

Diocese of Cheyenne
Accompaniment Program and Post-Ordination Formation
Norms for Newly Ordained Deacons

Accompaniment Program

Several documents point to a critical need for the ongoing formation of permanent deacons following ordination. (cf. *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*; *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*; *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*; and *Diocese of Cheyenne - Directory Concerning Personnel Issues of Permanent Deacons*) An essential component of this ongoing formation is the accompaniment of newly ordained deacons by a deacon mentor, his pastor, and a spiritual director. These individuals assist the new deacon to grow into his ministry in a healthy and effective fashion.

DEACON MENTOR:

A critical component of ongoing formation is experienced deacon mentors who are willing to accompany the newly ordained deacon and his family for two years following ordination, in a relationship that can be extended if both parties agree. The Diocesan Director of Deacon Personnel will work with each newly ordained deacon to find and assign him a mentor. In addition to the new deacon's ministry, consideration must be given to the spiritual health and well-being of his family. As such, the deacon mentor is charged with maintaining an awareness of the new deacon's family, and their integration and acceptance of his ministry into their lives. Normally, the new deacon will schedule a meeting with his mentor within the first three-months of ordination and schedule regular meetings or phone calls, thereafter, as outlined below.

The deacon mentor will work to build a relationship of trust and mutual respect with the new deacon and will help the new deacon reflect upon his ministerial experiences. The mentor should offer suggestions and techniques, to help develop a habit of prayerful reflection. In addition, the mentor will work with the new deacon to help him integrate well into the diaconal life of the Diocese. The mentor's responsibilities are outlined in APPENDIX A: *ROLE OF THE MENTOR DEACON*.

PASTOR OR PRIEST SUPERVISOR:

The Pastor's main responsibility is to introduce the new deacon to the various aspects of pastoral ministry, particularly regarding diaconal service to the Word, the Altar, and Charity. He will instruct and help form the new deacon in the pastoral practice of the parish and the Diocese. The pastor should help a new deacon to develop the skills necessary for collaborative ministry, effective staff interaction, and pastoral planning in the context of parish life.

The new deacon and his pastor will work together to clearly define the deacon's ministries, duties and responsibilities, both in the parish and in the wider community. The pastor is responsible for working with the new deacon to draft a ministry agreement, which is found in Appendix A of the *Diocese of Cheyenne Directory Concerning Personnel Issues of Permanent Deacons*. With awareness that the new deacon must prioritize his responsibilities to his family and secular job,

the new deacon and his pastor will mutually agree upon the duties and expectations contained in the agreement. Within three months of being assigned to a parish, the ministry agreement should be completed. The new deacon is to submit copies to the chancellor and the Director of Deacon Personnel, with other copies being retained by him and his pastor. In drafting the agreement, any areas of contention that cannot be worked out should be brought to the Director of Deacon Personnel for resolution.

The new deacon's pastor is responsible for his professional growth and increased knowledge and comfort with liturgical duties. Suggested study topics, assignments, and practica can be found in APPENDIX B: *PROFESSIONAL GROWTH – ROLE OF THE PASTOR*.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR:

The new deacon will find a spiritual director within the first six-months of ordination or arrange to continue with the spiritual director used during formation. He should meet with his spiritual director monthly if possible. If a deacon is married, it is good for his wife to secure a spiritual director as well, preferably one different from her husband's. The spiritual director should cultivate a relationship of trust and confidentiality with the new deacon. The spiritual director offers feedback and guidance regarding the new deacon's spiritual life, and their conversations are privileged. The spiritual director is a neutral party, who is a listener and guide with no authority except that which grows out of the ongoing relationship with the new deacon.

Suggestions for what might be included in this relationship are outlined in APPENDIX C: *ROLE OF THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR*.

Post-Ordination Formation

The Diocese of Cheyenne is to provide five years of post-ordination accompaniment, formation, and continuing education for newly ordained deacons. In addition to accompanying the new deacon with a deacon mentor, spiritual director and the guidance of his pastor, the Diocese provides continuing formation for all deacons as set forth in the *Diocese of Cheyenne – Directory Concerning Personnel Issues of Permanent Deacons*.

