

*DIACONATE FORMATION
PROGRAM
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT*

There are **three separate but integral paths** that constitute a unified Diaconate Formation Program:

- (1) Aspirancy
- (2) Candidacy
- (3) Ministry (post ordination)

In each path, **there are four essential Dimensions:**

- (1) Human
- (2) Spiritual
- (3) Intellectual
- (4) Pastoral

Dimensions of Formation

Formation is to promote the development of the whole person. The dimensions are to be so interrelated so as to achieve a progressive integration of their objectives in the life of each participant and in his exercise of his ministry.

Human Dimension

A future deacon comes too formation with a history of interpersonal relationships--his wife, children, relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbors, etc. His ongoing relationship with the Lord transformed his heart and fostered his call to be of service to the People of God.

Formation, therefore, begins with human formation and development. The objectives of human formation is to cultivate a series of human qualities that will foster growth to the extend that he will become, as Maslow would put it, a "self-actualized" individual and a minister to others.

Human Dimension

Personality Traits

The future deacon should possess:

- (1) a docile personality;*
- (2) a capacity to transmit compassion and hope;*
- (3) a sense of responsibility, honesty, initiative;*
- (4) a spirit of sacrifice;*
- (5) a capacity to relate to others -- have an affective maturity;*

(6) a healthy attitude and constructive behavior
regarding intimacy,
diversity, and conflict

Ministerial Qualities

1. The future deacon should have:
 - (1) good human relationships with the children,
the young adults, adults, and the seniors;
 - (2) the ability to dialogue not only with
Catholics but also with other Christians, and
those of other religions;
 - (3) a grasp of one's own culture;

(4) *the ability to communicate, collaborate, and organize;*

(5) *a balanced judgment;*

(6) *the trust of the parish community;*

(7) *the ability to confront challenges in a constructive*

way;

(8) *the openness in listening to others*

11. *The future deacon should be:*

(1) *a leader;*

(2) *a bridge, not an obstacle, for others.*

Specific Human Dimension Outreach

(1) *Since the future deacon lives and works in the world, he understands today's society and tries to bring solutions to personal and social problems in the light of the Gospel.*

Specific Human Dimension Outreach

(2) *The future deacon needs to be close to the people so that he can understand their needs and frustrations. He is the Bishop's right hand man who brings to the attention of the Church the needs of the People of God and, when necessary, has the courage to speak out for the weak and defend their rights.*

Spiritual Dimension

Human formation leads to and finds its completion in the spiritual dimension that constitutes the heart and unifying center of Christian discipleship.

Goals of the spiritual dimension

The future deacon is:

- (1) to establish and to nourish of attitudes, habits, and practices that will set the foundation for a lifetime of ongoing spiritual discipline;*
- (2) to have, with the help of his spiritual director and those responsible for formation, a diaconal*

*commitment to God's word, to the Church, and
to the world;*

*(3) to deepen his prayer life: personal, familial,
communal,
and liturgical.*

(4) to participate in daily Eucharist, if possible;

*(5) to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours daily,
especially*

morning and evening prayers;

*(6) to have devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary
and the*

saints;

(7) to read the Lectio Divina;

(8) to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis;

(9) to have knowledge of Catholic spiritual tradition as reflected in classic spiritual writings;

Goals of the spiritual dimension

The future deacon is:

(10) to become familiar with contemporary developments in spirituality--a faith seeking to be expressed, celebrated, and renewed.

(11) to assess the depth and quality of his integration of personal, family, employment and ministerial responsibilities;

(12) to determine his growth in self-knowledge, his commitment to Christ and His Church, and his dedication to service, especially to the poor and those most suffering;

(13) to celebrate the ethnic, racial, cultural religious traditions.

(14) to incarnate his spirituality in the real life and history of the people whom he encounters each day in places where he lives, works, and serves.

Discernment is an essential spiritual process both in determining the presence of a vocation to the diaconate as well as determining the capacity to live it fully after ordination.

The object of the spiritual life is a deeper union with God. A pre-condition for the formation of an authentic spiritual life is training in freedom that includes the formation of a moral conscience, preparing one to listen to the voice of God in the depths of one's heart and to adhere closely to it.

A future deacon is to be open to conversion of heart about issues of justice, peace, and respect for life. He understands that his prayer, simplicity of life, and commitment to the poor will add credibility to his capacity to witness and to preach effectively the word of God.

A spirit of service to others is finally an invitation of Christ Himself who came not to do His own will but the will of His Father. Accountability is never simply obedience to the letter of the law but an invitation to a deeper conversion.

A strong spiritual life and a realistic commitment to serve people converge in the continual transformation of the participant's mind and heart in harmony with Christ.

Intellectual Dimension

Intellectual formation offers the future deacon substantial nourishment for the human and spiritual dimensions of his life. Through study, especially the study of theology, the future deacon assents to the word of God, grows in his spiritual life and prepares himself to fulfill his pastoral ministry.

