

Handbook for Spiritual Directors



School of Permanent Diaconate Formation Diocese of Marquette

PURSUANT TO THE
*NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR THE FORMATION, MINISTRY, AND LIFE
OF PERMANENT DEACONS IN THE UNITED STATES*
PROMULGATED BY THE USCCB, FEBRUARY, 2005

Revised (4/13/2017)

CONTENTS

Spiritual Formation 4

 Components of the Spiritual Program:..... 4

 Liturgy of the Hours..... 4

 Classes and workshops 4

 Spiritual Formation Team 5

Role of the personal Spiritual Director 5

 Meeting 6

 Specific Topics to be addressed 6

 Report on Meetings 9

Communication from the Deacon Formation Program..... 9

Resources 9

Appendix 1: Candidate’s Report Form 10

Appendix 2: Spiritual Director Meeting Form..... 11

Appendix 3: Request for Approval of Spiritual Director..... 12

Dear

Please accept our thanks for your willingness to serve as a spiritual director in our Deacon Formation Program. As the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States (ND)* notes, you are an integral part of helping to form the diaconal candidates for our archdiocese. This small handbook is offered as an aid to your spiritual guidance of the candidates during their formational experience. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to contact the Director of the Permanent Diaconate at the Diocese of Marquette.

Deacon Jack Leadbetter

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The goal of the spiritual formation program is “putting on the mind of Christ, thereby establishing and nurturing attitudes, habits, and practices that provide a foundation for development of an authentic and ongoing spiritual life.” (ND, 191) This attitude should govern every aspect of a deacon’s life, his relationship with other people and the reason for his ministry. The program of Diaconate Formation seeks to help candidates to develop their relationship with God in Christ; discern their vocational call; and further develop prayerful attitudes, habits and practices that will enable the men to foster and enrich their spiritual lives.

The spirituality of the deacon is intrinsically related to his commitments. He is first of all married or single and must develop ways of loving God and neighbor through those commitments. If married, he must learn how to strengthen the sacramental love between himself and his spouse and to build up the family through love. It is of utmost importance that a candidate learns how to meet and balance his responsibilities to God, his family, his professional work, and the Church in a way that honors them all and so that through them he grows in faith, hope and love in union with Christ and the Church.

Components of the Spiritual Program:

Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours is the common daily prayer of the Church. Morning and evening prayer are the two hinges on which the Liturgy of the Hours turns. The whole Church prays together to acknowledge the Creator and his mighty works every morning and evening. Together we recall the Incarnation of the Son and the salvation that is ours through him. Those aspiring to Sacred Orders, should want to take part in this prayer of the Church, just as they take part in her daily Eucharistic liturgy. The Liturgy of the Hours and the celebration of the Eucharist are meant to be anchors for lives of faith and prayer.

Aspirants and candidates should use the four-volume set known as Liturgy of the Hours. There are several apps for phones that are helpful in the discipline of the hours [i-breviary and Divine Office]. These apps should *never* be used to lead formal liturgies. At ordination, one of the promises the permanent deacon will make to the Bishop is to pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily. This includes at least the Morning and Evening prayer.¹

During the first semester of Aspirancy year, a member of the formation team will instruct the candidates on how to pray the liturgy of the hours and lead the class in prayer.

Classes and workshops

- History of Catholic Spirituality (Aspirancy Year- 2 credits)
- LOH and the Spirituality of the Diaconate (Aspirancy- Saturday Workshop)
- Spiritual Direction and Discernment (Aspirancy- Saturday Workshop)
- *Lectio Divina* (Year 1 – Saturday Workshop)

¹ ND, 90: “Permanent deacons are required to include as part of their daily prayer those parts of the Liturgy of the Hours known as Morning and Evening Prayer. Permanent deacons are obliged to pray for the universal Church. Whenever possible, they should lead these prayers with the community to whom they have been assigned to minister.”

Spiritual Formation Team

Fr Tim Ekaitis currently functions as the Spiritual Director for the Diaconal Formation Program. The *Directory* describes the role of the director of spiritual formation as thus:

The director of spiritual formation assists the director of formation by coordinating the entire spiritual formation program, giving it unity and direction. He makes provision for the individual spiritual direction of each aspirant and candidate [...] He provides an orientation to the spiritual dimension in aspirant and candidate formation to other priest spiritual directors, who have been chosen by the aspirants or candidates with the approval of the bishop. The director of spiritual formation provides for the liturgical life and prayer of the aspirant and candidate communities, making appropriate provision for the celebration of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, and opportunities for celebration of the sacrament of penance in formation gatherings. He is also responsible for retreats and days of recollection, assuring that they are well planned and carefully executed. The director of spiritual formation, who must be a priest, is nominated by the director of formation and approved and appointed by the bishop. (ND, 273)

Spiritual Coordinator: In order to assist the Spiritual Director, a member of the Diaconal formation team is appointed Coordinator of Spiritual Formation. The role of the Spiritual Coordinator is to assist the Spiritual Director in coordinating and planning the spiritual dimension of formation and to be in communication with the spiritual directors.

