

**THE DIACONATE PROGRAM**  
**of the**  
**POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Diaconate Program of the PNCC divides the sacred work of a deacon into five basic ministries or categories under which all of the functions are listed. That fivefold diaconal ministry within the Church includes:

- 1--Sacramental    2--Liturgical    3--Caring  
4--Teaching    5--Administrative

**SACRAMENTAL MINISTRY**

- 1---Preach the Word of God at Holy Mass, Penitential Services and other paraliturgical services
- 2---Baptize and provide instruction for godparents/sponsors and parents
- 3---Distribute Holy Communion during Holy Mass, to the sick and homebound, and at *A Service of Worship and Holy Communion*
- 4---Hold pre-marital classes and provide some marital counseling only if properly trained to do so

**LITURGICAL MINISTRY**

- 5---Conduct worship services in the absence of a priest
- 6---Serve at Holy Mass and assist the priest
- 7---Assist the Bishop
- 8---Read the Gospel
- 9---Hold wake services (without absolution of the dead) and assist at funerals
- 10---Prepare the church and sanctuary before and after any liturgy
- 11---Help the choir prepare for any liturgical and paraliturgical services
- 12---Train lectors
- 13---Train altar servers
- 14---Bless homes during the Epiphany season and bless Easter food on Holy Saturday

**CARING MINISTRY**

- 15---Set a good example for others by confirming with deeds what is preached
- 16---Minister to the sick (without Anointing)
- 17---Minister to the youth
- 18---Minister to the aged
- 19---Minister to the troubled
- 20---Minister to the widows
- 21---Help with works of charity in the parish and in the local community

**TEACHING MINISTRY**

- 22---Teach religion to youth and/or adult groups
- 23---Teach First Holy Communion catechism
- 24---Teach Confirmation catechism
- 25---Teach School of Christian Living classes
- 26---Lead a Bible study
- 27---Speak with potential members
- 28---Instruct new members of the parish about the Church
- 29---Give presentations at parish, seniorate and diocesan events; conventions of church societies; youth retreats, etc.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS**

- 30-Lead the faithful to God
- 31-Be the Bishop's advance person for Confirmations, diocesan Holy Masses, clergy funerals, special services, etc.
- 32-Assist in coordinating seniorate services and programs
- 33-Assist with the administrative matters of a parish
- 34-Serve at parishes on an as-needed basis
- 35-Assist with evangelism on parish, seniorate and diocesan levels

## **TRADITIONAL RESTRICTIONS**

According to the historical tradition of the Church, certain functions cannot be performed by a deacon. A deacon:

- 1--Cannot offer Holy Mass
- 2--Cannot impart absolution
- 3--Cannot hear confession
- 4--Cannot anoint the sick
- 5--Cannot perform matrimony
- 6--Cannot do any functions a priest cannot do
  - a--Cannot consecrate things with Holy Oil
  - b--Cannot confirm anyone
  - c--Cannot ordain anyone

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

### ***Biblical***

"Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons." (1 Timothy 3:8-10)

### ***Personal***

In addition to the biblical qualifications above, a candidate for the Diaconate Program in the PNCC must be:

- ◆ Male and at least 25 years of age at the time of applying for enrollment into the program
- ◆ A member of the PNCC in good standing for at least the last five years in the same parish—being active in the sacramental, religious and social life of that parish and being current with church dues and all other church financial obligations
- ◆ A high school graduate, who is able to read, write and speak in English
- ◆ A resident in the United States who has a place of residence, a self-sufficient income and adequate health care insurance (an applicant from the Canadian Diocese must be a resident of Canada)

## **APPLICATION FOR ENROLLMENT**

Applicants to the Diaconate Program are required to complete an Application for Enrollment. Applications are available from the local Pastor or the Parish Committee. They may also be obtained by calling, or writing to, or e-mailing one of the following people: The Diocesan Bishop, the Admissions Board Chairperson or the Faculty Board Chairperson. The application will show the address where it may be sent when it is completed.