Below is presented the program design and curriculum to be addressed in the five years immediately following diaconal ordination. This curriculum will be tailored specifically to address the needs of the newly ordained as their spirituality and ministry mature with time and experience.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE:

During the five years following ordination, new deacons are required to meet four times annually for formal post-ordination formation under the direction of the Director of Deacon Personnel working in consultation with the Permanent Deacon's Council. Two of these four meetings will necessitate participants meet in person, with the remaining sessions being remote if possible. Deacon's wives are welcome to attend the gatherings, and an effort will be made to provide them with opportunities for spiritual and intellectual growth as well.

Typically, post-ordination formation sessions will span a weekend, beginning Saturday morning with prayer and ending Sunday afternoon. The celebration of the Eucharist will normally be incorporated into each day, as will opportunities for reconciliation when possible. To further

intellectual, spiritual, human, and pastoral formation, these weekends will include a minimum of two sessions from the various curriculum listed in APPENDIX D - SAMPLE CURRICULUM AND MEETING STRUCTURE FOR DIACONAL POST-ORDINATION FORMATION. These sessions will include opportunities for open discussion. The format is intended to foster dialogue and discussion which are critically important to the formation process. The open discussion periods should provide a comfortable and privileged environment wherein the men and their wives can consider problems, issues and concerns they have encountered, and share personal experience and best practices.

Saturday evenings will normally include an opportunity for social interaction and a forum to address ministerial, personal, and current events confronting individuals, the Diocese, and the Universal Church. This part of the session is intended to provide the opportunity to strategically think through and respond to initiatives and concerns within the diocese or the local parish. Saturdays will formally conclude with a Holy Hour, Adoration and Benediction.

The Sunday session will be scheduled around the local Sunday celebration of Eucharist. These Sunday sessions will focus on protocols and approaches to ministry, liturgical practica, and include a forum for homiletic practice and critique.

In addition to post-ordination formation gatherings, newly ordained deacons are required to be present at fall and winter Diocesan institutes, the annual deacons' retreat, and participate in spiritual and clergy days as addressed in the *Diocese of Cheyenne – Directory Concerning Personnel Issues of Permanent Deacons*. Deacons may be excused from clergy gatherings for sufficient reason or serious conflicts with secular employment. However, it should be remembered these gatherings encourage fraternity among new deacons, their wives, and their more experienced brother deacons and wives, together with our priests. Also, the gatherings provide ongoing spiritual, human, intellectual, and pastoral growth.

Finally, because the deacon may preside at the Sacraments of Baptism or Matrimony, or at funeral rites outside of Mass, he is strongly encouraged to pursue additional education and formation related to his ministerial and liturgical roles. This should include 'certification' in such disciplines as the annulment process and guiding the faithful through sacramental preparation that might also include FOCCUS, 'Better Together' or NFP facilitation, and the post marriage accompaniment norms established for the Diocese.

SUMMARY:

All parties in this dynamic process should recognize the critical importance of the deacon mentor, pastor, and the Ministry Agreement. This process is intended to define the deacon's dual responsibility to family and Holy Orders before conflicts become troublesome. Every effort should be made to develop positive relationships between the new deacon and his pastor and bishop. The process presented here is intended to build relationships and develop proficiency in ministry.

APPENDIX A

ROLE OF THE DEACON MENTOR:

The new deacon and his mentor will meet every six to eight weeks by phone, video conference, or in person. Face to face meetings are strongly encouraged, at least quarterly. In general, their conversations are privileged. This atmosphere will allow for forthright, honest, and open dialogue.

If a situation arises which causes the mentor to have serious concern for the new deacon's health, happiness, or well-being, the deacon mentor will encourage the new deacon to speak directly with his pastor, the Director of Deacon Personnel, the Bishop, or a professional counselor if appropriate. If the new deacon is unwilling to do so, then the mentor should inform the new deacon that he will speak to the Bishop about the matter.