Spiritual Director. As part of the formation journey, Aspirants and Candidates for ordination to the diaconate are required to meet regularly with a spiritual director. His task is that assisting the candidate in discerning the workings of the Spirit in the soul and, at the same time, 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 all this, Aspirants and Candidates are invited to entrust themselves for spiritual direction only to approved spiritual directors of proven virtue, equipped with a good theological culture, of profound spiritual experience, of marked pedagogical sense, of strong and refined ministerial sensibility.

ROLE OF THE PERSONAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Those in diaconal formation are required to enter into spiritual direction with a priest who has been approved by the Bishop to function in this formational role:

The role of the spiritual director, who must always be a priest, is critical to the formation process, particularly in assisting the participant to discern and affirm the signs of his vocation. An individual's spiritual director may be chosen directly by the participant with the approval of the bishop, or from a list of spiritual directors similarly approved. The distinction between internal and external forums must always be clearly maintained. (ND, 117)

The Spiritual Director should preferably not be a pastor or other priest who serves in any supervisory capacity over the candidate. If a candidate desires a spiritual director not on the

approved list he may request, with the agreement of the priest, approval from the clergy office. (cf. Appendix 3).

Formational Spiritual Direction occurs during both Aspirancy and candidacy, each phase of formation having its own particular focus. As noted in the *Directory*, during Aspirancy, the:

[...] spiritual director is critical to the formation process. This priest, who is to be approved by the bishop, must be well trained and knowledgeable about the diaconate. The spiritual director accompanies, supports, and challenges the aspirant in his ongoing conversion. The spiritual director assists the aspirant in his relationship with God and his understanding that it is Christ who “calls,” the Church that affirms his diaconal vocation, and the bishop who responds to that affirmation by the imposition of hands. (ND, 194)

The *Directory* offers this guidance for spiritual direction during candidacy:

One of the primary objectives of the spiritual dimension of the candidate path in formation is “to assist the candidate in achieving a spiritual integration” of his life, family, work, and apostolic service [...] Throughout his formation, the candidate is “to secure the assistance of a [...] priest spiritual director], to cultivate regular patterns of prayer and sacramental participation, and [...] to reflect spiritually on [his] ministry.” (ND, 216)

Meeting

Aspirants and candidates are encouraged to meet monthly for the first year, then quarterly with their spiritual director throughout formation.

Specific Topics to be addressed

In addition to general spiritual health and growth, spiritual direction during formation is ordered toward the development of the specific calling of a man discerning his vocation and nourishing within his spiritual discipline habits ordered toward the ministry of the diaconate. The goals listed below are drawn from the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* and can be used as a guide to direct the focus of your formative meetings with the men. You are not expected to cover all of these topics in your meetings.

Aspirancy Year: This year is a preparation for acceptance into candidacy. Those in this year should be prepared to demonstrate within their spiritual life the ability:²

- To be self-reflective;
- To be a good listener, respect each person, and be accepted as a trusted participant who keeps confidences;
- To be open to change through reflective growth in understanding;
- To express his position candidly without being intimidating or being intimidated in doing so;

² Adapted from *ND* “Basic Standards for Readiness”, pp. 156-159.

- To integrate and prioritize his personal boundaries relating to family, recreation, work, ministry, and time alone;
- To reflect theologically on his faith experience through regular spiritual direction;
- To pray the Scriptures, meditating on the mystery of God as our Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- To fulfill 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;
 - frequent participation in the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
 - personal prayer and reading of the Bible;
 - devotion to Mary and to the saints;
 - planning and leading communal prayer;
- To ascertain, if married, the quality of his relationship with his wife and children and the need for dialogue and mutual consent to continue in formation and move forward toward ordination;
- If single, to live a single lifestyle in an appropriate manner and grow in an understanding and embracing of celibacy;
- To discern how God is calling him into ministry and to link, in reflection, his pastoral and personal experiences to theology – apprehending God’s presence through touching the needs of the poor or afflicted;
- To articulate his relationship with God and reasons for believing he has a call to the Order of Deacons within the formation community;

Candidacy Years: Once accepted into candidacy the men, over the course of the next five years, should be spiritually preparing for life as a deacon. They should be prepared to demonstrate within their spiritual life the ability³

- To engage in self-reflection and assesses his abilities and limitations;
- To set healthy and responsible goals;
- To maintain a healthy balance in his personal life and ministry;
- To develop positive support systems among family, friends, and peers;
- To be flexible and assign appropriate priorities in varied circumstances;
- To participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church;
 - in the Eucharist daily or frequently;
 - regular use of reconciliation;
 - to participate in ongoing spiritual formation, e.g.:
 - spiritual direction,
 - retreats,
 - community worship [especially the Liturgy of the Hours],
 - personal prayer,
 - meditation,

³ Adapted from *ND* “Basic Standards for Readiness”, pp. 160-182.

