

Diocese of Cheyenne Diaconal Formation Program General Requirements and Expectations

The requirements and expectations of men in the Diocese of Cheyenne's diaconal formation program shall normally comply and comport with those outlined in the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Additions to and deviations from the National Directory have been made (and future adjustments will be applied) in compliance with the Code of Canon Law where judged by the Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne to be in the best interest of the program and the men in formation. To assist these men and those considering formation, the following overview of program requirements and expectations has been compiled. However, it is neither a complete nor exhaustive list, but serves only to highlight important aspects of the National Directory as applied in the Diocese of Cheyenne together with Diocesan specific requirements. This document may be amended at anytime with the Bishop's approval.

DEFINITIONS:

Inquirer / Inquiry: A man who is actively engaged in learning more about the formation, ministry and life of permanent deacons. It is a time for such a man and his family to discern if he is called to apply for admission to diaconal formation. It is normally comprised of a period of about one year immediately preceding admission to formation.

Aspirant / Aspirancy: A man who has been admitted into the diaconal formation program and is in the "propaedeutic," or introductory period, of study and discernment.¹ It is a time during which the ministry, life and spirituality of the permanent diaconate are explored more fully; and an active effort is begun by such a man to discern a vocation to Holy Orders. It also initiates the Church's formal process of ongoing evaluation of the genuineness of a man's perceived vocation and his potential ability and propensity to serve in the clerical state of deacon.

Candidate / Candidacy: A man who has been admitted to candidacy for Holy Orders (in this case the permanent diaconate) through the Rite of Candidacy. It is period of at least three years during which such a man is formed intellectually, spiritually, pastorally, and personally to serve in the order of deacon.² It is also a continued period of intense discernment and evaluation by both the candidate *and the Church* to assess the genuineness of a man's perceived vocation and his potential ability and propensity to serve in the clerical state of deacon.

Diaconal Formation (Formation): The formal and established process, programs and experiences (beginning with Aspirancy) through which a man actively discerns a vocation to the permanent diaconate; while at the same time being formed intellectually, spiritually, pastorally and humanly for ordination. As such, it is also the period during which the Church not only prepares such a man for ordination to permanent diaconate,

but continues to actively discern if he is in fact truly called to, and suitable for, this ministry.

1. The minimum age for single men to be ordained to the permanent diaconate is twenty-five (25) years, and thirty-five (35) years for married men.³ Maximum age in the Diocese of Cheyenne to enter the Diaconal Formation Program (Aspirancy) is fifty-five (55) years, or age 60 at ordination, unless the Bishop allows an exception.⁴
2. A man cannot be impeded from receipt of Holy Orders by any perpetual irregularity or simple impediment, unless such irregularity(ies) or impediment(s) have been validly dispensed in accordance with canon law.⁵ In addition, he must be judged suitable for Ordination by the Bishop.⁶ Normally, suitability will be determined by the Bishop in consultation with the Diaconal Formation Board. If a man becomes impeded during formation he shall, as soon as reasonably possible, notify the Director of Diaconal Formation.⁷
3. Married applicants to the permanent diaconate must be in a marriage that is considered valid by the Catholic Church.⁸ This is to be documented by an official marriage certificate issued by the parish where the marriage occurred. If the husband or wife had a prior marriage, either a death certificate or copies of any definitive sentence(s) and any confirming decree(s), or a release to obtain said documents issued in relation to annulment proceedings are required. If the man is single, but has been married before, then either a death certificate or copies of any definitive sentence(s) and any confirming decree(s), or a release to obtain said documents, issued in relation to annulment proceedings are required.⁹
4. Upon application to the diaconal formation program, the married applicant must demonstrate evidence of a stable marriage for a minimum of five years¹⁰ and have the enthusiastic support of his wife, including her written consent when required.¹¹ His wife must be Catholic or be in the process of coming into full communion with the Catholic Church before the beginning of his second year of formation.¹²
5. Upon application to the diaconal formation program, the single applicant must have lived in a celibate state for at least five years.¹³
6. Five years should elapse between a convert or returning Catholic's entry into the Church and his acceptance into formation.¹⁴ *Care must be given to someone in whom a sudden conversion experience seems to precipitate a diaconal vocation.*
7. Aspirants and candidates should have a sound knowledge, understanding and appreciation for the ministry of charity and of service which define the life of a deacon. Successful applicants will have a demonstrated track record of service in their parish and community.¹⁵
8. Applicants to the diaconal formation program should have an established, regular and active prayer life prior to entering formation.¹⁶ This should be exemplified by a sound spiritual life

of regular personal prayer together with full and active participation in the Church's liturgies. In addition, aspirants and candidates are expected to demonstrably grow and deepen their spiritual and prayer life during formation.