Their meetings, reflection and discussion should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Family responsibilities as the deacon's first vocational responsibility
- Ministerial experiences
- Personal, professional and ecclesial relationships related to ministry
- Conformance with diocesan policies regarding professional relationships and boundaries
- Safe Environment protocols
- Participation in diocesan events, annual retreats, and days of reflection
- Accompanying families pre- and post-sacramental celebration
- Family issues and how they impact ministry
- Time management and maintaining personal, emotional, and spiritual balance
- Participation in fraternal support
- Physical, spiritual, and mental well-being
- Personal finance in relation to stewardship, tithing, and retirement
- Appropriate attire for specific ministerial and secular situations
- Conflict resolution and problem-solving, including assistance with determining a course of action and identifying expected outcomes

APPENDIX B

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH - ROLE OF THE PASTOR OR PRIEST SUPERVISOR

Because the deacon forms a vital part of the clerical team in any parish and the diocese, it is important that the pastor assist the newly ordained deacon in becoming knowledgeable about the universal, diocesan and parish decrees, directories, statutes, and instructions pertinent to his ministry as contained in:

- Diocesan Administrative Handbook and its Decrees, with its Directives and Instructions
- Diocesan Statutes for Parish Pastoral Councils
- Diocesan Statutes for Parish Finance Councils
- The Diocese of Cheyenne – Directory Concerning Personnel Issues of Permanent Deacons as it pertains to the parish
- Parish practices and protocols

MINISTRY OF WORD AND ALTAR - LITURGY AND DEVOTIONAL PRAYER LIFE: The pastor will also assist the new deacon in developing proficiency regarding sacramental and liturgical celebrations and devotions; including:

- Reviewing the *Diocese of Cheyenne - Liturgical Guidelines for Deacons Assisting at the Eucharist*, General Instruction for the Roman Missal and other diocesan norms to be observed by the deacon
- Setting up and preparing for those Masses the deacon will assist at
- Scheduling, preparation and constructive feedback of homilies
- ‘Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion’ under various situations
- Attending to music, art, environment, and sound pertinent to liturgical celebrations
- Discussing parish norms for Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction
- Leading Stations of the Cross
- Providing Viaticum to the Dying in the absence of the priest
- Preparing for, and celebrating, vigils and funerals, including those celebrated in a funeral home, the Church (within and outside the Mass) and graveside, along with recommendations for meeting with the deceased’s family
- Clarifying expectations and protocol for preparation of and celebration of marriages, including the deacon’s role regarding annulment cases, marriage preparation and Natural Family Planning (NFP)
- Clarifying expectations and protocol when preparing for and celebrating Baptisms, including preparation of godparents

The pastor will also:

- Address those devotions specific to differing cultures within the local setting (e.g., Native American, Hispanic, Anglo, Vietnamese, etc.), Likely devotions would include:
 - Blessing of Homes
 - Blessing of Religious Articles
 - Las Posadas
 - Las Mañanitas (birthday celebration)
 - Blessing of animals, fields/seeds at planting time, or celebrating the Feast of St. Francis
- Help the new deacon evaluate his ministerial experience and offer support, encouragement and guidance as needed to improve ministry style
- Advise the new deacon regarding protocol for assisting at other parishes (delegation etc.)

MINISTRY OF CHARITY: The deacon is most importantly called to be a ‘presence’ of the Church and Jesus Christ in the community working to ensure the common good. As such, the pastor will make sure the newly ordained deacon has a working knowledge of the needs and resources of the local community, and where to make referrals when necessary in pastoral or professional counseling. He will help to identify and address the physical, spiritual, and social justice needs of the larger community; the pastor should encourage the deacon to always be mindful of the seven key principles of Catholic Social Teaching¹:

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person created in the image and likeness of God; redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ
2. Our Call to Family and Community, “Communion for Mission: One Body in Christ, One Paschal Journey”
3. Our Right and Responsibility to Embrace and Protect Life; insuring adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care and employment to all
4. Our Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.
5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers.
6. Solidarity with all People.
7. Care for God’s Creation.

To help the newly ordained Deacon recognize those rights, duties, responsibilities, and opportunities in the local setting, the pastor might suggest:

- Participating in the local Ministerial Association,
- Connecting with Catholic Charities of Wyoming and identifying their role in the local community.

¹ Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching. <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching> Accessed 12/23/2020.

