

Diaconate Formation Program

Diocese of Bridgeport

FOUR YEAR PASTORAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

During the candidate's path of formation, the candidate will undertake several different ministries that will pastorally enhance the knowledge acquired in the classroom. Comforting the poor; educating the children and adolescents, young adults and seniors; ministering to those who are ill in hospitals, nursing homes, or who are homebound; and finally addressing the pastoral needs of those who are dying are the principal areas of pastoral outreach that will occur during the candidate path. Hopefully, with this experience and knowledge in hand, the candidate will then be equipped to function in a variety of pastoral situations commonly found in parish life.

Year I Pastoral Outreach to the poor, marginalized, outcast in the community. A candidate can devote one evening a week (approximately 2 to 3 hours) in a soup kitchen, for example, preparing food, serving meals, engaging in conversation and evangelizing those who are struggling to cope with life's burdens.

Year II Pastoral Outreach to children, adolescents, young adults, faith formation program, RCIA, and Pre-Cana programs. A candidate may teach in a religious education program preparing students for first communion or confirmation. He may also address the needs of those seeking to enter the faith through the RCIA program by becoming an instructor, a mentor, or a sponsor. Finally, he and his wife may be an ideal couple to address young couples preparing for marriage. The candidate is under the direction of the Coordinator or Director of Religious Education.

Year III. Pastoral Outreach to those in Hospital or Nursing Homes and those who are Homebound. Equally important is Pastoral Outreach to those in prison. Specifically, the candidates assist the Pastoral Staff in a hospital or the chaplain in the prison. The candidate may also assist a deacon when he goes to a prison, nursing home to conduct a communion services for the inmates/ patients. He should seek training when available either at the hospital or nursing home or prison setting. His ministry will always be under the supervision of a qualified member of the Pastoral Team or a prison chaplain

Year IV. Hospice ministry or serving patients who are terminally ill at a medical venue.

The goal of the pastoral formation program is to equip a candidate with the necessary skills so that he can function as a pastoral leader immediately after ordination. We have placed a high priority on this training. We pray that this effort will help balance the sacramental and liturgical ministry of the deacon so that the deacon will be known not so much by what he says, but more importantly, by what he does for his brothers and sisters in the Lord. By his example, the faithful will have a good example to follow as they live out their baptismal call in their parish community.