## **INTERVIEW**

After completing the *Application for Enrollment* and attaching all of the necessary documents, the applicant must undergo a personal interview by the Diocesan Bishop and/or the Admissions Board. Among the things the interviewer(s) will ask the applicant are whether he:

- ◆ Has received Baptism, Confirmation, Penance and Holy Eucharist as well as proper catechesis applicable to those Sacraments
- ◆ Is in reasonably good health (physically, mentally and spiritually), practices overall good personal hygiene, displays a compassionate attitude and is willing to deal patiently with all people
- ◆ Is married and his marriage has been blessed by the Church
- ◆ Has the calling, faith and commitment to serve as a deacon
- ◆ Is willing to commit at least four hours a week to preparation and study for the Diaconate

## **CONDITIONS PRIOR TO ORDINATION**

Prior to ordination to the Diaconate the candidate is required to:

- ◆ Undergo a background investigation for any serious impediments to ordination to the Diaconate
- ◆ If deemed necessary by the Diocesan Bishop, undergo psychological testing or provide additional evidence of fitness prior to the elevation or ordination to any Order
- ◆ Successfully complete every course, all requirements and examinations in the Diaconate Program to the satisfaction of the Diocesan Bishop and the Faculty Board
- ◆ Receive the approval of the Diocesan Bishop for ordination
- ◆ Refrain from wearing the clerical collar and garb except during the performance of his ministry

## **SPIRITUAL RETREAT**

As part of the application process the applicant must participate in a spiritual retreat conducted by the Admissions Board.

## **ACCEPTANCE**

Enrollment into the Diaconate Program is decided by the Admissions Board with the concurrence of the Diocesan Bishop.

## **PROGRAM CURRICULA**

There are specific courses and practica a candidate must successfully complete before becoming eligible for ordination to the Diaconate in the PNCC. Those courses are combined to form the following seven curricula:

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>I.</b> Biblical Studies | <b>II.</b> Liturgy        |
| <b>III.</b> Theology       | <b>IV.</b> Ministry       |
| <b>V.</b> Spirituality     | <b>VI.</b> Church History |
| <b>VII.</b> Homiletics     |                           |

Each curriculum includes courses that a candidate will take to gain the academic knowledge and the practical competency necessary for the Diaconate. The courses are developed to prepare the student for every function of the fivefold ministry of a deacon. The courses are outlined below.

Instructors must be mindful that every candidate is a part-time student who is committed to at least four hours per week for instruction and study. Generally, 26 hours are planned for each semester course with some requiring more time, some less. Therefore, 104 hours are available for every six-month semester, which means the Faculty Board has 104 hours to divide among the courses offered for each semester.

To qualify as a candidate for ordination as a deacon, every course and every course requirement must be completed and passed. A comprehensive examination is the final requirement that the student must pass for each course. Students are expected to complete all of the requirements and courses for the Diaconate Program three years from the date of enrollment in the first semester.

If the student has received adequate prior instruction in any course, the requirement to complete that course may be waived by the Diocesan Bishop and the Faculty Board officers. The student must make a written request to the Diocesan Bishop with a copy to the Faculty Board Chairperson for the waiver. The student must submit evidence of prior instruction in a course with his waiver request. The Bishop and the Faculty Board officers will either render a decision or request an interview with the student and then make a decision. Before allowing a waiver the Bishop and the Board officers may require the student to successfully complete the comprehensive exam for the course in question.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

The requirements for each course may include any of the following: Periodic exams conducted throughout the semester, which may be oral, written or both; directed reading and writing; writing reports or essays; viewing videotapes or listening to audiotapes; oral presentations or sermons; independent study; participating in a seminar or workshop; working in the field through a practicum; a spiritual retreat; a comprehensive examination.

A comprehensive examination is the final requirement that the student must pass for each course. It may be oral, written or both at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop and the Faculty Board officers. Comprehensive exams should be able to show that the student has a good understanding of the overall subject matter and adequate knowledge to communicate that understanding.

## **COURSE INSTRUCTION**

The program of study set forth for ordination to the Diaconate is designed to prepare men for ministry as deacons in the PNCC. Studies are pursued under the general supervision of the Diocesan Bishop and Faculty Board, with personal guidance offered by an assigned mentor.

Courses will be taught in six-month semesters in order to provide enough time for flexibility in the student's schedule, but more importantly to provide enough hours for instruction and study in each course. The entire Diaconate Program should be completed in six semesters, which is three years.

