

- Participation in faith enrichment opportunities (*e.g.*, retreats, days of recollection, adult education programming);
- Positive and stable marriage, if married, or a mature celibate state of life, if single;
- Active membership in a Christian community;
- Capacity for obedience and fraternal communion; and
- Deep spirituality and prayer life.

Parish Discernment Tips

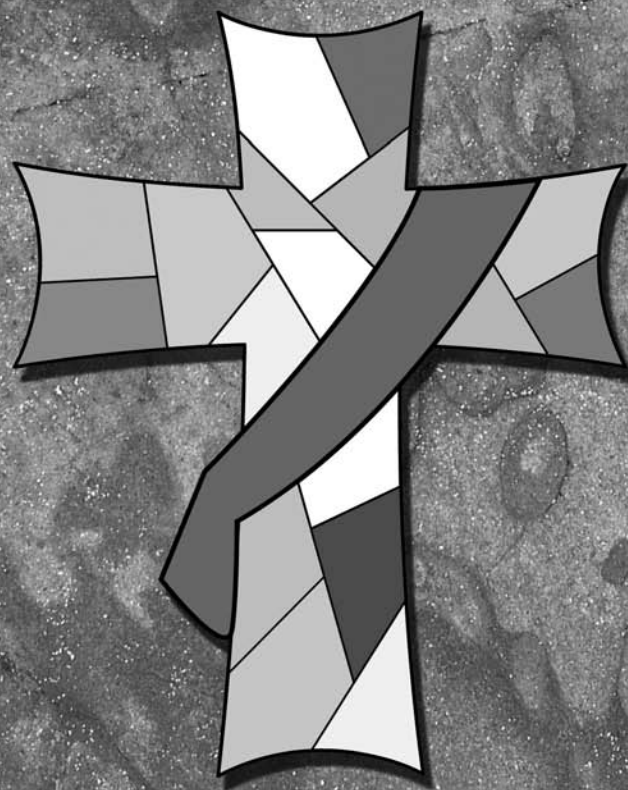
1. Share with the parish pastoral council the behavioral and spiritual attributes desirable in candidates for the deacon formation program. The pastoral council may want to identify men in the parish who demonstrate abilities of service and leadership inviting them to consider a vocation to the permanent diaconate.
2. Consult with his pastoral staff sharing information about the permanent diaconate and also identifying men who may consider a vocation to the permanent diaconate.
3. Study pastoral needs in the parish, cluster or region that could benefit from diaconal ministry including ministries associated with Word, Sacrament, and charity/justice.
4. Add a petition to the general intercessions at Sunday Mass praying for those men who might consider a vocation to the diaconate.
5. Extract information from the various tools enclosed in the priest packet to include in the parish bulletin as a way to offer catechesis to the faithful.
6. Encourage men to attend one of the diocesan-wide listening sessions to be hosted in July.

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DISCERNING A VOCATION TO THE PERMANENT DIACONATE



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The discernment of a vocation for ministry in the Church requires one to gain knowledge, seek information, converse with other people, and be sustained in prayer. The permanent diaconate is a ministry of service and charity to the faith community thus requiring from the deacon a real commitment involving time, effort and hard work. A man who believes the Lord is calling him to serve the Church as a deacon is called forth by the bishop and ordained for the Church. The deacon ministers alongside priests and bishops while also maintaining his obligations to family and career. Below is information about the various responsibilities undertaken by deacons, the desirable attributes for those involved in ministry, and ways a parish might encourage men to discern a vocation to the diaconate.

Areas of Diaconal Ministry

1) Ministry of the Word Tasks:

- 1.a. Teach religious education for adults
- 1.b. Teach religious education for children
- 1.c. Conduct inquiry classes for those interested in the Catholic Faith
- 1.d. Proclaim the Gospel during Mass
- 1.e. Deliver homilies
- 1.f. Give baptismal instructions to parents
- 1.g. Lead or assist with marriage preparation programs
- 1.h. Participate in or coordinate youth ministry programs
- 1.i. Assist with catechetical programs on the parish, regional, or institutional levels

2) Ministry of Sacrament Tasks:

- 2.a. Serve as deacon at the Eucharistic Liturgy
- 2.b. Distribute Holy Communion
- 2.c. Take Communion to the sick and shut-ins
- 2.d. Celebrate Baptisms outside of Mass
- 2.e. Lead prayers at funeral home
- 2.f. Lead prayers at cemetery
- 2.g. Serve as minister of exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
- 2.h. Witness marriages
- 2.i. Preside at the celebration of Morning or Evening Prayer
- 2.j. Preside at funerals outside of Mass
- 2.k. Serve as advocate for the diocesan tribunal

3) Ministry of Charity and Justice (Parish, Regional, Deanery, Institutional) Tasks:

- 3.a. Visit the hospitalized
- 3.b. Minister to persons with disabilities
- 3.c. Visit the imprisoned
- 3.d. Visit the aged and homebound
- 3.e. Provide information, referral, and assistance for the poor and disadvantaged
- 3.f. Promote parish social action
- 3.g. Minister to immigrants and refugees
- 3.h. Coordinate advocacy efforts in light of Catholic social teaching
- 3.i. Assist parish organizations (Saint Vincent de Paul, Ladies of Charity, *etc.*)
- 3.j. Minister for at-risk children (detention centers, group homes, *etc.*)
- 3.k. Assist with ministries directed to food pantries, *etc.*

Behavioral and Spiritual Attributes

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in their national directory on the formation of men to the permanent diaconate identifies **behavioral attributes** of exemplary deacons which can assist an inquirer in his discernment:

- Natural inclination to serve the Christian community and those in need;
- Demonstrates psychological integrity;
- Has a capacity for dialogue;
- Ability to share one's faith yet listen respectfully to other points of view;
- Capacity to listen carefully and without prejudice to race, gender or ethnicity;
- Good communication skills;
- Self-directed and collaborative accountability;
- Balanced and prudent judgment;
- Generosity in service;
- Ability to lead, motivate, facilitate, and animate others into appropriate action and service.

The USCCB also emphasizes the following **spiritual attributes** of exemplary deacons:

- Sound faith;
- Good Christian reputation;
- Active involvement in the Church's apostolate;
- Personal integrity, maturity, and holiness;
- Regular participation in the Church's sacramental life;
- Evidence of recognized, ongoing commitment to the Church's life and service;