

DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

Diocesan Seal placed here

GUIDELINES

FOR

PASTORS

ON THE SELECTION OF INQUIRERS

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THE DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
Diocese of Bridgeport

MISSION STATEMENT

The Diaconate Formation Program is a small, caring community of baptized Christian men who desire to enhance their baptismal call of service to the People of God by preparing themselves to be a deacon. The Church, therefore, provides a four and a half-year diaconate formation program.

Through prayer, study and the grace of the Holy Spirit, the aspirant/candidate undergoes a transformation of heart and mind as he spiritually, intellectually, and pastorally prepares himself to be a servant-leader (*diakonos*) of Word, Altar, and Charity to the People of God in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Section 1

The historical highlights of the **DIACONATE**

"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 (c.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 (c.65), in which he illustrates the qualities and virtues that deacons must have in order to be worthy of their ministry.

Also in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, commonly called the Didache (c.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

St. Ignatius of Antioch, martyred c.106, 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."³ 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

¹ Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* #18.

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.

⁵ *Ad Trallianos*, III, 1: Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 1, p. 99.

Finally, in the letter of St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (b.69/70; martyred 155/156A.D.), to the Philippians, we read, "...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 (100 A.D. - 300 A.D.), or from Ignatius of Antioch to Gregory the Great, have been called the Golden Age of the diaconate. During this period 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.

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 "diocese," 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 (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.

⁶ *Ad Philippenses*, V,2: *ibid.*, p. 133.

The human tragedy of World War II not only changed the map, but also the mind of Europe. In Germany, the 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 - 16, 1963 the subject was discussed during the deliberations of Vatican Council II. On September 29, 1964 the Second Vatican Council approved of the restoration of the diaconate for the Western Church. In *Lumen Gentium*, §29, the Council briefly described the nature and functions of the diaconate and the need of the Church it hoped this ministry would meet.

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*.

1.2 National Catholic Conference of Bishops (NCCB)

The Bishops of the United States petitioned the Holy See on May 2, 1968 to restore the diaconate in this country. In their letter of May 2, 1968, they offered the following as the 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. The following November the Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate was established.

By the spring of 1971 thirteen programs were in operation, with a total of 430 candidates. The first group of ordinations to the permanent diaconate took place in May and June of 1971.

Late in 1971 the Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate issued a document entitled, Permanent Deacons in the United States: Guidelines on Their Formation and Ministry. These guidelines drew upon the experience and knowledge gained in the initial programs and served the American Church well, as it began to assimilate the new ministry of the deacons.

The 1971 guidelines were produced from a wish to assist the establishment of the diaconate in this country, but could not reflect actual experience, since they were written before any permanent deacons were ordained. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, motivated by the concern of diocesan bishops that existing formation and ministerial efforts be corrected, improved and updated in light of increased theological understanding and ecclesial practice, used the 1981 survey, A National Study of the Permanent Diaconate in the United States, to prepare an updated version of the 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 of the NCCB for action and publication. They are presently used across the United States as the norm for the establishment of a permanent diaconate formation program.

References:

- Barnett, J.M. (1979). *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. New York: Seabury.
Richardson, C.C. (Ed), (1970). *Early Christian Fathers*. Vol. 1, New York: Macmilan.

Section 2
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

**The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of
Permanent Deacons in the United States**

The Inquiry Period

The first stirrings of a vocation to the diaconate are often explored at a personal level and usually begin with seeking information about the diaconate and formation. Primacy must be given to the spiritual dimension. [N.D. 169].

The parish is the primary experience of Church for most inquirers. It is the responsibility of this community and in particular its pastor to invite from among its members those who may be qualified to serve as ordained ministers of the Church. The initial information and conversations are with the pastor and others on the parish staff are particular resources at this time [N.D. 171].

Information sessions, the exploration of the criteria for a diaconal vocation, and particular counsel presented by the diaconate office can aid an individual in his decision to move forward to a formal application. When the inquirer submits an application, the formal process for admission begins [N.D.172-173].

Guidelines on the selection of an Inquirer

The inquirer must be no younger than age 30 at the time he makes formal application to the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program (Aspirancy) and no older than 56 years of age.