- Becoming familiar with local, state, and civic agencies as well as individual persons who may be of assistance to the newly ordained as he engages in pastoral counseling and helping to provide aid to the needy through:
 - Wyoming Catholic Ministries Foundation
 - St. Joseph's Children's Home
 - Catholic Charities of Wyoming
 - Council of Catholic Women
 - Knights of Columbus
 - Food Bank of the Rockies and local contacts
 - St. Vincent de Paul Society and others
- Assuring that the deacon is current and up to date on policies and procedures related to Safe Environment training and background checks.
- Discussing expectations regarding the deacon's involvement in the parish faith formation program, including youth and adult faith formation, sacramental preparation, instruction and formation of lay ministers; all in keeping with the deacon's ministry agreement and time.

PARISH AND DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION: The Pastor should help the new deacon:

- Become familiar with the physical facility and the responsibilities and duties of helping to maintain the parish complex. Perhaps identifying how he might use his gifts and talents or assist in those endeavors.
- Understand the personnel policies and procedures pertinent to the parish.
- Have a basic understanding of parish and diocesan organizational structures, since parishioner's questions can often be redirected to pertinent personnel at both the parish and diocesan level.
- Be knowledgeable of the purpose and functions of the parish pastoral and financial councils. One or all of the deacons assigned to the parish may be designated by the pastor to serve as ex-officio, voting members of the Pastoral Council.
- Participate in an orientation program for new clergy to become familiar with chancery personnel and operations, and how they interface with parish life.

APPENDIX C

ROLE OF THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR.

The new deacon is encouraged to meet with his spiritual director monthly if possible, or at least every six weeks. It is recommended that the spiritual director be attentive to and help the new deacon with feelings of inadequacy, frustration and being overwhelmed. Likewise, the newly ordained deacon should be challenged to avoid a false sense of his abilities, developing an inflexible or legalistic approach to ministry, as well as overreacting to ministerial experiences.

During these meetings, reflection and direction might include, but are not limited to, helping the new deacon:

- Grow an awareness of the grace of God at work in:
 - The wonder of the newness of ministry
 - The experience of being vulnerable
- Develop his relationship with the Lord as related to:
 - The necessity of daily prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours
 - The centrality of the Word of God
 - Experiences of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist
 - The need for regular confession
 - Charity of life as expressed in “love of neighbor”
 - Awareness of spiritual consolation and desolation

Additionally, the Spiritual Director might:

- Suggest books and other materials in support of the spiritual life
- Help discern appropriate ascetical practices of self-discipline, self-denial and the deacon’s embracing the circumstances of his life
- Discuss ministerial experiences: how and where the Lord is present, and how these experiences can be integrated into an understanding and acceptance of his vocation
- Discuss relational interactions with clergy, parishioners, and the public
- Address issues surrounding chastity, including:
 - Embracing and applying the theology of chastity as an expression of love in one’s life
 - The integration of the new deacon’s ministry and family life
 - Ability to put into practice safe environment training
 - The rationale for celibacy
 - Celibacy if that were to become necessary through the illness or the death of one’s

spouse

- Suggest supportive resources for holistic marital living;
 - World-wide Marriage Encounter, or an equivalent
 - Participation in a couple support group
 - Other retreats, enrichment opportunities and activities as they become available
- Address concerns and issues related to obedience.
- Address lifestyle as it relates to:
 - Showing gratitude and generosity
 - Ability to provide for family while planning for retirement
 - The simplicity of life and avoidance of materialism

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE CURRICULUM AND MEETING STRUCTURE FOR DIACONAL POST-ORDINATION FORMATION²

The Diocese of Cheyenne provides continuing formation for all deacons as set forth in the *Diocese of Cheyenne – Directory Concerning Personnel Issues of Permanent Deacons*.

Below is presented the curriculum and typical program design to be addressed in the five years immediately following diaconal ordination. This curriculum will be tailored specifically to address the needs of the newly ordained as their spirituality and ministry mature with time and experience.