Teaching methods include the conventional classroom method, linked studies, practica in the field, special topic seminars and hands-on workshops. The predominant method involves distance learning: Directed reading and writing, independent study, videotaped and/or audio-taped instruction. With the proliferation of personal computers, teaching may also be done via the internet. Regular contact will be kept between each student and the instructor by telephone or by written correspondence, which includes e-mail.

### ***Classroom Time***

Although conventional classroom time will be limited, it will be an important part of the program of instruction. Instructors may schedule generally one or two days of classroom time per course. If there is negligible travel time for the instructor and student(s), classes may meet more often. The number of daylight or evening hours for face-to-face teaching will depend upon what days are available to both the instructor and the student(s). Instructors will take into consideration the family and work obligations of every student before classroom time is scheduled. The final decision on how much classroom time is required for each course will rest with the Diocesan Bishop and the Faculty Board. The dynamics of personal interaction between teacher and student are critical to the educative process. Therefore the quality, not the quantity, of classroom time will need to be ensured in the planning and development of course instruction.

## ***Distance Learning***

Since most of the candidates in the Diaconate Program are expected to be true part-time students, and because faculty will be spread throughout the diocese, classroom time will be limited. Distance learning, which includes independent study, will comprise most of the course work. Such learning will also ensure flexibility for the student and practicality for the faculty. Distance learning is the method of education by which students will receive a specified timetable of directed reading and writing assignments. They may also receive videotaped and audio-taped instruction. Videotapes and audiotapes may be produced by the faculty. They may also be produced commercially and purchased by the diocese when the subject matter is found to fit the course outline.

Independent study is the method of education by which students will be given a topic for research and guidelines to conduct a self-motivated study and personal reflection of that topic. It is not limited to just the writing of research papers. The requirements for an independent study are limited only by the creativity of the instructor and are subject to the review and approval of the Faculty Board.

Through distance learning and independent study the student will be able to learn at his own pace and according to his own timetable each week. For those weeks he is unable to study, he will be expected to make the necessary adjustments in his schedule to make up the lost time on his own. The faculty and mentor will monitor his progress and commitment to learning.

## ***Seminars and Workshops***

The Faculty Board will plan occasional seminars and workshops for all of the students to attend together. Seminars and workshops will involve more than one instructor teaching lessons that form an interrelationship among their respective subjects. Such programs will be used to satisfy requirements in several different courses at the same time. These special programs will help build relationships between students and instructors on individual and group levels that should stimulate theological reflection and deepen the commitment of students to their vocation.

Seminars will be planned around either selected issues in theology or special topics related to the diaconal ministry. In each seminar two or more instructors will present papers, which will be provided to students in advance for reading and reflection. The instructors will then lead the students in a discussion of each paper. They will then discuss the interrelationship among the papers and how they relate to the diaconal ministry.

Workshops will be geared more towards hands-on learning of functions and skills necessary to the diaconal ministry. Two or more instructors will present the theory behind certain aspects of the diaconal ministry, then engage the students in the discussion of actual cases to facilitate an understanding of the theory. They will then place the students in simulated circumstances or in mock settings for the practice of skills, ritual and other functions a deacon will use in his work.

## ***Practicum -- Work in the Field***

A practicum will also be developed by the Faculty Board for some of the courses. A practicum is supervised training in the field, where the student learns to put theory into practice. Some courses will have more practica planned than others, while some practica will be used for several different courses at the same time. Each practicum will, in effect, be designed to give the student simulated or practical experience for virtually every function and ministry related to the Order of Deacon. Thus, the practica will enable students to achieve a higher level of competency for the diaconal ministry.

Most practica will be offered at the parish where the student is a member. Therefore, the Pastor or Parish Administrator will most likely serve as the instructor who will train the student and supervise the practical experience that the student will get in his work at the parish. The Faculty Board and mentor will monitor the progress and ability of the student, while the Diocesan Bishop and the Faculty Board will monitor the training and supervision given by the instructor.

## ***Linked Courses***

Some courses will be linked to others in regard to the completion of assignments. For example, students will learn how to prepare a homily or sermon in Homiletics and use what they are learning in Biblical Studies, Theology, Liturgy or Church History for content. The Homiletics instructor will evaluate the homily and then submit it in writing to the instructor of the linked course. The student may then receive credit in both Homiletics and the course linked by the homily.

