



RESPONDING TO THE CALL

The word “deacon” is derived from the Greek words *diakonia*, service, and *diakonos*, variously translated as servant, helper, attendant, or minister. Phil 1:1 acknowledges the evolving concept of diaconal ministry in the early Church, and 1 Tim 3:8-10, 12-13 lists the necessary qualifications for the office of deacon once it had become more formally established in the early Church.

The diaconate is conferred by a bishop by the laying on of hands, and it is one of the three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Deacons have a special bond with their bishop, and their visible role is normally to assist priests in parishes.

Unlike lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and other ministries, permanent deacons are deacons for life. A deacon assists the priest at Mass, preaches the homily occasionally, administers the Sacrament of Baptism; brings Viaticum to the dying; blesses religious articles, presides for prayer services; officiates at wakes, funerals, and burial services; and witnesses marriages.

A LIFE OF SERVICE

The deacon is a public witness of the Church among his family, friends, and coworkers.

As ministers of service, there are many options for deacons to perform charitable good works: outreach to the poor; the visitation of the sick, either at home, in nursing homes, or in hospitals; the care of inmates in prisons and jails; the teaching of sacramental preparation and religious education classes; and various administrative duties; just to name some of the major roles.

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THE PERMANENT DIACONATE *in the* DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE



WHAT SORT OF PERSON PURSUES THIS VOCATION?

The following are some of the requirements; the list is not exhaustive:

- A male who has received all the sacraments of initiation and maintains a strong prayer life.
- A sincere desire to be of service to the poor and marginalized that is carried out in action.
- Has a long term and stable record of ministry in his parish. (Five years is the normal length asked for by the Formation Program.)
- Can be married if that marriage is in accord with the laws of the Catholic Church. His wife must formally support his decision to enter formation and his ordination. He agrees to remain celibate should he lose his wife.
- If single, he takes a vow of celibacy and may not marry.
- Must not have been divorced more than once, and if divorced, must have had the first marriage annulled.
- Have the support of his wife and family.
- According to canon law, the minimal age at ordination for a married man is 35 years of age; 25 for single men. The upper age is determined by the judgement of the diocese during the application process.
- Be employed or otherwise self-supporting.
- Have the strong endorsement of his pastor.
- Be able to attend all required classes, retreats, and functions. Dates will be provided at the beginning of the Program.
- Have a sincere sense that God is calling him to this permanent and stable ministry of service.



BECOMING A DEACON *in the* DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE

The formation process is comprised of two parts: A nine-month discernment program that meets monthly will begin in early 2024; and a five-year academic, pastoral, and spiritual formation program.

Those men who complete this pre-formation discernment program and are invited to do so, will then begin the application process to the formal Permanent Diaconate Formation Program.

Upon completion of the application process, those accepted to it will enter the five-year Diaconate Formation Program. Discernment will continue throughout the program. As currently envisioned, it will consist of monthly weekend-long sessions and online classes.

MET WITH SUPPORT

It is crucial that you have your pastor's strong endorsement for the program. It is likewise just as important that you have your wife's approval, as she will have to give her endorsement along the way.

To fully appreciate the potential impact the diaconate will have on a marriage, wives of men in formation are expected to attend the classes as well. **Ordination is anticipated to be in the spring of 2030.**



FRAN RUCHALSKI