I. Checklist for Pastors

The following are questions that should be addressed and resolved before sponsoring a man for the Inquiry Period:

1. Does the inquirer give clear evidence of a spirituality and balanced theology?

2. Has the inquirer live in and / or have strong roots in the Bridgeport Diocese for a minimum of five (5) years?

3. Is the inquirer a U.S. citizen or does he possess a Permanent resident (Green Card)?

4. Does the inquirer have at least a high school education or GED?

5. For at least the past two years, has the inquirer been involved in the life of the parish to a noticeably more active degree than the average active lay person in the parish?

6. Is the inquirer a convert to Catholicism? If so, he must be five (5) years beyond reception into full communion in the Catholic Church.

7. Has the pastor taken the initiative in suggesting to the inquirer the diaconate? If not, is the pastor convinced that the inquirer could effectively serve a parish as a deacon?

8. If married, the inquirer must be in a stable, valid Catholic marriage not less than five (5) years and has the full support of his wife.

9. If widowed or single, the inquirer must be aware and willing to accept the Church's requirement of the promise of celibacy.

10. If the inquirer and/or his wife have a previous marriage which ended in divorce, annulment(s) must be completed, a Declaration of Nullity granted, and convalidation or sanation completed prior to inquiry sessions.

11. The inquirer must agree to a background check and completion of Safe Environment training.

12. Does the inquirer's wife support his desire to enter the formation program? The wife of any inquirer must consent to participate in all the required formation for wives (i.e. retreats, spiritual and human formation meetings, etc.)

13. The wife of the inquirer must give written consent to her husband's application. Ultimately, the wife must give written consent for her husband to be called to Holy Orders.

14. Are his children under 12 years old? Serious consideration should be given to family life. If entering the program at this stage would hinder family life, the inquirer is advised to wait for a more appropriate time.

14A. If an inquirer with children under 12 wishes to consider entering formation, there must be evidence that there is an extended family present (grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.) to supervise the children.

15. Is the inquirer's reputation (and that of his immediate family) beyond dispute?

16. Does he show active involvement in carrying out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?

17. Is the inquirer a "reconciling influence" in the parish, and does he work easily with the pastoral staff and parishioners?

18. Are his motives appropriate?

19. Can he afford the time in light of family and occupational obligations?

20. Is the inquirer accepting of celibacy if he is not married, or, if married, should his wife pre-decease him?

21. Is he an effective public speaker?

22. Is he at ease in the sanctuary?

23. Does he seek to serve without need of constant recognition and coaching?

24. Is the pastor willing and ready to take a principal role in complementing the formation efforts?

25. Is the inquirer's health strong?

26. Does he realize that the diaconate is not a right?

It is important to explain to the inquirer that ordination is not a right, and that, even after considerable investment of time and study, he may be asked at anytime by the Bishop to pursue his vocation as a lay ecclesial minister.

Section 3 **Irregularities/Impediments**

Dear Father / Monsignor,

I have provided you with information on irregularities / impediments that sometimes are not considered when evaluating a man's call to Holy Orders. I ask that you review the list provided and prudently assess the potential inquirer's background to make sure that none of these canonical prohibitions exist, have existed, or will exist in the life of this individual. It is extremely important that all who begin their discernment period be free of these prohibitions.

Canonical prohibitions (canon 1041) which can lead to denial of admission to the Inquiry Period include:

1. Insanity, a diagnosed mental illness or addiction;
2. Commission of apostasy, heresy or schism;
3. Being ordained or in perpetual vows as a member of a religious order;
4. Being married outside of the Church or being in an invalid marriage;
5. Commission of voluntary homicide;
6. Performing, financing, procuring or cooperating in an abortion;
7. Attempting suicide;
8. Self-mutilation including vasectomy or tubal ligation;
9. Impersonation of an ordained minister;
10. Involvement in any activity that would be unbecoming to the clerical state or that would bring scandal to the Church.

Section 4
The Pastor's Role
Inquiry Phase of Formation

The Pastor's support, understanding, spiritual guidance and direction are vital to the formation of the inquirer. While the inquirer is in the process of discerning his vocation, the pastor can assist him by:

1. meeting with the inquirer and his wife periodically. This meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the formation program, his experiences thus far, and any difficulties or concerns he may have.
2. encouraging the inquirer to meet with his Spiritual Director (Confessor) on a regular basis, to attend weekday liturgy as often as possible, to participate in Sunday liturgy as a lector or Eucharistic minister, and to reach out to his brothers and sisters through a ministry of charity
3. observing the inquirer's responses to staff members, his leadership style in the parish, and his relationship with you and the priests and deacons assigned to the parish.
4. supporting the inquirer as he moves into the next phase of his formation as an Aspirant.

