

CONTINUING FORMATION POLICY FOR DEACONS

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

Introduction

The Church expects that each deacon will take seriously his personal responsibility to continue his development and formation beyond ordination. Continuing development and formation remains the lifelong responsibility of the individual deacon. The diocese and the parish or institution he serves will support him in that responsibility.

A deacon's continuing formation activity must include the elements of study, prayer, and community. Building on his formation process prior to ordination, he is expected to continue to develop new skills and sharpen present talents following ordination. The needs of the people of God call for qualified servants. Those ministering in the church today must pursue a regular schedule of on-going development.

A deacon makes such a commitment in his Agreement for Diaconal Ministry:

"I agree that I will pursue my continuing development and formation as outlined in the Continuing Formation Policy for Deacons."

General Guidelines

1. Active deacons in the Diocese of Green Bay are expected to complete a minimum of 20 hours of continuing formation each year. Retired deacons and deacons on medical leave are encouraged to continue involvement with the diaconate community and with continued formation as their situation allows.
2. The diaconate department will provide periodic diaconate gatherings and the annual Diaconate Congress. Since these events are diaconate focused and include elements of prayer, study and community sharing, every effort should be made to have these events be the foundation of the deacon's continuing formation. The deacon is also encouraged to pursue other courses, seminars, workshops, and independent study to enhance his ministry and spirituality.
3. The spouse of a deacon is encouraged to participate in all diaconate community events and to pursue her own continuing personal and spiritual formation.
4. An annual report of continuing formation efforts by each deacon is to be submitted to the diaconate department office by January 31st for the preceding year. A reporting form will be provided. Deacons are encouraged to keep an ongoing log of their continuing formation activities during the course of the year to facilitate the completion of the annual report.
5. A deacon has access to an annual continuing formation allowance from his parish as set forth by Diocesan policy.

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Types of Programs

1. In addition to the Diaconate Congress and other gatherings, a variety of possibilities may be included to fulfill the minimum 20 hours per year. This could include workshops, seminars, academic courses, specially designed programs for personal study, etc. Well-rounded continuing formation should address human, intellectual, spiritual, pastoral, and diaconal vocation dimensions over time.
2. Topical areas which may be pursued over time include scripture, theology, Christian ethics, spirituality, liturgy, homiletics, catechetics, behavioral sciences, social justice issues, pastoral skills, evangelization, administrative skills, communication skills, etc.
3. In addition, consideration may also be given to personal, theological and spiritual growth through books, professional journals, audio and video materials, discussion and sharing groups, and other resources.

Spiritual

1. It is recommended that every deacon have a spiritual director and that they receive regular spiritual direction.
2. All deacons are expected to make an annual retreat. Spouses are strongly encouraged to participate in an annual retreat. Diaconate community retreats are provided that focus on topics of interest to the diaconate and provide opportunities to experience diaconal community within the retreat. Deacons may also utilize any of the retreat houses in the area for retreats designed for the individual or offered for various groups.

Accountability

1. Each deacon is responsible for developing his own personal continuing formation plan and sharing that plan as requested with the Diaconate Director. The deacon should consult with his pastor/parish director (or supervisor of his ministry assignment if assigned to ministry outside the parish setting) regarding his continuing formation needs and share the plans he has developed for continued formation.
2. The Diaconate Director will review each deacon's continuing formation report annually and make recommendations as needed.
3. Deacons who are behind in their continuing formation commitment two years in a row will meet with the Diaconate Director to review the status of their continuing formation and to develop a plan to meet the requirements. Longer lapses in the continuing formation may be reviewed with the Bishop to determine the status of the deacon's assignment and faculties.