determined to be in the best interest of the Church? (which always remains paramount), and what can be determined to be in the best interest of the candidate?

Every assessment has a dual purpose. It affirms the participant in identifying his gifts and capabilities, exhibits areas for his further growth and development, and indicates his limitations. The assessment of the individual participant also points out the strength, potential, and limitation of the formation program. Assessments should be made and communicated on a regular basis. (National Directory, § 156)
For these reasons annual evaluations are to be submitted to the Director of the Diaconate Office from the following:
Aspirant /candidate’s self-evaluation
Pastor of the aspirant/candidate
Director of Diaconate
Facilitator
Aspirant/candidate’s Spiritual Director
Faculty/Instructors
Mentor couple
The Director of the Diaconate Office will coordinate the evaluation process and determine the submission due dates. All information will be provided to the Evaluation Committee appointed by the bishop.

I. **Faculty’s Assessment**

Faculty members are asked to assess each student's ability to understand the major concepts presented in class by a measure they deem appropriate: an examination; a research paper or a project. Theological course evaluations are based on key dogmatic and moral principles presented during the course.

"The requirement for examinations in the fundamental courses and a comprehensive examination at the conclusion of the course of study, prescribed by the Congregation of Catholic Education, may be effectively achieved in a variety of ways" [Draft of the National Directory...paragraph 228]

- For certain subjects the traditional assessments by examinations or academic papers are appropriate" [Draft of the National Directory...paragraph 232].

- Often, in independent study, the method of assessment usually applied is the traditional methods of examinations or academic papers. Even here, however, the sense of partnership can be fostered with the opportunity for the candidate to present a portfolio of his accomplishments; to design a variety of ways in which he may demonstrate his readiness, or to engage in a collaborative independent study venture with those charged with his formation  [National Directory...par 224]

- A comprehensive and integrative seminar, used in professional education, is recommended as a model to determine the level of assimilation and achievement of the candidate at the completion of his theological course of study. The goal of this comprehensive and integrative seminar is always to project: 'how will this person live a diaconate lifestyle and ministry?' [The
II. Pastor's Assessment

The Pastor or his delegate evaluates the aspirant's pastoral practicum experience in June of each year.

- "Can the aspirant do that which his training is preparing him to do?"
- Does the way in which he presents himself in public ministry show, for example, an integrated and balanced sense of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and an understanding of his role within the Church and in its mission of service?
- Does the way he participates in and leads prayerful gatherings of his ministerial community give evidence of not only liturgical knowledge, but also liturgical sensitivity?
- Can he give evidence in his pastoral field ministries not only of a properly formed conscience and moral sensitivity, but can he form others in a convincing as well as sound manner?" (National Directory, par.220)

The Pastor also evaluates annually the aspirant's potential as a team member as well as his ability to communicate with the parochial staff and parishioners. In April/May, the pastor submits his annual evaluation of the aspirant.

Pastor’s Role as Mentor and Supervisor

Ministry of Word

The Aspirant is to proclaim the scripture to the parish community at liturgy. (The National Directory - Aspirant Path - Basic Standards - Spiritual Dimension)

Ministry of the Liturgy

The Aspirant is to serve as the parish sacristan, or, if there is a parish sacristan, to assist him or her on a regular basis. (The National Directory - Aspirant Path - Basic Standards - Diaconal Vocation and Ministry)

Ministry of Charity (Justice)

The Aspirant assists by feeding the homeless, visiting those in shelters, and becoming more aware of the needs of the marginalized. When he is not attending to the needs of the homeless, the aspirant is ministering in his home parish under the direction of his pastor. A minimum of 2 hours per week is devoted to diaconal munera of charity. (The National Directory - Aspirant Path - Basic Standards - Spiritual Dimension)

Prayer Life

The pastor is to evaluate how well the Aspirant has integrated his active and interior life.
Other
The pastor is to meet with the Aspirant and his family sometime during the year.

Other
The Aspirant is to work with the members of the Prayer Group, of the parish outreach group, i.e. at Thanksgiving, Christmas, et alibi.

Evaluation
The pastor is to submit a yearly evaluation in June.