Section 5

The Role of the Inquirer's Wife and Family

In the diaconate formation program, the wife is very important to the success of integrating ministry with family life. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in describing the average deacon in the United States, portrays the wife as the single most important factor for the deacon. Therefore, it becomes important that:

1. the wife be fully knowledgeable of all that is to be expected of her husband, herself and the family during the formation period and after ordination. She and her children should be comfortable with these expectations and should be frank about whether they are causing the family hardship. Both husband and wife may desire spiritual direction.
2. the wife is expected to attend the annual retreat, ministry days, participate in social activities with other inquirers and their wives, and ordination. She is strongly encourage to attend classes, participate in formation evenings, most especially those that pertain to her future role, and periodic meetings of inquirers' wives to the extent possible.

Development of family life is a primary concern of the program. The children of inquirers and Aspirants are invited to attend formation events so that they can become more familiar with the formation program and be able to experience Church as a community interested in their spiritual growth and development.

The deacon's primary obligation even after ordination is to his family. It is through the family that love, growth and acceptance, affirmation and understanding will be nourished. It is as if the family is the powerhouse for reactivating more energy into the ministry.

Love begets love as it always has been, and besides begetting children, the deacon-family can be generative in community-building. Ordination can make the marriage intimacy a far-reaching instrument in the larger Church.

Section 6

Discernment: Sorting out God's will for me

The process of making a decision about your life with the help of the Holy Spirit is called "discernment." It is a process of discovering God's will for you. In this process you deal with two persons: you and God. During the process you will get to know both better. As you begin, remember, that both you and God ultimately desire the same thing - your happiness.

The process of discernment, though often a struggle, is not complicated. It consists of four steps:

1. BE IN TOUCH WITH YOURSELF

Know your likes and dislikes, your fears and dreams, your hopes and interests, your abilities and limitations. Get to know how you work under stress, what kind of leadership you respond to, how much structure you need in your life.

See how others view you in work situations, under stress and at leisure. Reflect how you view others. Are you able to accept others, to work with them?

One way to look at a call for the Lord is to see Him acting all through your life. He created you with a unique personality and allowed you to experience a personal history. Your personality and personal history are part of your call.

2. BE IN TOUCH WITH THE LORD

Develop a life of prayer, not just in times of crisis, but regularly. No relationship develops between persons unless they listen to each other. You must learn to listen to the Lord in prayer and not merely ask Him to listen to you. You have to spend time with Him, listen to Him, be honest with Him, and occasionally be willing to wait on Him.

3. THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ITSELF

As you become more in touch with yourself and with the Lord, prayerfully gather the facts about your decision. Consider alternatives. Write out the pros and cons of each alternative. Try to project what effect each alternative will have on you five and ten years from now.

4. CONFIRM YOUR DECISION

After you have made your decision, spend time in prayer for an extended period to see if the decision still seems right. If it is, there should be a continuation of inner peace and satisfaction. You can also be confirmed in your decision by sharing it with your spiritual director and your pastor with whom you have worked throughout the year.

(The discernment process is courtesy of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Vocation Office)

Section 7
THE INQUIRY PROCESS

1. Any interested man who has an attraction to a diaconal vocation must first speak with his pastor.
2. The pastor is to have at least two meetings with the inquirer and one meeting with the inquirer and his wife.
3. If the pastor judges the man worthy of consideration, the pastor is to complete the Pastor's Report found in Appendix A of this handbook. He is to return the Report Form to the Director of the Diaconate as soon as possible.
4. The pastor is to inform the inquirer that he must also write a letter requesting acceptance into the formation program. Likewise, the inquirer's wife is to write a letter of supporting her husband's decision to enter the inquiry period of the formation program.
5. The pastor is to inform the inquirer that a mentor couple will come to their home to interview the family. The inquirer will be contacted by the mentor couple regarding a convenient date to come to visit the family.
6. The pastor is to inform the inquirer that a background check is required, and that their fingerprints are taken and placed in their file.
7. The pastor is to inform each inquirer to have a medical test of illegal drug use and excessive use of alcohol.