9. The National Directory calls for an understanding of the fundamentals of Catholic teaching. Familiarity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the Bible, with awareness of appropriate resources is required.¹⁷
10. The willingness of the applicant to make a strong commitment of time and talent for study during the formation period should be evident. If married, the spouse's understanding and agreement to this commitment must also be present.¹⁸
11. A man must have the support and recommendation of his pastor to enter the diaconal formation program.¹⁹
12. Applicants to the formation program should be in good health. They should have a physical examination within six months of the application date, and a report from the examining physician may be required during the application process. This report should state that the applicant is capable of sustaining the rigors of a strenuous academic formation program while maintaining his current work status.²⁰
13. The man (and his wife if he is married) must be cleared to minister to youth and at-risk adults within the Diocese. This involves a criminal background check and completion of the "Safe Environments Training (SET)" workshop.²¹
14. Graduation from high school or the equivalent is required to enter the formation program.²²
15. Inquirers, aspirants, and candidates shall complete and submit all required forms and applications by their due date.²³
16. Aspirants and candidates shall participate in any interviews requested by the Formation Board, including any psychological interviews or diagnostic exams.²⁴
17. Attendance at all aspirancy and formation weekends, retreats, and other scheduled meetings or liturgical celebrations are required unless excused ahead of time by the Director of Diaconal Formation.²⁵
 - a. Non-excused absences may be grounds for expulsion from the program.
 - b. More than two (2) excused absences per year may be grounds for expulsion from the program.
18. Aspirants and candidates must complete and submit all assigned reading and course work by any respective due date unless otherwise excused by the instructor for any course and the Director of Diaconal Formation.²⁶

19. Candidates must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 on the traditional 0-4 scale for all academic class work. Receipt of a failing grade in two or more classes may be grounds for expulsion from the program. To reduce competition between candidates and stress, aspirants and candidates are encouraged not to share their grades or personal evaluations with other men in formation.²⁷
20. Aspirants and candidates are strictly prohibited from engaging in any form of cheating or plagiarism. In addition, they are expected to conform to the testing and paper submission requirements of all instructors and (except for approved tutoring) be neither aided nor abetted by others in the completion of their course work, unless permitted by an instructor.²⁸
21. Applicants are expected to complete the necessary studies required during formation.²⁹
22. Aspirants (beginning by January, 2017) and candidates must meet regularly (monthly on average)³⁰ with an approved spiritual director who is a priest.³¹
23. During the first year of formation, aspirants shall complete a minimum of 18 hours of approved pastoral ministry under the direction of a supervisor. These hours shall be completed between October 1, 2016 and June 1, 2017 and a report from their supervisor is due within two weeks of completion of these hours. Normally, this ministry will be conducted in their home parish under the supervision of their pastor or an associate pastor, and it may consist of ministries in which the aspirant is already engaged.³²
24. Subsequent to the first year of formation, aspirants and candidates shall complete 36 hours of approved pastoral ministry each year under the direction of a supervisor. These hours shall be completed between July 1st and May 1st of each year, and a report from their supervisor is due by May 15th. To the extent practical, this ministry will be conducted outside the man's home parish, should not be a ministry in which they are currently engaged, and will be varied during each year of formation.³³
25. Attendance at a five day minimum, pre-ordination canonical retreat is required and will not be dispensed.³⁴
26. Aspirants and candidates are responsible for all travel and lodging costs associated with formation.³⁵ In addition, they will be responsible for covering the cost of any tuition and academic resources (including, but not limited to, books, supplies, computers, and internet service). Some financial assistance may become available based upon need. Parishes or other organizations and individuals may sponsor some (or all) of an aspirant's or candidate's out of pocket expenses.³⁶
27. Aspirants, candidates and permanent deacons must be economically stable and self-sufficient. It is expected that the ministry of diaconate will be part time for most deacons, so that each must have a source of income for support of self and family, including providing

for their retirement needs. Deacons are not paid for their ministry, but some expenses may be reimbursed.³⁷

ABBREVIATIONS:

BNFPD Congregation for Catholic Education, Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons (*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum Permantium*) Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1998.

CIC 1983 Code of Canon Law

DN Diocesan Norm - Requires approval of Bishop for change or dispensation.

ND National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States. Including the Secondary Documents; Basic Standards for Readiness; and Visit of Consultation Teams to Diocesan Permanent Diaconate Formation Programs. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (Effective 12/26/2004).

PR Diocese of Cheyenne, diaconal formation program requirement, set by Formation Board, but may be altered or waived by board action.

¹ ND 182

² ND 204

³ CIC 1031 §2; a dispensation of one year may be given by the Bishop, a dispensation of more than one year is reserved to the Apostolic See (CIC 1031 §4).

⁴ DN (cf. CIC 1031§3)

⁵ CIC 1040; 1041; & 1042

⁶ CIC 1029

⁷ PR

⁸ CIC 1041 §3

⁹ DN

¹⁰ PR (cf. ND 174^d, 2 years min.)

¹¹ ND 78, ND 186 (cf. BNFD no. 37)

¹² DN

¹³ BNFPD no. 68

¹⁴ PR (cf. ND 167)

¹⁵ ND 179

¹⁶ PR (cf. ND 179)

¹⁷ ND – Model Standards for Readiness for Admission into Aspirant Path

¹⁸ PR

¹⁹ ND 174

²⁰ PR (cf. ND 178)

²¹ DN (cf. ND 178)

²² PR (cf. ND 179)

²³ PR; ND 178

²⁴ PR; ND 178; ND 198

²⁵ PR

²⁶ PR

²⁷ PR

²⁸ PR

²⁹ DN

³⁰ PR

³¹ ND 117; the Bishop must approve the priests who may act as spiritual directors for men in formation.

³² PR – Hours and specific ministries may be adjusted depending upon program demands and personal situations of Aspirants.

³³ PR– Hours and specific ministries may be adjusted depending upon program demands and personal situations of Candidates.

³⁴ CIC 1039

³⁵ PR

³⁶ PR

³⁷ DN