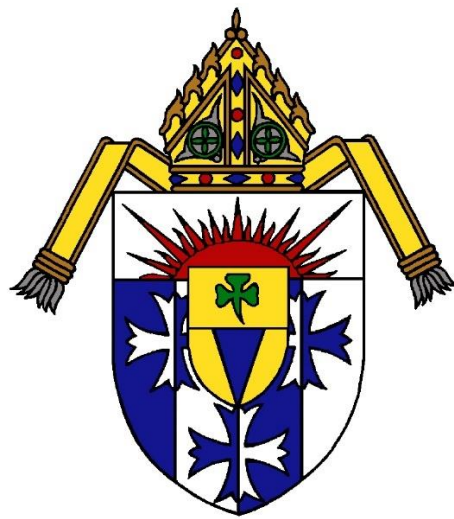


DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS



DEACON FORMATION PROGRAM

Candidacy Manual

2021-2024



DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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May 18, 2021

Dear Candidates,

As I did when you began your time of discernment for service in the church in the ministry of Deacon, I give thanks for your perseverance and openness to serve the people of God in Eastern Montana. The discernment of a man called to be a deacon has included the observations of the Deacon Formation Team who serve on my behalf. Now, acting upon the recommendation of that Team as well as your own prayerful reflection, you begin a new phase in your formation to become a deacon as a Candidate for Holy Orders in a ministry of service to the people of the diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

I invite and encourage you to use these next few years to continue the good work God already has begun in you. The Sacrament of Holy Orders, for which you are preparing, carries with it a great responsibility. It is a ministry of service to God's people and one the Church uses to invite people to encounter Christ. In the Rite of Ordination, a Candidate is handed the Book of the Gospels with the following words:

*Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become.
Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.*

In a similar way as the Aspirancy Manual, this Candidate Manual is provided to you as a guide to help you understand the details of the formation program for the Permanent Diaconate and the expectations and responsibilities of a Candidate preparing for ordination. It includes expectations and responsibilities for wives of married Candidates. The purpose of the formation program is to assist you in your journey of faith and provide you the skills needed to be effective and fruitful as a deacon in the church.

May God provide you with the gifts needed to be of service to the church and bless these next few years of formation.

In Christ,

Michael W. Warfel
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings

MT/

Bishop's Livestock Brand

CANDIDACY

A Time of Preparation and Final Discernment

This manual outlines the purpose, content and expectations of the final journey in the Diaconal Formation Program. The descriptions, guidelines and schedules contained in this manual are distilled from the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*¹ and adapted for use in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

While this manual will include some details about the nature of the diaconate and the character of those called to serve, the primary purpose of this publication is to provide information on the requirements, time demands and the selection process directly related to the Candidacy Years of the Diaconate Formation Program. It should be noted that this manual is a “living” document and is subject to adjustment and further revision by the Permanent Diaconate Advisory Board and the Director as circumstances warrant.

Further information can be obtained by a review of the National Directory (ND) noted above and *The Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons / Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* (BNFPD).²

For further understanding of the spirituality, charisms and life of a deacon, please refer to the bibliography at the end of this manual.

- 1) National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States. (ND), USCCB, 2005, ISBN 1-57455-368-2
- 2) Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons / Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons. (BNFPD), USCCB, 1998, ISBN 1-57455-242-2

A. General Overview of Candidacy Formation:

In moving from Aspirancy to Candidacy, candidates transition from a period dedicated to personal reflection into a period of preparation and training for public ministry in Holy Orders serving the needs of the People of the Diocese of Eastern Montana. Therefore, while much of the Aspirancy Experience was focused on meeting the applicant's needs as he discerned, if indeed he was called and ready, Candidacy is focused on making sure the individual is equipped to meet the needs of those he will serve. This change will make a material difference in the pace, intensity, subject matter and nature of the courses and program presentations. While fraternal spirituality and prayer will continue to be a priority, the development of proficiencies and growth in knowledge will become of greater importance. Due to the truly academic nature of some of the material, a significant portion of the course work will be administered through the Virtual Learning accomplished with the University of Notre Dame, McGrath Institute STEP Online Courses (NDSTEP). Candidates can also expect to participate in face-to-face classes covering all four of the formation dimensions during the seven Weekend Formation Sessions scheduled each year. These classes will be facilitated by qualified instructors and experts in their respective fields. Reading assignments and submission of reflection papers in advance of these courses will be the norm, with the processing of discoveries and group discussion a part of every weekend presentation.