Appendix A
PASTOR'S REPORT FORM

[A pastor is to interview the INQUIRER and his wife and forward this report form to the Director of Diaconate Formation as soon as it is completed]

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name _____ Age _____
Wife's Name _____ Age _____
Home Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ - _____
Home telephone (_ _ _) _____
Cell _____
E-Mail _____
Home Parish _____ Pastor's Name _____
Parish Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ - _____

EDUCATION

[It is required that an aspirant have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent (GED) before entering the formation program]

Please provide the name of each school or institute attended.

High School: _____ Date completed _____
College: _____ Major: _____
Degree: _____
Graduate School: _____ Major: _____
Degree: _____
Other educational training: _____

PASTOR

[An inquirer is to be an active member of a parish for at least three years and known by the parish community]

In which ministries has the inquirer served the parish? _____

How long have you known the inquirer and his wife? _____

Is there a need in the parish for diaconal ministry? _____

If so, please explain: _____

Do you know of any objections raised either by the community or his family (wife or children) to his desire to enter the formation program? _____

If so, please explain _____

MARITAL STATUS

How long has the couple been married? _____

Did either party have an annulment? Inquirer: Yes / No; Wife: Yes / No

If so, date(s) of the annulment: Inquirer _____

Wife _____

(Arch)diocese in which the annulment was obtained:

Inquirer _____

Wife: _____

Describe the wife's involvement in the parish _____

Is the wife supportive of the husband's desire to begin formation? _____

If not, please explain _____

Are there children? Yes / No If so, how many? _____

Please indicate the ages of the children: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____

PASTOR'S ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Pastor's Signature

Date

Appendix B
DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
Model Standards for Readiness for Admission into the Aspirant Path
INQUIRY PERIOD

I. HUMAN DIMENSION

OBJECTIVE 1: The inquirer will develop an appreciation and knowledge of his emotional, intellectual, physical and personal limitations.

Abilities/Skills:

1. His ability to speak appropriately of his personal limitations and known boundaries.
2. His ability to begin to understand how these [limitations & boundaries] affect his life, family, employment and present service ministry.
[Discerning of one's ability to deal with personal limitations is critical at this initial stage]

PERSONNEL: The pastor, the wife, and the spiritual director.

OBJECTIVE 2 : The inquirer will develop an appreciation and commitment to a family perspective in his life.

Abilities/Skills:

1. His ability to balance and prioritize his commitments to family, work, leisure and ministry .
2. His ability to become a self-disciplined man.
[Discerning of one's ability to deal with potential conflicts due to job, family, or employment is critical at this initial stage]

PERSONNEL: The pastor, the wife, the spiritual director, and members of the formation team.

II. SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

OBJECTIVE 1: Inquirer's ability to acquire an appreciation and knowledge of God's redeeming activity in his state of life.

Abilities/Skills:

1. His ability to reflect/meditate in faith on his life with a sense of discovering God's will.
2. His ability to convey examples of God's presence in his life.

PERSONNEL: The pastor, and his spiritual director

OBJECTIVE 2: The inquirer's ability to understand and appreciate the importance of both a personal and communal prayer life

Abilities/Skills:

1. His ability to develop a pattern of prayer
2. His ability to adjust his daily schedule so as to participate in the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation as often as possible.
3. To participate with his wife in a retreat experience

PERSONNEL: The spiritual director, formation director, and the pastor.

DIACONATE FORMATION PROGRAM
Model Standards for Readiness for Admission into the Aspirant Path
INQUIRY PERIOD

III. INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION

OBJECTIVE: The inquirer's ability to appreciate and grow in knowledge of the basic teachings of the Church.

Abilities/Skills:

1. Become familiar with the structure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church
2. Study and discuss the Sacraments of Commitment [Matrimony & Holy Orders]
3. Study and discuss the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [*Lumen Gentium*] and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [*Gaudium et Spes*]

PERSONNEL: The Formation Director and his team.

IV. PASTORAL DIMENSION

OBJECTIVE : The inquirer's ability to appreciate and understand the importance of living the Gospel in his life, home, place of employment and neighborhood.

Abilities/Skills:

1. His ability to learn to connect the teachings of the Church to daily living
2. His demonstrated ability to be flexible in attitude and behavior
3. His demonstrated ability to be open to change
4. His ability to analyze situations in light. of the Gospel and Church teaching

PERSONNEL: The pastor, the spiritual director, and the formation director and his team. .

V. DIACONAL VOCATION AND MINISTRY,

OBJECTIVE: The inquirer's ability to appreciate and understand his personal call to diaconal ministry within the Church.