III. Formation Team Member's Assessment
Aspirants and candidates are interviewed by formation team members periodically throughout the year. In January, the team reviews the course evaluation, seeks information from both the aspirant/candidate and his wife regarding their progress in the formation program, and makes recommendations to assist the aspirant/candidate with his ongoing formation. In June, after consulting with other appropriate sources of discernment, e.g. the faculty, the pastor, the wife, and the candidate himself, the formation team members present a summary of the information to the candidate with a final recommendation from the Director of formation. The summary with its recommendation is presented to the Rector of the seminary who reviews the information and determines whether to advance the candidate to the next year or recommend an alternate program.

*Interviews are scheduled regularly with the aspirants and candidates. The director of formation and those who collaborate with him address concerns and become collectively aware of their common collaborative role in assisting, counseling, and assessing the aspirant and candidate. This responsibility is of utmost importance. Due care is taken to preserve the confidentiality of spiritual direction at these interviews. (National Directory, par 226).*

The Director of Formation and the members of the formation team, conscious of their serious responsibility to build up the Body of Christ, exercise their duty in the faith that God will not allow the Church to lack ministers if the worthy are promoted and those who are not suited to the ministry are guided with fatherly kindness.

ASPIRANT’S SELF-ASSESSMENT AND WIFE’S ASSESSMENT
Aspirants annually evaluate the spiritual, theological, and pastoral progress they have made since entering the formation program. The wife likewise evaluates the effect the formation program has had on her and her family and permits the husband to continue with his formation as a Candidate.
MINISTERIAL ASSESSMENT [IN GENERAL]

Before an Aspirant is admitted to Candidacy or installed as a Reader, the members of the formation team, the pastor, and the members of the Board of Scrutinies determines the aspirant's suitability for the ministry by the following criteria:

1. He regularly attended classes and participated, as required, in all aspects of the Diaconate Formation Program: spiritual, theological, and pastoral.
2. He completed all written assignments;
3. He has an approved Spiritual Director whom he consulted on a monthly basis;
4. He attended Liturgy as often as possible in his parish or at a parish near his job and frequents the Sacrament of Reconciliation monthly;
5. He has the support of a sponsoring pastor, parish community, and his family;
6. He has met the prescribed number of hours required in Pastoral Outreach [Pastoral practicum].

ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

Before being admitted to Candidacy, an Aspirant:

1. has received a better than satisfactory report from his professors regarding his understanding of the material presented in class;
2. has knowledge [understanding] of and demonstrated the ability:
   a. to prepare the altar and sanctuary for Liturgy;
   b. to read the Ordo;
   c. to arrange the Lectionary and Sacramentary for Liturgy;
   d. to read the liturgical calendar and to set the proper liturgical vestment;
   e. to know the names of the vessels, liturgical symbols;
   f. to return vessel and vestments to their proper place;
   g. to purify the sacred vessels after Liturgy.
3. prays the Liturgy of the Hours on a daily basis; and attends liturgy as often as possible
4. has met the required number of hours for pastoral outreach.

MINISTRY OF READER

Before being installed as a Reader, a Candidate:

1. has received a better than satisfactory report from his professors regarding his understanding of the material presented in class;
2. can proclaim the Word of God clearly, authentically, and distinctly;
3. can serve in the sanctuary with poise and ease;
4. has a familiarity with the Lectionary;
5. prays the Liturgy of the Hours daily;
6. gives evidence of a devotion to the Word of God by reading and reflecting on scriptural passages Lectio Divina;
7. has a willingness to share the Word of God with others;
7. continues to maintain a balance among family, job, and formation;
8. articulates a good understanding of the deacon's role in the today’s church;
9. has established qualities of a good deacon-candidate:
10. can work with others;
11. is a spiritual person;
12. is highly sensitive, perceptive, and accepting;
MINISTERIAL ASSESSMENT [IN GENERAL]

MINISTRY OF READER (continued)

13. can work hard at building a positive team climate;
14. can be very generous with his time and energy; sees himself as a self-giving, "good person;" and
15. finally has a high energy-level and puts a high priority on family.
Section 13
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
Diocese of Bridgeport
THE ASPIRANT and HIS WIFE

ATTENDANCE - Aspirants must attend all class sessions, Friday formation evenings and Saturday formation days, the annual retreat, ministry days, and the diaconate ordination.