- visits to the Blessed Sacrament,
 - personal penance and mortification,
 - devotion to Mary and the communion of saints
- To identify, affirm and critique the various Christian spiritualities operative in himself and others;
- To articulate his personal expression of faith;
- To integrate the wide spectrum of moral and human issues into his spiritual consciousness, prayer and ministry: human rights, sexuality, economics, peace, ecology, moral ethics, solidarity with human needs, the preferential option for the poor;
- To maintain a commitment to regularly scheduled spiritual direction and to opportunities as appropriate, for physical and psychological health in consultation with a professional advisor;
- To communicate and share his ministry, prayer, and formation with wife and family; to demonstrate marital chastity in conformity to the magisterial teaching on marriage and sexuality;
- To balance marriage and ministry commitments;
- To form a support system, utilize it, and contribute to it;
- To accept the gift of celibacy and be willing to accept it if so called; to speak truthfully about the gift and demands of a celibate life.

In addition, the *Directory* specifically mentions that the **issues of obedience and celibacy** should be explored during spiritual direction:

Each person in formation is called to a mature relationship with those in authority that includes a spirit of trust, mutual respect, and obedience. Accountability in formation is an invitation to a deeper conversion. A spirit of service to others is finally an imitation of Christ himself, who came not to do his own will but the will of his Father. Formation personnel, especially the spiritual director, should give instructions on the meaning of authentic obedience and help each participant to appreciate and practice it in his life. (ND, 116)

Further, throughout the formation process, it is expedient that the candidate's spiritual director and those responsible for his formation ascertain the candidate's understanding, willingness, and capacity to accept the Church's discipline regarding perpetual celibacy not merely among those who are not married but, also, among married men who will be required to embrace this ecclesiastical discipline in widowhood or divorce (even with a subsequent annulment). Dispensations from the requirement of celibacy cannot be presumed. Continuation in ministry cannot be presumed even with the reception of the requested dispensation. (ND, 116)

Report on Meetings

Each year, the spiritual director is asked to attest to the aspirant's or candidate's attendance for spiritual direction. The form to be completed [cf. Appendix 2] will be given to the spiritual director by the one in formation. It is to be completed and sent to the Director of the Permanent Diaconate by April 15 of each year by the Spiritual Director.

The form is also available on-line on the School of Diaconate Formation website (to be determined).

While the Dean of Formation and/or the Coordinator of Spiritual Formation may communicate concerns regarding the aspirant or candidate to the spiritual director (see below), so that the matters may be discussed as part of ongoing discernment, the conversation between the spiritual director and the aspirant or candidate is confidential. The content of any conversation between the spiritual director and aspirant will not be reported from the spiritual director to the formation team.⁴

COMMUNICATION FROM THE DEACON FORMATION PROGRAM

During the year, the Diaconal formation team meets to review the men in formation. If issues arise during the review, the Coordinator of Spiritual formation may contact you so that the issues can be addressed in spiritual formation as well as in the other areas of formation. At the end of each year, the Director of Formation completes a report that is presented to the Bishop, providing “a synthesis of the candidate's achievements and limitations, particularly in reference to his human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral readiness for continuation in the formation process and, ultimately, for nomination to ordination” (ND, 227). This report can be viewed in the Formation Office “by the candidate's spiritual director, whose ‘task is that of discerning the workings of the Spirit in the soul of those called and, at that same time, of accompanying and supporting their ongoing conversion’” (ND, 228). While the issues raised in the report should be brought to spiritual direction, the individual source(s) of the comments or concerns included in the report *must be kept confidential* and not shared with the aspirant or candidate.

RESOURCES

National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States (available on-line at: <http://old.usccb.org/deacon/DeaconDirectory.pdf>).

⁴ “care must be taken, however, to preserve the confidentiality of spiritual direction” (ND #226).



Diocese of Marquette
Permanent Diaconate Program
Candidate's Spiritual Director Meeting
Form



NAME _____

DATE _____

YEAR IN FORMATION _____

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR'S NAME _____

Address _____

How frequently do you meet? _____

How long has this person been your spiritual director? _____



Diocese of Marquette
Permanent Diaconate Program
Spiritual Director's Meeting Form



Name of Aspirant/Candidate: _____

Name of Spiritual Director: _____

How frequently do you meet? _____

By my signature, I attest that over the past year I have met with the above-named aspirant/candidate on a regular basis and with sufficient frequency to meet his needs and spiritual growth. The Deacon Formation Program presumes that "sufficient frequency" would be about once per month.

Signature: _____



Diocese of Marquette
PERMANENT DIACONATE Program
Request for Approval of a Spiritual Director



I hereby request that the following Priest be considered for approval as my Spiritual Director:

Priest Name: _____ Assignment: _____

Parish/ Residence: _____

Address _____

City: _____

Zip Code _____

Phone: (Home) _____

(Cell): _____

Email: _____

I have spoken with the Priest and he has indicated that he would willingly accept the responsibility to serve as my Spiritual Director. We both understand that the approval of a spiritual director requires approval from the Bishop via the Clergy Office.

Signature: Aspirant/Candidate:

Priest

(Print) _____

(Print) _____

Date: _____

Date: _____