The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States states this about Candidacy:

“The candidate path in diaconal formation is the occasion for continued discernment of a diaconal vocation and immediate preparation for ordination. Throughout this path in formation, the candidate himself assumes the primary responsibility for his discernment and development.

Self-formation does not imply isolation ... or independence from formators, but responsibility and dynamism in responding with generosity to God's call, valuing to the highest the people and tools which Providence puts at one's disposition. Self-formation has its roots in a firm determination to grow in life according to the Spirit and in conformity with the vocation received ...” (ND #204)

During Candidacy, The Director of Formation and those selected to instruct in the Candidacy Years' programs along with the University of Notre Dame, McGrath Institute STEP Online Courses (NDSTEP), are responsible for providing appropriate theological education and practical training to insure candidates have adequate opportunity to acquire the necessary level of competency in the areas of directed charitable service, liturgy (sacraments) and preaching to serve as deacons as well as construct "real opportunities" for the candidates to demonstrate they have clearly mastered these areas.

Each year during Candidacy, the Director of Formation, working with the Permanent Diaconate Formation Team (PDFT) and program instructors, has the responsibility of providing a written assessment of each candidate describing his achievements and limitations in the areas of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development during the previous year. This information, which is shared verbally with the candidate, is used to determine the candidate's level of preparedness and, ultimately, to be nominated for ordination. (ND #227)

During Candidacy, each candidate and his wife will be matched with an experienced deacon couple, who will serve as a mentor couple. Mentor couples will meet with candidates and their wives to share personal experiences and practical information learned in their experiences in ministry. These periodic conversations are a collaborative effort and participation by all parties is required.

As during Aspirancy, candidates are expected to actively pursue their own spiritual growth. More than ever, the candidate must truly reflect on the reality that being a deacon is a life-long commitment. During these years of preparation, participation in the sacraments, prayer, and work with a spiritual director becomes even more important ... and mandatory to be considered for ordination.

As during Aspirancy, expenses for the program are covered by contributions from the diocese, your parish and your own personal resources. Participants may expect to pay for some texts and resource materials. Your parish **may** be expected to provide anywhere from \$500-\$600 annually in support of their candidates. All travel expenses, meals while traveling and lodging expenses are the responsibility of each candidate. Meals, while attending weekend formation sessions, are provided by the diocese.

B. Discernment

While personal discernment continues throughout the candidate formation years, focusing largely on the questions: “*am I called and am I ready?*”, ecclesial discernment takes on a new dimension in Candidacy. In addition to the questions: “Is this person called and ready?”, the Director of Formation and the PDFT are now charged with assessing annually the practical abilities of the candidate to fulfill the various roles and ministries of a deacon. This assessment involves traditional examinations, peer evaluations, observation of candidate’s performance in real and “role playing” scenarios and ministerial activities, testing the candidate’s ability to apply the Gospel to real daily living situations, and evaluating his ability to reflect theologically about the human, spiritual, and intellectual aspects and pastoral dimensions of his service work.
(ND # 222)

Along with classroom and field observations, annual interviews will be conducted with each candidate and his spouse, his pastor and formators. The sum total of these observations and interviews will form the basis for an annual report that will be discussed verbally with the candidate and added to his personnel file.

In the end, these reports will aid the Bishop in making an informed decision to meet personally with each candidate and his spouse prior to his potential invitation to ordination.