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<tr>
<td>An aspirant who cannot attend a scheduled activity because of <strong>illness or a job conflict</strong> is to call the <strong>Formation Office on the day of the absence</strong>. Please leave your name, and the reason(s) for your absence on a voice message. As a follow-up, <strong>on the evening of your return to the formation program</strong>, please provide a letter addressed to the Director indicating the date(s) of your absence and stating the reason(s) for the absence.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If an aspirant knows has a **conflict** because of a planned event in the future, he is to make an appointment with the Director to personally inform him of the situation. As a follow-up, **on the evening of your return to the formation program**, please provide a letter addressed to the Director indicating the date(s) of your absence and stating the reason(s) for the absence.

The aspirant who cannot attend a class(es) is responsible to contact the Director, explain the reason(s) for the absence, and request updated information on the material covered so as to prepare himself for the next class by keeping up with the assigned reading and/or written assignment.

**Prolonged sickness or excessive absence [3 or more absences]** due to a family or job conflict will require that the aspirant take a temporary leave of absence from the formation program.

ASPIRANT PROGRAM (SIX MONTH WORKSHOPS)
An important part of the discernment process is recognizing responsibility to make challenging and sometimes difficult decisions. Discernment requires prayer and conversation with all who support.

In the Aspirant Program it is our objective to assist those who are discerning their call as they now begin their journey in faith.
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DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
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We will:
» provide tools that will help you to listen to God.
» walk with you during this important journey
» explore your primary vocation from Baptism to discipleship, viewing your state of life and your desired ministry

You will be asked:
» who is the God we are listening to in discernment and what is your image of God
» what is God’s will for you and are you willing to follow His plan

We will evaluate the attitudes necessary for discernment, while looking at your self-awareness.

During your journey, you may experience an interior change and may decide, along with us, that you are called to the Permanent Diaconate.

ASPIRANT PROGRAM (COMPONENTS)

Each month will begin with an Informal Gathering, Morning Prayer, and Sharing as described below.

Informal Gathering: we will begin each weekend with the men to get reacquainted over a cup of coffee and to allow them to start the day off in a relaxed and conversational way.

Morning Prayer and Sharing: begin the day with prayer and an opportunity to share with each other where their call has led them since the last gathering. This could also be an opportunity to pray with Lectio Divina or another form of directed prayer.
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DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
Diocese of Bridgeport
THE ASPIRANT and HIS WIFE

ASPIRANT MONTHLY PROGRAM (SCHEDULE)

7:30-8:00AM  Informal Gathering
8:00-8:30AM  Morning Prayer and Sharing
8:30-9:00AM  Breakfast
9:00-9:30AM  Interviews/Workshops
9:30-10:00AM Dimensions of Formation: Spiritual, Theological, Human
10:00-10:30AM Formation/Facilitator
10:30-11:00AM Workshops
11:00-11:30AM Personal Prayer
11:30-12:00NOON Workshop/Spiritual Formation
12:00-12:30PM Lunch
12:30-1:00PM Open
1:00-1:30PM  Workshop/Reflection on the Journey
1:30-2:00PM  Workshop
2:00-2:30PM  Personal Prayer
2:30-3:00PM  Liturgy of the Hours/Lectio Divina/Wrap Up Session
3:00-3:30PM  Workshop
3:30-4:00PM  Evening Prayer/Dismissal

ATTENDANCE OF WIVES

Aspirants’ wives must attend the annual Orientation, the annual retreat, ministry days (Admission to Candidacy, Ministries of Lector and Acolyte), and the diaconate ordination.

These gatherings provide an opportunity for the wife to grow spiritually, to dialogue with deacon wives, to learn about the formation process and their future role as a deacon’s wife, and to celebrate with the family members of candidates who have advanced to the next level of their formation prior to ordination. Wives of aspirants and candidates are most welcome to attend classes. They are also encouraged to participate in the scheduled liturgy with their husband.
CANCELLATION OF MONTHLY PROGRAM.

In the event of a snow storm or if very icy conditions exist, the following events will occur:

1. **the Director will leave a voice message** indicating whether or not classes will be in session or are cancelled. Aspirants are to call the **Formation Office**.

2. **a telephone chain relay** is also used to communicate information to students by students. The aspirant who is first on the chain relay list will personally contact the next aspirant to inform him of any changes or important information. If an aspirant does not personally speak with another student, he is to leave a message on his voice mail and proceed to call the next student on the list, leave a message if no one is available and continue the same process until he reaches someone who can then continue the chain.

COMMUNICATION

The **Director will e-mail** aspirants on a regular basis regarding program information, schedule changes, or updates on diaconal ministry throughout the country. If you do not have an email, please contact a classmate who can contact you in the event of important program changes or provide you with a copy of the email sent.

