1154 Formation and Continuing Education for Deacons

The Division of Clergy Personnel

1154 FORMATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR DEACONS

1154.1 General Principles

- **The Necessity of Ongoing Formation and Education:** The preordination formation and education of a deacon prepares him for some of the demands placed on him in his early years of diaconate. It does not, however, fully prepare him for responsibilities he may be asked to assume as additional challenges and opportunities for service are presented.
- To keep pace, growth opportunities need to be available for the development of deacons to meet the increasing challenges in their respective ministries.
- Continuing education and ongoing formation offerings are designed to prepare deacons for more effective service in current assignments and to provide opportunities for deacons to increase their theological knowledge and pastoral skills for more challenging and satisfying work in ministry.
- Continuing education and ongoing formation should lead to growth in all four pillars of formation – Spiritual, Human, Intellectual, and Pastoral – in order to foster a well–rounded approach to ministry. In

addition, they should enhance essential prayer habits as a foundation of spiritual awareness and health.

1154.2 Ongoing Formation

1154.2.1 Required Elements

Deacons are expected to devote 20 hours annually to continuing formation. Participation in workshops or continuing education activities related to the deacon's specific ministry may fulfill some of these-activities, but each deacon is responsible for taking advantage of the programs offered to meet this expectation or promoted by the Ongoing Formation Committee of the Deacon Life and Ministry Board.

Each deacon should make sure he continues to form himself within the four pillars of formation: Spiritual, Human, Intellectual, and Pastoral. Though there are components of all four in each activity, a balance of all is needed.

A deacon should review his continuing formation activities with his supervisor on a yearly basis.

1154.2.2 Convocation and Day of Enrichment

It is part of the meaning of ordination that a man is brought into the Order or body of ordained ministers. A communal element is thus essential to ordination and to the exercise of ordained ministry. The mutual support and fraternity of deacons are not just sociologically or psychologically useful; they are integral to the meaning and fulfillment of their vocation.

In an effort to foster the community, support, and fraternity aspects of diaconal ministry to one another, the Board will sponsor a "Deacon Convocation" in every even-numbered year and a "Deacon Day of Enrichment" in every odd-numbered year. These gatherings are designed to provide time for common prayer, fellowship, support, reflection on, and celebration of the call to diaconal ministry. These gatherings should also provide inspiration, formation, and information to help deacons more effectively fulfill their call to ministry.

1154.2.3 Retreat

Spiritual renewal is fundamental to the full realization of the diaconal call to service and ministry. Retreats play a significant role in this renewal process. Deacons are to participate in an annual retreat experience to renew their faith and their commitment to ministry.

The Board will sponsor retreats annually for deacons. These will normally be scheduled in the spring or fall of each year. Deacons must participate in at least one Archdiocesan-sponsored deacon retreat every third year. Participation in the Archdiocesan-sponsored retreat does not preclude participation in other retreat opportunities.

Accountability for deacon retreat participation is primarily the responsibility of each deacon. Every deacon is personally responsible to fulfill his annual retreat obligation as well as his required participation in the Archdiocesan-sponsored retreat every third year.

1154.3 Spiritual Formation

Spiritual Formation is a lifelong task for all Christians. As leaders in Christian communities, deacons must be attentive to their spiritual formation. Deacons, by virtue of the Order, have committed themselves to prayer, whether that is Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, or other liturgical and devotional moments.

Simplicity of Life – As disciples of the Lord and called forth from the community, deacons should embrace a simplicity and generosity of life. One’s lifestyle of simplicity coincides with the principles of Christian stewardship. Deacons grow in simplicity of lifestyle through regular and prayerful reflection on their lives.

Spiritual Direction – Each deacon should have a spiritual director with whom he meets regularly to both challenge and encourage his journey of discipleship. The director can further one’s call to simplicity and prayer. The Division of Clergy Personnel maintains a list of available spiritual directors.

