

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT DIACONATE

CHECKLIST FOR PASTORS – SELECTION AND EVALUATION OF INQUIRERS

The *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* notes that the parish is the primary experience of Church for most men making inquiry into a possible vocation to the diaconate. The *Directory* further notes that “...it is the responsibility of this community and, in particular, its pastor, to invite from among its members those who may be qualified to serve as ordained ministers of the Church. Similarly, those church and community agencies that have often carried out the Church’s mission of charity and justice have a unique opportunity to call forth appropriate nominees from among their personnel.” (171) Additionally, “...the inquirer who seeks consideration for ordination to the diaconate needs to enter into dialogue with his parish community. It is the pastor who initially presents him for diaconal formation through a letter that confirms he is a practicing Catholic of good repute and in good standing.” (174)

In order to assist pastors in their consideration of men who may be good candidates for discernment of a possible diaconal vocation, the Office of the Permanent Diaconate has prepared this document, which includes material from the *Directory* as well as material adapted from similar documents used in other (arch)dioceses. The Deacon Personnel Board and the entire diaconal community here in the Diocese of Rochester are most grateful for the prayerful, collaborative and meaningful support offered by our pastors, especially in the area of identifying and encouraging men who may consider discerning a vocation to the permanent diaconate.

The Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons and The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States both indicate “certain behavioral patterns have been discerned among exemplary deacons,” and certain spiritual and evangelical qualities that may demonstrate a vocation.

a. **Behavioral Patterns** (*National Directory* 166)

- i. A natural inclination of service to all in need.
- ii. Psychological integrity.
- iii. A capacity for dialogue, which implies a sense of flexibility and openness.
- iv. The ability to share one’s faith yet be tolerant of other points of view.
- v. The capacity to listen carefully, and non-judgmentally – respecting people in the context of their religion, race, gender, ethnicity or culture.
- vi. Good communication skills.
- vii. A sense of responsibility that includes the fulfilling of one’s word and completing one’s work.
- viii. Self-directed.
- ix. Balanced and prudent judgment.
- x. Generosity in service.
- xi. The ability to lead, motivate, facilitate and animate others into appropriate action and service.

b. **Spiritual and Evangelical Qualities** (*National Directory 167*)

- i. A sound faith.
- ii. A good Christian reputation.
- iii. Active involvement in ministry.
- iv. Personal integrity, maturity and holiness.
- v. Regular participation in the Church's sacramental life.
- vi. Evidence of a recognized, ongoing commitment to the Church's life and service.
- vii. Participation in faith enrichment opportunities (e.g. retreats, days of recollection, adult education programming).
- viii. A positive and stable marriage (or a mature celibate life).
- ix. Active membership in a parish community.
- x. A capacity for obedience and fraternal communion.
- xi. A deep spirituality and prayerful life.

Pastors are asked to comment more specifically on the above behavioral patterns and spiritual and evangelical qualities if a man makes formal application, but they are presented here for your consideration. Other considerations, as adapted from similar documents in other formation programs, are listed below.

- Does the inquirer give clear evidence of a solid spirituality and balanced theology?
- Has the inquirer been involved in the life of the parish to a noticeably more active degree than the average lay person in the parish?
- Has the pastor suggested that the inquirer consider the diaconate? If not, is the pastor convinced that the inquirer could effectively serve the Diocese of Rochester as a permanent deacon?
- Is the inquirer's family life stable? Does his wife support his desire to consider diaconal formation? Is she able to participate in the formation program as may be required?
- Are there young children in the family? Serious consideration must be given to family life. If entering the program at this time would hinder family life the inquirer is advised to wait for a more appropriate time.
- Does the inquirer show active involvement in carrying out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?
- Is the inquirer a "reconciling influence" in the parish, and does he work easily with the pastoral staff and parishioners?
- Are his motives appropriate? Does he understand the deacon's configuration to Christ the Servant?
- Can he afford the time in light of family and occupational obligations that the five-year formation program requires?
- Is the inquirer accepting of celibacy if he is not married, or if his wife should predecease or leave him?
- Does he seek to serve without need of constant recognition and coaching?
- Is the pastor willing to take a supportive role in complementing formation efforts?
- Does the inquirer understand that the diaconate is not a right? Does he understand that the Church discerns his vocational call at the same time that he discerns it himself?