Year I

- Pastoral Handbook: Focus on all parts that refer to Deacons and Clergy
- Pastoral administration, especially in relation to the deacon's role in assuring sacramental paperwork and records are completed, disseminated, and stored appropriately
- Grief counseling and family support at the time of death
- The Baptismal Rite and deacon's role both within and outside of Mass and:
 - Canon law related to the sacrament, including determining canonical qualifications of sponsors (godparents), paperwork, and reporting requirements
 - Developing or assisting with a baptismal preparation program
 - Addressing unique baptism situations, such as emergency baptism, cultural customs, lack of records, baptisms in other religious traditions
- Impromptu blessing and prayers, leading group prayer effectively
- Blessings: forms and types and adapting to specific circumstances
- Liturgical Practicum, including Diocesan norms, assisting at Mass, Rites, settings, music, topics, and discussion as needed, or requested
- Dealing with difficult parishioners, staff, deacons, or pastors
- Introduction to the ministry of 'Inner Healing and Deliverance'
- Homiletic practice and critique
- Discussion of problems or situations the new deacon has encountered
- Current social issues impacting diaconal & married life, ministry, personal life

² Topics to be covered and the order of coverage along with instructors will be tailored to each ordination class' needs as determined by the directors of deacons, diaconal formation and the respective boards, along with requests from each ordination class.

Year 2

- The Marriage Rite and deacon's role within a nuptial Mass and marriage outside of Mass
- Marriage preparation: Diocesan norms for wedding planning; canon law related to the sacrament with a special focus on dispensations; and instruction on developing or assisting with a marriage preparation program
 - Addressing unique marriage situations and customs
 - Understanding NFP to answer difficult questions and concerns of couples
- Understanding diaconal celibacy and chastity within marriage
- Developing an RCIA program and teaching RCIA classes
- Evangelization and apologetics
- Developing and supporting lay ministries within the parish
- Homiletic practice and critique
- Discussion of problems or situations the new deacon has encountered
- Current social issues impacting diaconal & married life, ministry, and personal life

Year 3

- Unique funeral homilies: death of a child, death through violence, suicide, when the body cannot be recovered
- Conducting committal and rosary in Spanish
- Conducting a memorial service and understanding its relation to a funeral
- Conducting Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals in Spanish
- Difficult funeral situations: disposition of ashes, helping families understand proper eulogy guidelines, other faith traditions
- Vesting the body of a deacon for his funeral
- Training liturgical ministers: altar servers, lectors, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion
- Sacramental preparation, devotions, youth and adult faith formation
- Tips and techniques for effective public speaking
- The impromptu homily or presentation
- Homiletic practice and critique
- Discussion of problems or situations the new deacon has encountered
- Current social issues impacting diaconal & married life, ministry, and or personal life

Years 4 & 5 will address newly developing needs and/or shortcomings from years 1-3.

SUGGESTED POST-ORDINATION FORMATION SCHEDULE

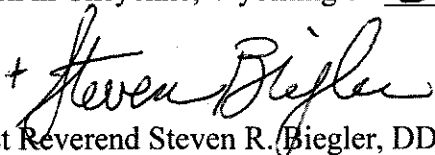
SATURDAY:

- 10:00 – Morning Prayer & Announcements etc.
- 10:30 – Session 1: Topic from Curriculum
- 12:00 – Lunch with discussion of Session 1
- 1:30 – Session 1: Topic from Curriculum – *continued*- and wrap-up discussion.
- 3:30 – Evening Prayer, Sacrament of Reconciliation, free time
- TBD – Eucharist – if not celebrated Sunday
- 6:30 – Supper followed by Adoration and Benediction
- 9:00 – Evening Social or free time

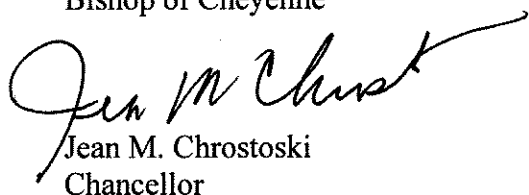
SUNDAY:

- 8:00 - Morning Prayer, Announcements etc.
- 8:30 – Session 2: Topic from Curriculum
- 10:30 - Break and Session 2 Discussion
- TBD – Eucharist
- 12:15 – Lunch
- 1:00 – Liturgical or Homiletics Practicum
- 3:00 – Wrap up, Evening Prayer, & Dismissal

Given in Cheyenne, Wyoming on 3-4-2021

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Most Reverend Steven R. Biegler, DD, STL
Bishop of Cheyenne


Jean M. Chrostoski
Chancellor