Retreat – The requirement for an annual retreat (4.2.3) is an essential part of a deacon's ongoing spiritual formation.

1154.4 Human Formation

Human Formation aims for the fuller development of one's humanity so that the deacon's humanity can be a bridge for communicating Jesus. Of special importance is the capacity to relate to others which is fundamental for a person called to be in service for the community. The whole being is involved in formation including the body, mind, and heart: psychological competence, communication skills, maintaining one's physical wellbeing, nurturing healthy relationships, and openness to the arts, sciences, and politics of human life. Integrating all of this and more is essential to becoming a complete and holy person.

Awareness of Self – It is paramount that one has a sense of self and how one is perceived. When individuals are able to see and appreciate their impact in various situations, they can learn from that knowledge. Each deacon will have a periodic review of his ministry as set forth by the Division of Clergy Personnel which will facilitate the process for the deacon.

Awareness of Physical Health – Each deacon should have an annual physical to assure that his health is maintained. Neglect of physical health compromises ministry. Deacons as public persons representing the Church should keep themselves fit since the body is a 'temple to the Lord.' When one's lifestyle is not in moderation, it is difficult to call others to such a balance of life.

Awareness of Life – A deacon must keep himself apprised of the many dimensions of life that affect the people he serves. Life is full of many factors well beyond our control but having knowledge of them allows the deacon to minister more effectively. Some of these are: anthropology (gender differences); sociology (demographics of the area); cultural awareness and competency; fine arts (expressions of human experience); and sciences (shape whole communities).

Awareness of the Other –

Deacon Community:

A deacon's attendance at events to which deacons are invited should be a priority. Those events include but are not limited to convocations, deacon days of enrichment, attendance at deacon funerals, ordinations, Chrism Mass, etc.

The Deacon Convocation and the Deacon Day of Enrichment are essential components of a deacon's human formation. (4.2.2)

Ministry Site:

The deacon, by nature of the Sacrament of Orders, is a visible sign of Christ's Presence. He should be attentive and present to the community even beyond the times the community is gathered for liturgy. These events could include funeral rituals, youth events, social events, fund raising, etc.

Presbyteral Awareness:

By virtue of their ordination, deacons and priests share in the sacrament of Holy Orders. Therefore, deacons should take advantage of the times the presbyterate of the Archdiocese is gathered with them: such as ordinations, Chrism Mass, educational opportunities, area clergy meetings, etc.

Civic Community:

Deacons should take advantage of opportunities to exercise diaconal leadership and presence beyond the ministry site. The deacon is a leaven within society whether at work or in the local community. The deacon may want to serve as a chaplain with the police or fire department. He may want to be on boards of local social outreach endeavors. Canon 278 §3

1154.5 Intellectual Formation

Theology has often been described as 'faith seeking understanding.' The knowledge gained through study and the practical wisdom that comes from experience combine to enhance a deacon's effectiveness in ministry.

- **Study –** Deacons must make themselves available to the many offerings of the Office or local institutions of learning as well as internet learning.
- **Theological Updating –** Deacons must keep themselves well-read beyond their initial formation to know what are today's questions regarding medical moral issues, ecumenism, social justice teachings, etc. Deacons should avail themselves of the many periodicals, journals, and publications that pertain to their ministry.

1154.6 Pastoral Formation

Pastoral formation entails the development of skills and competencies that enable deacons to serve their people well. It is the practical side of theology.

Deacons must always seek to be aware of the new and continuing challenges of the people they serve. They should continue to enhance their pastoral skills by gathering new insights on how to minister and by allowing themselves to be evaluated so that they can continue to be formed.

Those skills include but are not limited to:

- preaching;
- presiding at liturgy;
- proclaiming the word;
- pastoral counseling;
- catechesis;
- cultural awareness and competency;
- learning foreign language skills;
- conflict resolution; and
- parish management.

Each active deacon should schedule 10 hours of the expected 20 hours per year in a program or event that furthers his competency in one or more of the above areas of pastoral ministry.

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