C. Process and Criteria for Selecting Candidates

Potential Candidates are selected from among the members of the Aspirancy Cohort who have successfully completed their Aspirancy Year Experience and have been interviewed by the PDFT. The PDFT, having reviewed the Director's Aspirancy Year Report, will recommend that selected aspirants be invited to petition the Bishop, in writing, to be admitted to Candidacy. The petition must be accompanied by a letter from the petitioner's wife giving her clear consent. The petition is to be "written in his own hand and accepted in writing by the aforementioned authority (bishop)." (Canon 1034)

Along with the criteria for the selection for Aspirancy, the following are important indications of readiness for Candidacy:

- † Capable of reflecting theologically on his faith experience, his call and his ministry
- † Express his obvious love for the Word and the Church
- † Able to articulate the primary teachings of the Catholic Church and discuss knowledgeably the contemporary issues impacted by these teachings
- † Capable of being both a leader and a follower and working as a team
- † Willingness in developing fraternal support and community with fellow clergy and others
- † Self-aware, self-reflective and willing to share in an appropriate manner his faith experience
- † A deepening spirituality in response to the study of the diaconal charism
- † Commitment to the appreciation of the Sacraments
- † Participates often in Eucharist and communal prayer
- † Tolerant and generous with time, talent and treasure
- † A good listener
- † Effective communicator
- † Trustworthy and willing to teach only that which the Church teaches
- † Self-motivated and disciplined in completing assignments and tasks
- † Able to discuss intelligently, in personal and general terms, Christian vocations, ordained ministry, and especially, the Order of Deacon
- † Be a willing evangelizer
- † Able to describe the process of discernment
- † Able to speak in theological terms about one's call

These criteria are not only recognized through direct observation by the Director of Formation, the PDFT, and program instructors, but are proven to be present in the aspirant seeking to enter Candidacy by the quality of his interaction with other members of the formation community and his ministerial work with the greater community.

D. Purpose of Candidacy

The purpose of Candidacy is to prepare men called to be deacons for the service to which they are called as well as providing them with sufficient exposure to diaconal ministries exercised by experienced deacons to insure their discernment is based both on a spiritual and an experiential understanding of the diaconate as a whole. It is a time of training and acute assessment aimed at ensuring that the men called to serve as deacons by the Holy Spirit, their faith communities, and the Church, acquire the necessary competencies to meet the changing and diverse needs of the People of God.

E. Dimensions and Content of Candidacy

There are three distinct but integral stages in the formation of a deacon: Aspirancy, Candidacy, and Post-Ordination Continuing Education. Each of these periods of formation is distinguished by four elements or dimensions: Human Dimension, Spiritual Dimension, Intellectual Dimension, and Pastoral Dimension. Through these four paths, the following academic, spiritual and inter-personal topics will be discovered during the three years dedicated to Candidacy.

I. Human Dimension

The human dimension of Candidacy is aimed at further development and enrichment of the interpersonal skills and spirituality necessary for effective and responsible diaconal ministry. Emphasis is placed on developing social maturity and the ability to work collaboratively with diverse groups of people. Exercises in peer criticism and self-criticism are included to help candidates develop a habit of authentic self-criticism in light of the Gospel as well as to increase one's ability to treat others with compassion and candor. The overall objective of this dimension of the Diaconal Formation path is creating deacons who can balance family, ministry, and work while responding charitably and flexibly to the shifting circumstances of parish ministry. This requires both practical experience (internships) and courses on time management and priority identification.

II. Spiritual Dimension

In Candidacy, the focus of the spiritual dimension evolves from discriminate practices to integration. By introducing the candidate to the theology and spirituality of work, this component of the formation program helps the candidate learn and appreciate how to sanctify, through spiritual integration, all aspects of his life: prayer, family, ministry, work and recreation. This is an important pre-ordination step. Without this a candidate lacks a personal understanding that diaconal life is a “permanent state” not just a “temporary or occasional action.” Focused spiritual work at this time will also provide the core elements and opportunities for candidates to discern their vocation and gain the foundational life-long habits, such as daily prayer, frequent participation in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and theological reflection so as to sustain their vocation after ordination.

