



Am I Being Called to A Vocation of “Permanent Deacon”?

As we pray and grow in our faith, God calls us to action. What is that action, is often discerned through careful prayer and reflection, spiritual advice, through the examples of others, or even from people close to us, such as family or others. We must be careful not to let our own thinking box-in how God sends us messages. If we think we are hearing a call, we should explore that call to ensure we understand what it is and is it a “God” call or from somewhere else. This is possible when we are in good relationship with God and are living our faith in an active prayer and sacramental way. If that call may be to the Diaconate, you are in luck. The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings is getting ready to start a new four-year formation cohort and is planning an “Inquiry Weekend” to learn more about the Permanent Diaconate, how to apply, and the formation process.

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings is blessed with a cadre of 18 Deacons who serve this local Church with generosity and zeal. The mission of Christ is foremost in their hearts, and they respond to the needs of their sisters and brothers with uncommon dedication. Our deacons serve in 29 parishes throughout the diocese. Deacons can also be found ministering in a variety of other areas, including prisons, hospitals, nursing homes and in the formation of other men for the diaconate.

Deacons represent the Catholic Church in its calling as servant in the world. By struggling in Christ’s name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the interdependence of worship and service in the Church’s life. The deacon reveals the servanthood of Christ in which the people are to share.

There are two kinds of deacons in the Catholic Church. The transitional deacon, who is preparing for priesthood, and the permanent deacon, a deeply spiritual and prudent man, who after years of study and training, assists the Pastor and serves the Church and its people.

Permanent deacons are representatives of Jesus Christ who minister to God’s church. Strengthened by sacramental grace, they service the people of God, ministry of the liturgy and Gospel and works of charity. He is the guardian of the true treasures of the Church — the Body and the Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the people of his church.

Pope Paul VI outlined the deacon’s role as follows:

- to assist the bishop and priests during liturgical services regarding all those matters assigned to the deacon by the liturgical books for the various rites.
- to administer baptism solemnly.
- to reserve the Eucharist and to give communion to himself and others, to bring viaticum to the dying; to give benediction with the monstrance or ciborium.

- to assist marriage in the name of the Church, when no priest is available, and, with the bishop's or pastor's delegation, to impart the nuptial blessing...
- to administer sacramentals and preside at funerals and burial rites.
- to read the books of Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the congregation.
- to preside at offices of worship and prayer services when no priest is available.
- to lead celebrations of the word, especially in places where there is a lack of priests.

Such is the liturgical service deacons render to God and God's people in the celebration of the Eucharist, other sacramental rites, and communal prayer.

If you are interested in the Permanent Diaconate or attending the Inquiry Weekend 25 – 27 August 2023 at the Ursuline Centre in Great Falls, fill out the “I am Interested in the Permanent Diaconate!” form on the Diocese Web Page: <https://diocesegfb.org/> or contact the Director of Deacon Formation: PO Box 1399, Great Falls, 59403-1399 or via email to: pwoelkers@diocesegfb.org