

# ASPIRANCY

## I. Description:

- Period following the completion of the initial inquiry/discernment process & admission and selection process
- Inquirers are accepted into the *aspirancy period* by the [arch]bishop
- Corresponds to the *propaedeutic period* required by the *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* of the Congregation for Catholic Education
- It is a time to discern the capability and readiness for eventual selection into the *candidate period of formation*
- Will provide the opportunity for a thorough discernment of a diaconal vocation and include the following components:
  - Initiation into diaconal spirituality
  - Supervised pastoral experiences especially among the poor and marginalized
  - Adequate assessment of the aspirant's potential to be promoted to candidate formation, and ultimately ordination.
  - Be creative of an environment in which a wife can be appropriately prepared to give her consent, and *more essentially* to ascertain her compatibility with her husband's diaconal vocation and eventual ministry

## II. Supporting framework for the Aspirancy Period:

- The *aspirant handbook* which:
  - Details the components of the program
  - Provides a rationale and guidance for assessment
  - Delineates the expectations/responsibilities of the aspirant and those regarding the wife of a married aspirant
- The aspirant path of formation will last **one year**
- The Director of Formation will provide the bishop with **declaration of readiness** for each aspirant that:
  - Profiles the aspirants personality
  - Provides a judgment of suitability for candidate formation and ultimately ordination

## III. Components include:

- Introduction to the study of theology
- Deeper knowledge of the spirituality and ministry of the deacon
- More attentive discernment of aspirant's call
- Time to form an aspirant community (with it's own cycle of meeting and prayer)
- Establishes and ensures the aspirant's regular participation in spiritual direction
- Introduces the aspirant to the pastoral ministries of the [arch]diocesan Church
- Assists the aspirant's family in their support of his formation

#### IV. Dimensions:

**HUMAN** [Goal: to help the deacon develop “his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ.”]

- Time for a married aspirant and his wife to assess the quality of their relationship and consider the ramifications of his possible ordination to the diaconate for their married life
- For the single aspirant, it is a time to discern his capacity and receptivity for celibacy

**SPIRITUAL** [Goal: “**putting on the mind of Christ**,” thereby establishing and nurturing attitudes, habits, and practices that provide a foundation for the development of an authentic and ongoing spiritual life.]

- Aspirant path must:
  - Create an environment in which the individual is encouraged to grow in his personal relationship with Christ and in his commitment to the Church and its mission in the world.
- Includes:
  - Regular celebration of Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, and Reconciliation
  - Scheduled time for private prayer, meditation, *lectio divina*
  - Devotions to Mary and the saints
  - Conferences and workshops on the meaning of authentic obedience; celibacy; simplicity of life, and on Christian witness in both matrimonial and celibate life to the Church and the world
  - An understanding and appreciation of the diaconal vocation, with an ability to articulate this call through the primary ministries of word, liturgy, and charity
  - An introduction and experience of the spiritual writings of our Catholic tradition
- Spiritual direction: a spiritual director approved by the bishop, well-trained and knowledgeable about the diaconate is critical to the formation process
- Parish and Pastor: are collaborators in discerning the readiness of the aspirant to move into candidate formation. Accompany the aspirant and his family through prayers, support and presence
  - **Parish:** primary place to observe the aspirant’s relational skills and his practice in pastoral service
  - **Pastor:** is to provide an assessment of the aspirant and his family
  - **Formators:** utilizing these assessments are to support and challenge the aspirant’s discernment of his readiness to move into candidate formation

**INTELLECTUAL** [Objective: to **communicate a deeper knowledge of the faith and church tradition** than the aspirant has already attained.]

- To promote an in-depth and systematic study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- Introduce the tradition of Catholic philosophy, spirituality, and doctrine (especially doctrinal understanding of the diaconate, and the threefold ministry of the deacon)
- Taught how to participate in Theological Reflection.
- How to develop his ability to apply the Church's teaching on moral matters, including her social teaching, to the pressing moral questions that emerge in pastoral ministry
- Taught to understand *diakonia* as the prescriptive word for the mission of the Church in the world
- Workshops on family issues, personal health, time management, care giving skills, and married and celibate spirituality – will all contribute to the aspirant's human, spiritual, and intellectual formation

**PASTORAL** [Focus: is **ultimately the discernment of the aspirant's gifts for the threefold ministry** of word, liturgy, and charity, and **of his capacity to make a lifelong commitment** to these ministries. It also enables **the assessment of the wife and family** in their readiness to **give consent and support** to his vocation and ministry.]

- Should introduce the aspirant to the practical services provided by the diocesan Church
- Allow an exploration of core issues regarding charity and the social dimension of the Gospel as confronted by the Church (through pastoral placements)
- Mentors (exemplary deacons) should invite the aspirants to accompany, observe, co-minister, and reflect upon the specific diaconal ministries experienced
- Appropriate ecumenical pastoral experiences should be considered and implemented as opportunities emerge. Opportunities for involvement with the Jewish community and with representatives of other religions should also be provided

#### **V. Assessment:**

- Conclusion of the aspirancy path is determined through a **formal assessment** conducted by the *Committee on Admission and Scrutiny*
- Occurs when the **aspirant** with consent of his **spouse** (if married) and the expressed **permission of his formators** makes a written petition to the bishop for admission to candidacy
- At the time of petitioning the following documents are prepared:
  - Personal, handwritten, signed letter requesting admission to the candidacy path of formation, and to receive the Rite of Admission to Candidacy by the aspirant is written
  - A personal, handwritten, and signed letter of consent prepared by the married aspirant's wife
  - Each petitioner will be interviewed by the *Committee on Admission and Scrutiny* to appraise his and her (the wife, if married - her level of consent and support) readiness for nomination into the candidacy path of formation

- A review of all pertinent data on the aspirant will be conducted by the committee
- A vote of each member and the rationale for the vote is to be recorded
- The Director of Formation will prepare “a declaration which outlines the profile of the [aspirant’s personality]... and a judgment of suitability.” Accompanied by the votes and rationale, the declaration is submitted to the bishop for his selection of those to be admitted into candidate formation
- A copy of both the “declaration” and the bishop’s letter to the aspirant regarding his acceptance into candidacy is to be placed in the petitioner’s personal file

**VI. Rite of Admission to Candidacy:**

- Celebrated after admission to candidacy formation
- Does not constitute any right necessarily to receive diaconal ordination
- Public in character and ecclesial significant it is celebrated with special consideration to inclusion of spouses and children, and cultural traditions represented
- Candidates and spouses should prepare themselves for the reception of the rite through a spiritual retreat
- Appropriate documentation (a certificate) should be prepared and archived that the rite was celebrated.