III. Intellectual Dimension

In Candidacy, the intellectual dimension has two primary goals: building Church-related knowledge and developing competencies in areas of diaconal service. This creates the need for serious classroom work, either face-to-face or through distance learning courses and meaningful internships or practicums in social and liturgical service. The course of study intensifies at this time due to the volume of information that a deacon needs to know in order to preach, teach, minister and lead God’s People in prayer and action. Developing more than a “user knowledge” of Theology, Christology, Canon Law, the doctrinal and social teachings of the Church, Ecclesiology and Sacramental ministry requires earnest study and serious research. The overall goal of the intellectual dimension is to equip the future deacon with the knowledge, experience and confidence to be a *reliable witness* of faith in word and deed for the Gospel and the Church.

IV. Pastoral Dimension

By engaging candidates in a diverse series of pastoral, social and liturgical service opportunities, at least on a limited basis, Candidacy provides those seeking ordination time to widen their experience in Church work and to develop competence and confidence in each of the three areas of diaconal ministry: Word, Liturgy, and Charity. Working beyond the classroom setting, this component of formation relies on the collaboration of veteran deacons, pastors and parish staff to provide educational and meaningful internships in service and the administration of sacraments. Service internships and the exposure to leading liturgical services provide real opportunities for theological reflection and the occasion to translate into practical ministry that which one has learned in their academic track. Internships also provide an opportunity to learn how to motivate, organize and lead God's People within the context of parish action and service. Finally, time spent in actual ministry will help the candidate discern the veracity of his call and his true readiness to serve.

F. Time Commitment: Scope and Sequence

Candidacy, as required by the Norms (ND #205), is three years in length. Much like your experience in Aspirancy, you will be required, along with your spouse, to attend the seven weekend formation sessions scheduled in each of the three years at different venues throughout the diocese. These weekend formation sessions will commence on Friday evening, typically opening with a brief gathering followed by community Evening Prayer at 5:30 pm. Following dinner, an evening program will be provided. Friday evening and Saturday will be devoted to programming and coursework highlighted with shared Morning, Evening and Night Prayer as well as Mass to begin our day. Sundays will begin with Morning Prayer and a program on Spiritual development and culminate with Sunday Eucharist with the host parish at its regular time. Over the course of each year, a candidate and spouse would be expected to attend all 140 hours of formation time. Spouses are encouraged to read the materials assigned to their husbands so as to participate in discussion and benefit from the shared experience in appreciating what is being presented.

Candidates will also be required to register and complete on-line distance learning courses with NDSTEP as assigned (courses with NDSTEP is optional for spouses). One is expected to successfully complete 5 to 6, six-week courses each year as assigned. Currently, our provider for these distance learning opportunities is the University of Notre Dame, McGrath Institute STEP Online Courses (NDSTEP). When registering for these courses, candidates are to use the diocesan billing code provided to you. These courses will be covered by the Diocese. Annual hours of commitment to this coursework is approximately 200 -250 hours.

In addition to the formal academic coursework, a practicum will be arranged for each candidate in their home parish or institution to be completed each year. This practicum may require anywhere from 40-60 hours of time. No courses will be scheduled in December, around Easter, and August. (Note: NDSTEP courses may begin in the last week of August.)

Each of the first two years will culminate in a Candidates and Wives Retreat. Typically these retreats are 2-3 days in length. Year Three will conclude with a Pre-ordination retreat, a mandatory five day retreat for candidates only.
(Canon 1039)

In Year II, candidates will be installed into the Ministry of Lector and given sufficient time to exercise this ministry before being installed into the Ministry of Acolyte in Year III. The Rite of Installation into the Ministry of Acolyte must take place at least six months before Ordination to the Diaconate. (Canon 1035.2)

G. Wives Participation

Wives of candidates are encouraged to read all materials and texts provided to candidates but are not required to do so or complete any writing assignments. The wives have the option to take the NDSTEP courses (Paid by Diocese). **Wives are required to be present** at all formation weekend sessions and liturgical rites, so as to appreciate and understand the work being undertaken by their husbands and to participate in the Wives Programs and interact with veteran deacons' wives in attendance. Specific seminars will provide forums for wives to share their experiences and receive support in their companion journey with their husbands.