**DRESS CODE**: Aspirants are to dress neatly. Sport pants (not jeans), shirt, tie (optional) and shoes (not sneakers or loafers) **would be standard mode of dress**. Moreover, an aspirant or candidate assigned to be a leader at Evening Prayer or Reader at Liturgy or who assumes any leadership role is to wear a jacket, sport pants, shirt, tie and shoes.
INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

“Intellectual formation is a necessary dimension of diaconal formation insofar as it offers the aspirant… a substantial nourishment for his spiritual life and a precious instrument for his ministry. It is particularly urgent today, in the face of the challenging of the new evangelization to which the Church is called at this difficult juncture of the millennium. Religious indifference, obscuring of values, loss of ethical convergence, and cultural pluralism demand that those involved in the ordained ministry have an intellectual formation which is complete and serious” [Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum Peramentium, par 79].

INTERNSHIPS

Parish internships are a critical place for a candidate, and especially for those men who are bi-lingual and lack confidence in speaking another language. The parish internship, in part, is a place in which a candidate can develop his skills in this area. He will also be exposed to and learn the culture that is inseparable from the people and their language to have an opportunity to build his homiletic and public speaking skills. The Pastor will provide him with the opportunity to offer formal reflections at prayer services, wakes, schools, etc. and provide the candidate with feedback.

Some members of the Homiletics Faculty are bi-lingual. They will assist in the formation and evaluation of preaching in other languages both for the benefit of foreign born candidates and for those native English speakers who show the ability to learn another language.

After his second year of formation and parish internship, the candidate will be required to enter into another internship program in other areas of ministry. Participants will be involved with a supervised field internship that immerses the man into the realities of day-to-day ministry. Placements are assigned according to abilities, areas of interest and areas identified for growth.

These internships could take many different forms. It could involve ministry in a prison, half-way house, hospital, nursing home, soup kitchen, Clinical Pastoral Education, shelter, or Malta House. It could also involve an activity directly
related to a parish, but preferably not his home parish. The specific internship will be identified by the pastor in conjunction with the candidate, and in consultation with the Director of the Diaconate.

MONTHLY SPIRITUAL DIRECTION... enhances the spiritual formation program by providing an opportunity to discuss and reflect on a component of your spiritual life. Conferences are regularly scheduled so that ongoing spiritual formation will become an integral part of the day.

MINISTERIAL STEPS TO THE SACRED ORDER OF DEACON

ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY...is a public ceremony celebrates not only the intention of the Aspirant to continue, but the approval given to him by the Bishop to advance in his preparation toward the Sacred Order of Deacon.

MINISTRY OF READER is the Church's public commissioning of the Candidate to serve the People of God as a Proclaimer of the Word of God.

MINISTRY OF ACOLYTE...a candidate is installed as a Minister of the Eucharist. He is commissioned to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass and bring Communion to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes, and to those who cannot attend the parish liturgy.

ORDINATION TO DIACONATE...Upon successful completion of the spiritual, theological and pastoral requirements and with the consent of his wife, the Candidate is called by the Bishop to the Sacred Order of Deacon. The Candidate declares that he is "ready and willing" to become a visible sign of Christ, the Servant-Healer, to the People of God in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The candidate will draw new strength from the gift of the Holy Spirit. He will exercise his duties as a Minister of Word, of Altar, and of Charity with humility, compassion, and gentleness. He will make himself a servant to all. He will faithfully live out his calling as a minister of service and enthusiastically collaborate with the body of priests who sacramentally reach out to the People of God on behalf of the Ordinary.

The spiritual foundation established during his formation years will help to make him a holy witness of the Gospel. At the time of his ordination, the Candidate will be reminded:

“Receive the Gospel of Christ whose Herald you now are. Believe what you read; Teach what you believe; and Practice what you teach.”
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PASTORAL FORMATION

“In the wide sense, pastoral formation coincides with spiritual formation: it is formation for an ever greater identification with the diakonia of Christ. . . In the strict sense, pastoral formation develops by means of specific theological discipline and a practical internship” [Ratio. . . par 85]. . . . a practical internship should be provided for each candidate to permit him to meet in the field what he has learned in his study. It must be gradual, tailored to the individual and under continual supervision. For the choice of activities, account should be taken of the instituted ministries received, and their exercise should be evaluated” [Ratio. . . par 87].

