

which include courses in the Old and New Testament, Ecclesiology, Spirituality, Sacraments, Moral and Dogmatic Theology, Group Dynamics, Pastoral Psychology, Canon Law, and Homiletics.

In addition, they also meet three evenings per month in small local groups with priest advisors to clarify insights of faith, and join in liturgical or para-liturgical celebrations.

Wives are required to participate in a program on the Sunday afternoon of the formation Weekend, and they are welcome to attend the weekly small group sessions and/or the weekend courses. On Formation weekends, opportunities are provided for the children to come together for programs designed for them on their various age levels.

**A** new class of candidates is formed every other year. If you are a man of faith with a sense of vocation to

service, are open to further spiritual formation, have good mental and physical health, have demonstrated maturity and stability, and are interested in the Diaconate, contact your Pastor. After discussing the matter with him, you may begin the application process by having him write a letter of recommendation to the Permanent Diaconate Formation Director. Upon receipt of this letter, you will be sent an application, and arrangements will be made for an interview with you and your wife. Additional interviews are scheduled for you and your wife with members of the Permanent Diaconate Board. The final phase of the application process is a series of psychological tests.

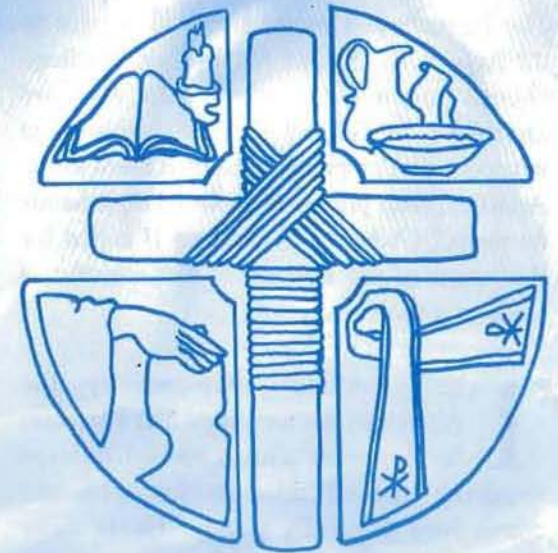
The Permanent Diaconate Program, which is part of the Office for Clergy Personnel, has an office located in the Catholic Center. It is here that the monthly Weekend Programs take place.

For more information or copies of this brochure, please contact:

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# THE PERMANENT DIACONATE PROGRAM



**DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT  
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**T**he Deacon, like the Church, is a sign of God's love to man. In his family, on his job, through his service, the Deacon gives reassurance to all that God and man are not strangers but friends.

"For strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the Bishop and his group of priests, they serve the People of God in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity."

*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*

The Permanent Deacon traces his origin to the Acts of the Apostles: "So then, brothers, choose seven men among you who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom . . . The group presented them to the Apostles, who prayed and placed their hands on them." (Acts 6:3-6). Vatican II called for the return of the Permanent Deacon after a lapse of a thousand years.

**T**he guidelines prepared by the American Bishops state that a Deacon "is a person with a special mission requiring special relationships with the community of God's people. He is more properly defined in terms of who he is rather than of what he does. In a world where conviction about God's presence is so often denied or disturbed, the Deacon emerges as a faith-person whose life gives assurance of God's concern."

### **The Deacon must be:**

- A person of deep and growing faith in God, in the community of the Church, in himself, and in others.

- A person with a clear understanding of his own calling and willing to make a permanent commitment to the people of God.
- A person with a generous and open heart, receptive to the Gifts of God to be shared with the People of God.
- A person of prayer whose life is rooted in the Liturgy, in the Word, and in Charity.

The Deacon is an ordained minister of the Church with specific functions and duties. His ordination is the sign of his commitment to Christ and to the Church community. Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the Deacon receives the sacramental grace to fulfill his servant role.

Although his strength comes from the altar, his service is not limited to the sanctuary. He is sent as a servant to a world in need.

Bringing Jesus to the world, he enriches it by his presence and his charisms. One with Christ, he shares this relationship with family, co-workers, and the community.

The Deacon has a role in liturgical Ceremonies. The Bishop confers him with the faculties to administer Baptism solemnly; witness and bless marriages;

officiate at wakes, funerals, and burial services; administer sacramentals; preside at prayer services; distribute Holy Communion; proclaim the Gospel and preach the homily; and assist at Mass. In his ministry of liturgy, word, and service, the Deacon presents to the world a new challenge and a new hope.

**T**he Holy See presently requires a man to be 35 years of age at the time of his ordination as Deacon. The Formation Program in the Diocese of Bridgeport takes four and one half years. A candidate in this diocese should be between the ages of 31 and 60 years of age at the time he enters the program.

Admission to the Permanent Diaconate program is also based on the candidate's background and commitment to service.

If married, he must have the support of his wife and children. Continuation in the program and advancement toward ordination will be evaluated on the basis of the efforts of the candidate, the support of his family, and his acceptance by the Christian community.

The four and one-half years of academic and spiritual formation prepare candidates for a ministry of service as ordained Deacons. During this period they come together one weekend per month for their studies,