An increasingly educated society and the new roles of leadership in diaconal ministry require that a future deacon be a knowledgeable and reliable witness to the faith and spokesman for the Church's teaching.

The future deacon must first understand the essentials of Christian doctrine and practice before he can communicate them to others in a clear way.

The criteria that govern the intellectual dimension:

(1) intellectual content should be organized, presented, and directed fundamentally to prepare

future deacons for the pastoral context of service;

(2) intellectual content should also provide the future deacon with the knowledge, skills, and appreciation of the faith that he needs to effectively fulfill his ministry of word, liturgy, and charity.

The criteria that govern the intellectual dimension:

(3) it [intellectual dimension] should also be constructed to help

the future deacon to evaluate his society and culture in the light of the Gospel and to understand the Gospel in the light of the particular features of the society in which he will serve, especially in its cultural, ethnic and racial diversity.

(4) it [intellectual dimension] should make use of the methods and processes of adult education. The future deacon is invited to draw and reflect upon his adult life and faith experiences in light

of the Gospel and the Church's teaching and insight.

(5) it [intellectual dimension] should be designed and presented in such a way as to integrate doctrine, morality, ethics, and spirituality.

The intellectual formation process is based on:

(1) Scripture and Tradition

(2) the Documents of the Second Vatican Council

(3) the Catechism of the Catholic Church

(4) the General Directory for Catechesis

Theological content of the intellectual dimension:

(1) Introduction to Sacred Scripture and its authentic interpretation:

<the interrelation between Scripture and Tradition;

<theology of the Old and New Testaments;

<the use of scripture in spiritual formation, preaching, evangelization, catechesis and pastoral activity in general.

(2) Introduction to the study of the Fathers of the Church

<Elementary knowledge of the history of the Church

*(3) Fundamental Theology with illustrations of
the sources*

< Topics and methods of theology

< Presentation of the questions relating to

revelation

*< The formulation of the relationship between
faith and reason*

(4) Dogmatic theology

< Trinitarian dimension

< Christological dimension

< Ecclesial dimension

< *The Church as a community of churches - the*

Latin and

Eastern churches

< *Christian anthropology*

< *Sacraments - theology of the ordained ministry*

and

diaconal communion

< *Eschatology*

< *Mariology*

(5) *Christian morality and ethics*

< *Personal, familial, and social dimensions*

< *Social doctrine of the Church*

(6) *Spiritual Theology*

<Spiritual traditions of the Church as applied to
one's

own spiritual journey and the spiritual life
of the
faithful.

(7) Liturgy

<Its principles with particular attention to the

R.C.I.A.

<Liturgical rites the deacon will celebrate

(8) Canon Law

<Canonical considerations of the rights and
obligations
of the clergy

< *Canons applicable to baptism, marriage, and
Christian*

Burial

Theological content of the intellectual dimension:

(9) Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue

< *Its principles, norms, and dimension in pastoral
ministry*

(10) Theology of Catholic evangelization

< *Evangelization of cultures and the inculturation
of
the message of faith*

<Multi cultural expressions of the faith
<Missiology

Pastoral Dimension

An integral formation must relate human, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions to pastoral practice. The whole formation imparted to the future deacons. . . aims at preparing him to enter into communion with the charity of Christ. . . Hence his formation in its different aspects must have a fundamentally pastoral character.

Pastoral formation interfaces with spiritual formation. It is a formation for an ever-greater

identification with the diakonia of Christ. Care is to be taken to introduce the future deacon actively into the pastoral life of the diocesan Church and to ensure a periodic meeting with the diocesan bishop, priests, other deacons, religious and lay people involved in ministry to ensure a coordinated unity for different pastoral activities.

Supervised pastoral formation placements should be designed and adapted to the needs of the individual, assisting him too gradually and appropriately experience in the field what he has learned in his study.

He should also be given ample opportunities to share experiences with deacons already in ministry and with his formation community.

The pastoral dimension in diaconate formation should strengthen and enhance the exercise of the prophetic, priestly, and leadership functions of the baptized already lived and exercised by the future deacon in diaconal formation.

Through the pastoral dimension of formation, the future deacon should have both a genuine

confidence in his abilities and a realistic sense of his limitations. He should also have a strong desire to serve in a broad range of ministerial circumstances.

The future deacon must be taught

(1) how to proclaim the Christian message and teach it;

(2) how to lead others in community and in liturgical prayer and celebration;

(3) how to witness to the Church in a Christian service marked by charity and justice.

The demonstration of pastoral skills is a crucial element in the assessment of fitness for ordination.

Qualities to be developed:

- (1) a spirit of pastoral responsibility and leadership;*
- (2) generosity and perseverance;*
- (3) creativity;*
- (4) respect for ecclesial communion;*
- (5) and a filial obedience to the bishop.*

The pastoral dimension is to build upon previous experiences and talents already displayed. In addition to identifying and developing the gifts already at work, the

pastoral dimension should aim at helping the participant to discover talents, perhaps unrecognized, and to develop the skills necessary for exercising the three-fold diaconal ministry of Word, Altar, and Charity.