H. Selection Process and Criteria for Promotion to Ordination

Possibly the most easily defined list of criteria is the one for ordination. Simply put, the men chosen for ordination must be a deacon – not potentially a deacon or possibly a deacon. The criterion for ordination is a combination of that used in the selection of aspirants and candidates, with the additional requirement of being able to fully exercise the following:

- ✚ Set healthy and responsible goals and maintain a balanced family, ministry, personal and professional life
 - Define priorities in shifting and varied circumstances
 - Serve and communicate with a wide variety of people and personalities
 - Identify the pastoral, physical and spiritual needs of the community
 - Have an inclusive approach and work actively to dispel prejudice and injustice
 - Bridge factions and bring groups together working collaboratively
 - Develop a life-long commitment to leadership in Catholic Christian Ministry
 - Integrate a wide spectrum of moral and human issues into ones spiritual consciousness, prayer and ministry
 - Lead prayer in formal and informal settings
 - Develop and commit to a plan of continued spiritual, personal and professional growth post-ordination
 - Be obedient to one's Bishop, the Magisterium and attentive to diocesan policies
 - Prepare and deliver homilies which infuse peace and justice issues
 - Interpret the Scriptures in harmony with the Magisterium and Catholic biblical scholarship
 - Skillfully perform thorough exegesis as part of homiletic preparation
 - Prepare and teach classes on the Sacraments and know their Scriptural, historical and doctrinal foundation

Teach Church doctrine, Church history and the fundamental elements of our faith, such as the Trinity, Christology, Creed and the place of Mary and the saints in our Church

Explain and teach the fundamentals of Catholic moral thought and apply them to the social issues of our time and particular situations

Explain the major Church teachings and their foundation in Scripture

Manifest an ever increasing holiness of life

Willingly preach the Gospel to the communities in which he lives, works, and ministers through actions and, when necessary, with words

Motivate and organize lay action in the area of social justice and the Corporal Works of Mercy

Conduct weddings, baptisms, wake services, funerals, graveside services and Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest

Frequently assist at the Eucharist when celebrated in the local community and especially when the Bishop presides

Apply and teach Church doctrines on the dignity and sacredness of human life in all stages

Preach, Evangelize and Catechize about the foundations of the Catholic faith and doctrine

Master a fundamental understanding of Canon Law and its importance in the correct dispensing of the Sacraments and general parish operation as well as how it applies to the Permanent Diaconate

Three Year Candidacy Program

[Subject to Refinement as Necessary]

Candidacy Year I 2021-22

NDSTEP Online Courses

30 Aug – 16 Oct 2021	Introduction to the New Testament
12 Oct – 20 Nov	Gospel of John
10 Jan – 25 Feb 2022	Letters of St. Paul
21 Feb – 8 Apr	Liturgical Theology
25 Apr – 10 Jun	Introduction to the Sacraments
13 Jun – 29 Jul	Theology of the Body

In Person Sessions (locations TBD)

September	Weekend Formation, Session I
September	Admission to Candidacy
December	Weekend Formation, Session II
January	Weekend Formation, Session III
February	Weekend Formation, Session IV
March	Weekend Formation, Session V
April	Weekend Formation, Session VI
May	Weekend Formation, Session VII
June	Candidate Couples Retreat
July/August 2022	Parish Internship Assignment

Class Topics: Diaconal Vocation and Ministry, Homiletics I, Sacraments, Church Doctrine, Moral Theology, Old Testament, New Testament, Public Speaking, Social Ministry Internship, Pastoral Care I, Church History, Patristics, Christology I, Spirituality I, Discernment I, Charisms - Gifts and Ministry