## **MINOR ORDERS**

The progression of Minor Orders and the academic semesters for the Diaconate Program are integrated. The candidate is eligible for elevation to an Order after completing and passing the courses designated for that Order and the approbation of the Diocesan Bishop. He must also demonstrate an aptitude for the ministry associated with each Order. If it is ever difficult to schedule with the Diocesan Bishop a time and place for the conferral of any Order, then the conferral of any one or more of the Orders may be delayed until a time is decided by the Bishop. The Orders may then be given all on the same date. However, delays for the elevation to any Order will not keep the candidate from continuing his course work from one semester to the next without delay.

The Minor Orders conferred by the Bishop are:

1--Porter    2--Reader    3--Blessor  
4--Acolyte    5—Subdeacon

Preceding the Minor Orders is the simple ceremony of Tonsure. After the candidate is prepared and approved for the first Minor Order of Porter, Tonsure will be conducted immediately before he is elevated to Porter.

The candidate's successful completion of all the courses for any semester will make him eligible for the conferral of the Order integrated with that semester. The following is an outline of the courses integrated with each Order in each semester.

### ***Enrollment***

Once the candidate is enrolled in the Diaconate Program, he will be assigned his first courses of the first semester. The courses leading to Tonsure and the first Minor Order of Porter are:

Biblical Studies 1	Liturgy 1
Ministry 1	Spirituality 1 with Practicum

### ***Porter***

Upon his elevation to Porter, the candidate will begin the second semester with these courses:

Biblical Studies 2	Liturgy 2
Theology 1	Spirituality 2 with Practicum
Homiletics 1 with Practicum	

### ***Reader***

Having become a Reader, the candidate now starts the third semester with the following courses:

Biblical Studies 3	Liturgy 3
Ministry 2 with Practicum	Spirituality 3 with Practicum
Theology 2	

### ***Blessor***

Following elevation to Blessor, the candidate continues with the fourth semester and these courses:

Biblical Studies 4	Liturgy 4
Ministry 3 with Practicum	Spirituality 4 with Practicum
Homiletics 2 with Practicum	

## ***Acolyte***

Upon elevation to Acolyte, the candidate embarks on his fifth semester and the following courses:

Biblical Studies 5	Liturgy 5
Theology 3	Spirituality 5 with Practicum
Homiletics Link 1	Church History 1

## ***Sub-deacon***

What was once considered the first Major Order is now conferred as the last Minor Order. As a Subdeacon the candidate takes his last step to the Diaconate. In the sixth and final semester the candidate completes his synthesis of academic and practical learning while finishing the following courses:

Ministry 4 with Practicum	Liturgy Practica
Theology 4	Spirituality 6 with Practicum
Homiletics Link 2	Church History 2

## ***Deacon***

Having successfully completed every course and all of the requirements and examinations in the Diaconate Program, the candidate is presented to the Diocesan Bishop for final approval and ordination.

## **CONTINUATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

If the candidate attains the Order of Deacon and believes his calling is even higher, he must apply to Savonarola Theological Seminary in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in order to become a priest in the PNCC.

## **CLERICAL COLLAR AND GARB**

Candidates will not be issued, nor will they be permitted to wear, a clerical collar and garb until after they have received Tonsure and the Order of Porter. Furthermore, a cleric or deacon may only wear his clerical collar and garb while performing a function of his ministry.

## **REMUNERATION**

The deacon will not be paid a salary or benefits from the parish, diocese or General Church. All deacons are to receive remuneration for all extraordinary expenses related to their functions, service and ministry. Remuneration is to be paid through the arrangements made by the Diocesan Bishop, the diocese and/or the parishes being served. This includes reimbursement for traveling costs at the mileage rate established by the diocese. Remuneration does not include the cost of purchasing clerical garb, nor does it include reimbursement for the purchase of items for personal enrichment or private use. The parish and individuals being served or ministered to by a deacon are not prohibited from offering a stipend or gifts to that deacon out of free will.

## **SUPERVISION**

Once a candidate is ordained a deacon, he will receive his assignments from the Diocesan Bishop. He may then begin to exercise the faculties of his sacred office. All deacons will remain under the authority and general supervision of the Diocesan Bishop. Deacons will be directly supervised by the Pastor or Parish Administrator of the parish they serve. Under those levels of supervision, deacons may administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Word of God, distribute Holy Communion and perform all the other functions of the diaconal office.

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