



## Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

*Office of the Permanent Diaconate  
Oficina del Diaconado Permanente*



### THE DIACONATE & DIACONATE FORMATION

**DEACONS:** Deacons are public ministers of the Church, ordained for the three-fold ministries of the Word, Liturgy and Charity. At present, there are more than 400 deacons serving in parishes and special ministries throughout the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Fundamentally, a deacon is a Man of Service who is called from the Church Community to a lifelong and public commitment to service through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Deacons are men who are best characterized as “having a deacon’s heart.” Their lived faith is one of caring for others, helping where needed, giving of themselves in the works of their parish community or the Archdiocesan Church.

**MINISTRIES:** Deacons serve in a variety of ministries: as parish ministers, prison chaplains, hospital chaplains, diocesan administration and services. Most deacons are assigned to their home parish but should realize that deacons are also assigned according to the needs of the archdiocese. Deacons minister under the authority of the Archbishop of the Archdiocese and are assigned to meet the needs of the archdiocese.

**PROGRAM OF FORMATION:** Prior to admission to formation, those desiring to apply for the diaconate will participate in a series of pre-requisite educational programs including: Introduction to Scripture – Old Testament, Introduction to Faith Tradition I, Introduction to Scripture – New Testament, Introduction to Faith Tradition II, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Theological Methods, and Introduction to the Theology of the Diaconate. During the second half of these pre-requisites, in addition to the academic studies, the inquirer begins an integrated program of academic, pastoral and spiritual formation. After acceptance into the program there is a one year period of Aspirancy followed by three years of Candidacy to ordination.

**ACADEMIC FORMATION:** The academic formation includes two programs. The Diploma Program includes 32 hours of undergraduate courses in theology and related subjects. This program does *not* lead to an academic degree. The Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies is a 36 hour *master’s degree* program that is designed to offer graduate level theological courses related to diaconal ministry. Both the Diploma and the MAPS programs include pastoral courses as well as academic courses. Each academic course meets one evening per week. Pastoral courses are offered one Saturday (half day) each month.

**SPIRITUAL FORMATION:** Spiritual formation sessions are held one Saturday (half day) each month except during June and July. Spiritual formation introduces the inquirer and his wife to the spiritual life of the deacon, prayer forms and practices, and the history of the Church’s spiritual traditions. An annual retreat is also an essential part of the spiritual formation process.

**LOCATION:** All classes meet at the University of St. Thomas School of Theology at St. Mary Seminary unless otherwise noted.

**WIVES:** Spouses are required to participate in all spiritual formation sessions and pastoral formation classes which are held on one Saturday per month (all months except June and July), as well as the annual retreat. Wives are encouraged but not required to participate in the academic courses for credit and/or audit. Those wives who desire to take academic and pastoral courses for credit and who do not have the requisite theological and philosophical grounding will be required to participate in the prerequisite courses.

**CANDIDATE MINISTRY:** Aspirants/Candidates are expected to have been involved in non-liturgical parochial ministry and will be expected to remain active in at least one non-liturgical ministry throughout the term of the diaconate formation program. The specific ministry assignment will be monitored and directed by the diaconate formation staff.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** At the time of application, those seeking admission to the diaconate formation program must meet the following standards:

- Be a fully initiated Catholic – baptized and confirmed
- Have a vibrant and living Catholic faith as evidenced in daily life
- If a convert, must have been received into the Catholic Church for at least five years
- If married, be in a valid sacramental marriage for at least five years
- Have a stable marriage and family life
- Have the support of his wife and children
- Have a high school education, GED or higher degree
- Be in good physical and psychological health
- Be sponsored by a parish in which the applicant has been a member for at least five years
- Be involved in non-liturgical parish ministry
- The applicant's age must be between 31 and 57 years.

**DEMONSTRATED HISTORY OF SERVICE:** Those selected to become aspirants will be individuals with a history of service in the Church beyond altar ministries. Serving as Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion and other roles of liturgical ministry, while important, are not the primary consideration for admission; works of charity must also be included. It must always be remembered that formation for the diaconate does not make a servant. One must first be a servant to be a genuine deacon.

**BILINGUAL LANGUAGE SKILLS:** Due to the needs of the archdiocese, those with bilingual skills in Spanish or other languages prevalent in the archdiocese will be accorded a priority in the admissions process. Due to the fact that most communication with the Chancery is in English, some English proficiency is expected; however, classes are now offered in English and Spanish.

**IMPEDIMENTS.** Canonical prohibitions which can lead to denial of admission to Aspirancy include:

- Insanity, diagnosed mental illness or addiction;
- Commission of apostasy, heresy, or schism;
- Being ordained or in perpetual vows as a member of a religious order;
- Being married outside of the church or being in an invalid marriage;
- Commission of voluntary homicide;
- Performing, financing, procuring, or cooperating in an abortion;
- Attempting suicide;
- Self-mutilation including vasectomy or tubal ligation;
- Impersonation of an ordained minister;
- Involvement in any activity that would be unbecoming to the clerical state or that would bring scandal to the Church.

Note that Catholics are required to report impediments of those seeking admission to formation or ordination. Should any of these impediments pertain to someone who is considering applying for admission to formation for the diaconate (or to his spouse), they should discuss the circumstances of the possible impediment with the Director of Admission & Scrutinies or the Director of the Permanent Diaconate before applying.

**ADMISSION:** The admission of aspirants to the formation process for the permanent diaconate involves a rigorous process of application, interview, scrutiny, evaluation, discernment and the successful completion of the prerequisite courses. The goal of this process is to discern which men are called by the Church to a vocation of permanent ordained service to the Church. The process includes the following steps:

- Contacting the Office of the Permanent Diaconate for an initial inquiry
- Attend Informational Meeting explaining the process
- Submitting the written application and spouse's application
- Obtain letters of recommendation from the pastor and others
- Review of application materials and possible impediments, followed by an invitation to interview or a formal decline of the application
- Administration of the Deacon Perceiver Skills Assessment
- Psychological evaluation of the Inquirer and his spouse
- Behavior Assessment interview of the applicant and his spouse
- Admission to Aspirancy. Note that Aspirancy is a one year period of formal discernment prior to the admission to Candidacy for the diaconate.

For more information contact (English/Spanish):

Deacon Dominic Romaguera  
Director of Admission and Scrutinies  
713-654-5723  
[dominic@SMSeminary.com](mailto:dominic@SMSeminary.com)

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston  
Office of the Permanent Diaconate  
9845 Memorial Drive  
Houston, TX 77024