Abilities/Skills:

1. To develop his interest in the diaconal *munera* of Word, Liturgy, and Charity.
2. His demonstrated experience of service, beyond liturgical ministries, through Church or civic involvement.
3. His demonstrated support and encouragement of his pastor
4. His demonstrated ability to be docile to the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life as he endeavors to pursue his vocation call to diaconal ministry.
5. His ability to acknowledge and accept that it is the Church that verifies the call to diaconal ministry.

PERSONNEL: The pastor, the staff psychologist, and the formation director and his team.

Appendix C

PERMANENT DIACONATE FORMATION TIMELINE

**PASTOR'S MEETING TO PROVIDE INFORMATION
ON INQUIRERS**

INQUIRY PATH

OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER

ASPIRANT PATH

JANUARY THROUGH JUNE

ACCEPTANCE INTO CANDIDACY

INTENSIVE PHILOSOPHY COURSES

SUMMER PROGRAM

CANDIDATE PATH

YEAR I

SJS + DOB COURSES

YEAR 11

SJS + DOB COURSES

YEAR 111

SJS + DOB COURSES

MINISTRY OF READER

YEAR1V

SJS + DOB COURSES

MINISTRY OF ACOLYTE

ORDINATION

POST-ORDINATION FORMATION (3 YEARS)

MEMORANDUM

TO: Pastors / Administrators
FROM: Deacon Anthony Cassaneto, Ph.D.
Director of Formation
DATE: September 25, 2015
RE: 2015 Inquiry (Discernment) Period Announcement

The Inquiry Period is a time set aside **to discern the Lord's will**. If you have a man who is ready to begin his discernment for the diaconate, please take some time to meet with him and his wife to discuss the possibility of beginning diaconal formation as early as this October.

The National Directory states:

The first stirrings of a vocation to the diaconate are often explored at a personal level and usually begin with seeking information about the diaconate and formation....and an individual initially reflects upon the nature of his perceived call. Primacy must be given at this time to the spiritual dimension [§169, p. 78].

The Directory continues:

*An inquiry and the eventual application for entrance into diaconal formation is not just a personal and family journey. The Church must accompany it. **The parish** is the primary experience of Church for most inquirers. **It is the responsibility of this community and, in particular, its pastor to invite** from among its members **those who may be qualified to serve as ordained ministers of the Church** [§170, p. 78].*

There will be a meeting of pastors who have a qualified man to begin his discernment process. The meeting will take place at the Catholic Center (Retreat Center) on September 29th at 7pm. Pastors will receive the new Inquiry Handbook and will have the opportunity to discuss the new diaconate formation program. Please call the Diaconate Office at **203-416-1451** at your earliest convenience to indicate that you will attend this important meeting.

If you wish that I visit your parish to speak to a group of men or an organization, please give me a call at the Diaconate Office. I would be happy to schedule a visit at a time that is most convenient for all.

In order to assist you with this task, I have also asked the deacons to present a name of an individual who has shown some interest in the diaconate over a period of time. You can then have the opportunity to interview the inquirer and his wife. Hopefully, we will then be able to have sufficient numbers of inquirers so that preliminary can be distributed to them in the near future.

Thank you in advance for all you do to promote the vocation of the permanent deacon in Diocese of Bridgeport.

Appendix E

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE INQUIRER

October 1, 2015

Dear Inquirer,

Welcome. Your pastor has submitted your name to the Diaconate Formation Office so that we can assist you with the discernment of your vocation to the Diaconate. The period of discernment is called the **Inquiry Period**.

The first stirrings of a vocation to the diaconate are often explored at a personal level and usually begin with seeking information about the diaconate and formation. Primacy must be given to the spiritual dimension. [The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States §169].

The parish is the primary experience of Church for most inquirers. It is the responsibility of this community and in particular its pastor to invite from among its members those who may be qualified to serve as ordained ministers of the Church. The initial information and conversations are with the pastor and others on the parish staff are particular resources at this time [The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States §171].

Information sessions, the exploration of the criteria for a diaconal vocation, and particular counsel presented by the diaconate office can aid an individual in his decision to move forward to a formal application. When the inquirer submits an application, the formal process for admission begins [The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States §172-§173].

Inquirers and their wives are asked to come to the Catholic Center on October 6th to meet with the Director of Formation. The meeting will begin at 7pm.

I look forward to meeting you and your wife.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Deacon Anthony P. Cassaneto, Ph.D.
Director of Formation