

ture of life through ministries of charity and justice. And others work in parishes, teaching RCIA and serving where they are needed most.

How will the diaconate respond to the Envisioning Ministry for the Future project?

Through the Envisioning Ministry Project, the Diocese of Pittsburgh is currently evaluating its needs in light of both the Nineteenth Diocesan Synod and an overall decline in the number of priests. Envisioning Ministry has played a large part in how the diocese is planning to select, form and place the upcoming class of deacons.

The result of this consultation will be a diaconate equipped for the future. New deacons will be selected and trained to prepare for the specific needs they will encounter, whether in parishes or in institutional settings.

Deacons were typically rooted in particular parishes, often their home parishes, under the direction of the pastor. Deacons in the future may be shared among several parishes in a cluster or even be assigned to serve at the deanery level under the direction of the dean. Deacons will have to be more mobile as a result.

How can I learn more about the diaconate?

Men interested in the diaconate should contact their pastor, who is responsible for the nomination phase.

Over the summer, the diocese will host two listening sessions at Saint Paul Seminary: July 25, 7:00 p.m. and July 28, 10:00 a.m.

Timeline

Summer-Fall 2007: Men inquire about the diaconate

Fall 2007: Pastors nominate men who express interest to the Office for the Diaconate

Fall 2007: Inquirers formally accept their nomination, consult with their pastor and complete application materials

Spring 2008: Inquirers interview with diocesan officials

May 2008: Selection of Aspirants for Propaedeutic Period

June-December 2008: Propaedeutic Period

December 2008: Selection of Candidates for Formation Program

January 2009-December 2012: Diaconate Formation Program (24 courses, 8 workshops, 8 Days of Recollection, 5 Retreats, 4 10-week pastoral experiences)

January 2013: Ordination



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What is the Diaconate?



DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

Bishop Paul J. Bradley has announced that the Diocese of Pittsburgh has established a deacon formation program to prepare interested and qualified men for ordination to the diaconate. This brochure answers questions for those interested in learning more about the diaconate.

What is the permanent diaconate?

A deacon is a member of the sacred hierarchy of the Church ordained for the ministry of service assisting the diocesan bishop with the needs of the faith community. Diaconal ministry includes a threefold ministry of Word, Sacrament, and charity exercised for the benefit of the local Church.

The name “deacon” comes from the Greek word “diakonos” meaning “servant” or “minister.” From the earliest times in the Church, deacons have assisted in the day-to-day ministries of charity and justice. Since a man is ordained into holy orders, the diaconate imprints a character and communicates a specific sacramental grace for the purpose of service. The spirituality and ministry of the deacon therefore can be a source of inspiration, motivation, and example for all the faithful in the Church.

How does the diaconate relate to the priesthood?

The Church teaches that Christ has instituted the sacraments for the good of the People of God including the sacrament of Holy Orders. There are three degrees in Holy Orders — the episcopacy, presbyterate, and the diaconate. Those ordained to Holy Orders are invested with sacred power to further the Church’s mission. The diaconate provides a sacramental grace to the Church with witness and ministry to charity. Thus while the bishop and priest are ordained in the person of Christ as head of the

Church, the deacon is ordained in the person of Christ as servant of the Church.

Has the diaconate always been part of the Church?

Yes. The roots of the diaconate are in the Acts of the Apostles. The apostles, overwhelmed with the many needs of the growing Church, appointed seven men, including St. Stephen, to ministries of charity and service.

Deacons had an important role in the western Church’s hierarchy until the fifth century. For various reasons, though, it began to experience a slow decline, until the diaconate became only an intermediate stage for candidates preparing for priestly ordination.

The Second Vatican Council renewed the permanent diaconate to meet growing pastoral needs. In 1967, Pope Paul VI issued norms for the re-establishment of the Order of Deacon and since then the diaconate has flourished in many dioceses throughout the world.

In the United States, as Pope John Paul II observed, the call has come at exactly the right time for the Church in America. American society faces unprecedented challenges from abortion, euthanasia, eroding social values, technological advances, an aging population, racism, poverty and scores of other issues that the Church needs to address.

What do deacons do?

As exemplars of service, the work of the deacon is characterized by the specific ministry the deacon provides the faith community. The deacon is primarily ordained for the ministry of charity and justice.

In the Diocese of Pittsburgh the deacon is ordained to meet the specific pastoral needs of the local Church. This ministry requires both humility and flexibility since deacons pledge obedience to their diocesan bishop and answer the bishop’s call wherever and whenever it comes. The deacon’s assignment can involve ministry at the parish or at the regional, deanery, and diocesan levels, including institutions within the diocese.

How does the diaconate serve the mission of the Church?

We are all, as Pope John Paul II frequently said, in a new springtime of the faith. A new springtime of faith requires a new evangelization. In the classical form of evangelization, Christians shared the “Good News” with non-Christians through acts of charity and service. But the new evangelization reaches out to inactive, marginal and nominal Catholics while also encouraging a deeper spirituality and participation among practicing Catholics as well.

Evangelization — bringing the Good News to the people who need it most — is a theme that runs throughout a deacon’s life. The Scriptures tell the story of how the ministry of St. Philip, one of the first deacons, was instrumental in the conversion of an Ethiopian. St. Philip taught him, baptized him and, in the process, helped bring the Gospel to Africa

How do permanent deacons serve the new evangelization? Their ministries vary as the needs vary. Some find themselves bringing Christ to young people in detention centers or to men and women in prisons. Others find themselves ministering to patients in hospitals and nursing homes. Others promote the cul-