The aspirant is expected to maintain the same parish commitment he had prior to his admission into the formation program. Liturgical assignments in the parish, such as, Reader or Eucharistic Minister at Mass, are not considered an integral part of pastoral formation.

The pastoral outreach formation is an opportunity to put into practice the theories studied, and to help develop pastoral skills under the guidance of the pastor/supervisor. It is very important to be conscious to establish a balance among job responsibilities, family obligations, and involvement in pastoral outreach formation. The Ratio states:

At the same time as (and possibly in relationship with) the teaching of pastoral theology, a practical internship should be provided for each candidate, to permit him to meet in the field what he has learned in his study. It must be gradual, tailored to the individual and under continual supervision. For the choice of activities, account should be taken of the instituted ministries received, and their exercise should be evaluated (§ 87).

PATHS OF FORMATION

Period of Inquiry. The purpose of this inquiry period is to provide an overview of the Ministry of Charity, Word, and Altar to men who feel they may be called to the Permanent Diaconate.
The initial inquiry should be made on the parish level and interested men should begin with a conversation with the pastor. Wives and families are included in this process.

The parish family should promote and encourage men to inquire and pastors should send prospective names to the Director of Diaconate. In addition, current Permanent Deacons should also promote and recommend candidates to the Director of Diaconate. Once a pool of candidates (five or more) is obtained, the Director of Diaconate will schedule an Information Night.

**Aspirant Path:** “The goal of a “suitable human dimension” is to help the deacon develop “his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus [the] Christ.”

The Aspirant Path in formation is also a time for a married aspirant and his wife to assess the quality of their relationship and consider the ramifications of his possible ordination to the diaconate for their married life. For the single aspirant, it is a time to discern his capacity and receptivity for celibacy. [N.D. 189-190].

**Candidate Path:** “Emphasis needs to be placed upon his relational and collaborative qualities and skills, especially his strengths and limitations in this regard. During the Candidate Path the candidate also needs to acknowledge his giftedness and to develop the habit of authentic self-criticism in light of the Gospel. He must learn how to balance his personal, familial, work and ministerial responsibilities.” [N.D. 215].

**REPORTS AND REFERENCE MATERIAL:** Reports and Projects are not to be hand-written. They are to be typed, double-spaced, with an 1.5” margin on the left side and a 1” margin on the right side; 1” from the top and bottom of the page.

**ROLE OF THE PASTOR**
The Pastor is the direct supervisor of the candidate and, together with the Director of Diaconate, is responsible for the progress of the man in formation. The candidate will have a different pastoral internship during every year of formation. These internships are intended to provide the candidate with varied parish and formation experiences. He will be supervised by the pastor of the parish and assigned by the Director of Diaconate.
There will be two formal pastoral evaluations during each experience. The first will be in January and the second at the completion of his internship in June. It will be in a written form provided by the pastor after consultation with a supervisor (if applicable) and sent directly to the Director of Diaconate. The Director will meet with the pastor/supervisor and the candidate to review each evaluation and recommend areas of improvement, if applicable.

Beyond the formal evaluation process, the pastor and other parish clergy/staff will meet with the candidate on a regular basis. These meetings are intended not only to build fraternity, fraternal prayer, and charity, but also to clearly communicate expectations regarding works of pastoral charity, liturgy, planning, scheduling, etc. They will also give the candidate an opportunity to raise and discuss questions about best practices, pastoral approaches to specific situations, and areas in which he must grow.

At least monthly, the pastor and other clergy should gather with the candidate for Evening Prayer and dinner in order to foster a bond of fraternity. These evenings could take place either at the parish rectory or at the home of the candidate if the family situation allows. This will enable the candidate’s family to become comfortable with clergy and enable them to gain an understanding of the family environment. This practice is strongly encouraged to continue after formation and ordination in the parish to which the newly ordained deacon has been assigned.

**SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

"To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" [NIV](Micah 6:8b). The goal of Christian spiritual formation is union with God in Christ. As with all other Christians, the aspirant or candidate’s spiritual life, founded on his baptism, should be centered in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. His faith should be constantly nourished by reading and meditating on the Scriptures. His activity should be enlivened and strengthened by regular participation in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Spiritual formation is the keystone of the diaconate formation program. The diaconate is meant to enhance the Church to which the aspirant or candidate is committed for life, the parish for which he provides a visible sign of service, and the person of the deacon and his family. Spiritual growth of the aspirant/candidate, his wife, and family is integrated into the total formation program. Theological knowledge and pastoral experience will naturally enter into the aspirant or candidate's prayer life.
“The element which most characterizes diaconal spirituality is the discovery of and sharing in the love of Christ the servant, who came not to be served but to serve. The aspirant / candidate must therefore be helped progressively to acquire those attitudes which are specifically diaconal. . . simplicity of heart, total giving of self and disinterest for self, humble and helpful love for the brothers and sisters, especially the poorest, the handmaid of the Lord, be present on this journey and be invoked as mother and auxiliatrix in the daily recitation of the Rosary” [Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum Permanentium, par. 72].

WIVES AND FAMILY PROGRAM

A wife is an equal partner in the Sacrament of Matrimony and is an individual with her own gifts, talents, and call from God. Diaconal formation can be a challenging time for couples, but it can also be an opportunity to enrich their marital relationship. The Wives and Family Program is designed to support their spiritual needs in a flexible way so that family responsibilities are not compromised.

The wives will be expected to meet two days each semester on non-formation weekends for spiritual reflection that will provide a different theme each year according to the liturgical calendar. This will give them the time to grow in their spirituality, reflect on their call and bond with the other wives in formation. The purpose of scheduling the wives days of reflection on non-formation weekends is to allow the husbands to provide childcare in their absence.

The Director of the Diaconate Office will be assisted by the wife of a deacon who has been ordained at least 3 years and is supportive of her husband’s vocation. She will assist with communication, support, and logistics for those elements of the formation process that require the wives’ participation.

Wives are required to attend one diaconate wives’ retreat each year, along with the scheduled retreat for all couples in formation each summer.

The wives are invited, but not expected, to participate in all educational and theological aspects of their husband’s formation, including auditing
courses at SJS. A list of potential Spiritual Directors will also be provided for the wives who choose to have one.

Children will be included in activities such as family picnics, pot luck suppers and casual gatherings, along with family days of reflection. These will provide opportunities for families within our diaconal community to come together to support one another and grow in mutual love and respect.

The activities which include children will require cooperative planning from the Director of the Diaconate, along with the women currently in formation to make them meaningful and spiritually rewarding to all who participate.
APPENDIX A
REFERENCE TEXTS
Aspirant Path

The following books and documents are to be part of your home library. The Aspirant is expected to be familiar with the contents/themes of each of these documents at the conclusion of the Aspirant Path. Several of these documents are used as references in the courses undertaken during the Aspirant Path.

**Vatican Council Documents**
- Lumen Gentium
- Ad Gentes
- Gaudium et Specs

**Congregation for the Clergy**
- Directory on the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons 1998

**Congregation for Education**
- Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons 1998

**Apostolic Letters**
- Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem – Paul VI – 1967
- Ad Pascendum – Paul VI – 1972
- Ministeria Quaddem – Paul VI – 1972

**Apostolic Constitution**
- Pontificalis Romani Recognito (1968)

**Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation**
- The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the Modern World (Christifideles Laici) (1988)

**USCCB Reference Books**
- Service Ministry of the Deacon
  Rev. Timothy J. Shugrue
  1988
- Foundations for the Renewal of the Diaconate
  Anthology
  1993
- The National Directory for the Formation and Ministry of Permanent Deacons in the United States
  2005
APPENDIX B
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

Textbook Order Information

Alba House 1-800-343-2522
Ave Maria Press (Parish Ministry Resources) 1-800-282-1865 (Ext. 1)
Ignatius Press 1-800-651-1531
Liguori Publications 1-800-325-9521
Liturgy Training Publications 1-800933-1800
Loyola Press 1-800-621-1008
Pauline Books and Media 1-800-872-5852
  > Official Documents of the Catholic Church
Paulist Press 1-800-836-3161
Resource Publications, Inc 1-888-273-7782
  > Resources for Ministry, Worship and Education
Sheed & Ward 1-800-558-0580
St. Joseph’s Communication (EWTN resource) 1-800-526-2151
The Liturgical Press Books 1-800-858-5450
  > Michael Glazier Books
  > Pueblo Books
Theological Book Service 1-800-558-0580
United States Catholic Conference 1-800-235-8722
  > Publishing Services
  > Publications and Videos