Candidacy Year II 2022-23*

NDSTEP Online Courses

29 Aug – 14 Oct 2022	Liturgical Prayer
10 Oct – 25 Nov	Theology of the Mass
9 Jan – 17 Feb 2023	Christian Conscience and Ethical Dilemmas
20 Feb – 31 Mar	Catholic Social Teaching
17 Apr – 26 May	Creed
16 Jun – 21 Jul	RCIA

In Person Sessions (locations TBD)

September	Weekend Formation, Session I
December	Weekend Formation, Session II
January 2023	Received into Ministry of Lector
January	Weekend Formation, Session III
February	Weekend Formation, Session IV
March	Weekend Formation, Session V
April	Weekend Formation, Session VI
May	Weekend Formation, Session VII
June	Couples Retreat
July/August	Parish Internship Assignment

Class Topics: Canon Law, Homiletics II, Liturgy and Liturgical Ministry , Social Justice, The Councils, Vatican II, Medieval Theology, Contemporary Theology, Apologetics, Ethics, Philosophy – East and West, Forming a Moral Conscience, Pastoral Care II, Spirituality II, Discernment II, Collaborative Ministry

Candidacy Year III 2023-24*

NDSTEP Online Courses

4 Sep – 13 Oct 2023	Jesus Christ: Yesterday and Today
16 Oct – 24 Nov	Doctrine of Salvation in Jesus Christ
1 Jan – 16 Feb 2024	Ecclesiology
12 Feb – 22 Mar	In God's Image: The Mystery of Creation
15 Apr – 24 May	Mary as Mother: A Symbol of Life and Hope

In Person Sessions (locations TBD)

September 2023	Weekend Formation, Session I
September	Admission to Candidacy
October	Weekend Formation, Session II
December	Received into Ministry of Acolyte
December	Weekend Formation, Session III
January	Weekend Formation, Session IV
February	Weekend Formation, Session V
March	Weekend Formation, Session VI
April	Weekend Formation, Session VII
April	Advisory Board Review & Recommendation
Winter/Spring 2024	Pre-Ordination Retreat
June 2024	Ordination
July 2024	Initial Assignments

Class Topics: Homiletics III, Church Documents, Liturgical Practicum, RCIA, Initiation, Holy Orders, Stable Life Condition, Marriage & Family, Spirituality III, Ecumenism, Pastoral Care Practicum, Discernment III, Basic Human Psychology, Discernment of Charisms in Ministry

* Specific Dates in Years II and III to be determined pending publication of class schedules, formator team availability and Bishop's calendar.

Bibliography of Suggested Readings

The Deacon Reader, Edited by James Keating, Paulist Press, 2006

The Emerging Diaconate, William Ditewig, Paulist Press, 2007

The Call to Service: Pastoral Statement on the Permanent Diaconate,
Joseph Cardinal Bernadin, Archdiocese of Chicago, 1993

“*The Heart of the Permanent Deacon*”, St. Pope John Paul II,
address to deacons – Detroit, *Origens* 17, Oct. 5, 1987

101 Questions and Answers on Deacons, William Ditewig, Paulist Press, 2004

A New Friendship: The Spirituality and Ministry of the Deacon,
Edward Buelt, Liturgical Press, 2011

Diaconate: The Legacy of Vatican II, Theodore W. Kraus,
Address to NADD – Boston, 1999

The Deacon’s Ministry Series:

The Deacon’s Ministry of Charity and Justice, William T. Ditewig,
Liturgical Press, 2015 ISBN: 978-0-8146-4824-7

The Deacon’s Ministry of Liturgy, Frederick Bauerschmidt,
Liturgical Press, 2016 ISBN: 978-0-8146-4848-3

The Deacon’s Ministry of the Word, Jay Cormier,
Liturgical Press, 2016 (Available: December 2016)

May 2021