

IMPEDIMENTS AND SUITABILITY FOR RECEIPT OF HOLY ORDERS

There are several issues concerning candidates for the diaconate that need to be addressed during the application process. Two of these are impediments and suitability. These are briefly outlined below along with some italicized notes to help in their understanding.

Regarding impediments, there are two types: irregularities (perpetual impediments) and simple impediments (temporary impediments):

Irregularities (perpetual impediments) are listed in canon 1041, and are as follows:

1. Some form of amentia or other psychic illness due to which, after experts have been consulted, the candidate is judged unqualified to fulfill properly the ministry.
2. The commission of apostasy, heresy, or schism.

Apostasy is the denial of the faith, such as becoming an agnostic, an atheist, a Jew, a Mormon, Muslim, etc.

Heresy is the denial of a teaching of the Church, such as the Immaculate Conception.

Schism is the joining of another Christian community or church. This must be done through a liturgical act, a formal declaration or a written statement. Falling away from the Catholic faith and attending another faith's services or not practicing usually does not constitute one of these.

3. Attempted marriage, even if only civilly, while either impeded personally from entering marriage by a matrimonial bond, Sacred Orders or a public perpetual vow of chastity; or with a woman bound by a valid marriage or restricted by the same type of vow.

This is generally held not to include a candidate who has a prior marriage declared invalid and then married. The canon is usually applied to the person who married, divorced, and without an annulment has attempted a second marriage. However, a question of suitability for Holy Orders could present itself when a person has prior marriages that have been declared invalid. A copy of the decision(s) of the tribunal declaring the marriage(s) invalid and a description of the circumstance will need to be submitted to help determine suitability.

4. Commission of voluntary homicide or having procured a completed abortion, including all those who positively cooperated in either.

This includes first and second degree murder and being an accomplice in it. It also includes all aspects of an abortion from the moment of conception, such as performing and assisting with the actual abortion, taking a woman to have an abortion, paying for an abortion whether physical or chemical, or encouraging someone to have an abortion.

5. Mutilating oneself or another gravely and maliciously; or attempting suicide.

This generally does not include procedures done for reasons of health, but may be applied to body piercings and tattoos. In the Diocese of Cheyenne, tattoos and body piercings are considered impediments. However, as noted below, the Bishop may grant a dispensation depending upon the particular circumstance.

6. Simulation of an act of orders.

This is basically presenting oneself as deacon, priest or bishop or performing actions only they can perform.

Note: Dispensations from numbers 2, 3 and 4 above, as well as number 1 below, are reserved to the Holy See (*canon 1047*). The Holy See is not wont to grant dispensations from these irregularities. Therefore, these requests are usually denied. The local Bishop can dispense irregularities and impediments not reserved to the Holy See. However, in most cases he is also not wont to do so.

The simple impediments are listed in canon 1042, and are as follows:

1. Having a wife, unless destined for the permanent diaconate, in which case the candidate must have the consent of his wife (*canon 1031 §2*).
2. Having an activity or occupation which is unbecoming or foreign to being a cleric (*see canons 285, 286 and 288*).

While deacons can hold public office which entails a participation in the exercise of civil power, this is discouraged. Some examples of unfitting trades and professions (depending upon circumstance) are bartenders, liquor store owners, jailers and taxi drivers; habitual gambling or the management of a gaming establishment; prize fighting; jockeys, risqué theater or music.

3. Being a recent convert unless in the judgment of the Bishop the applicant has been sufficiently proven.

The qualities necessary for one to be suitable for the diaconate are found in canon 1029:

1. Have an integral faith.
2. Be moved with the right intention.
3. Have the requisite knowledge.
4. Possess a good reputation.
5. Endowed with integral morals and proven virtues.
6. Posses the physical and psychic qualities needed to exercise the ministry.