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BISHOP'S STATEMENT

January 24, 2023

The Permanent Diaconate is a sacramental ministry within the Church vital to help address pastoral needs in today's environment. We are all called to share in the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ, every lay minister, deacon, priest, and bishop. We look to Jesus as our model of the servant leader and strive to be as compassionate and understanding.

It is my prayerful hope that these revised Norms based upon the second edition from the USCCB clarify the role and responsibility of the Permanent Diaconate in our Church. As we move forward in the Road to Renewal, it will be an ongoing journey where all clergy, religious and laity are called to be working collaboratively for the greater glory of God.

These Norms are the diocesan adaptation of the norms from the National Directory for the "Formation, Ministry and Life of the Permanent Deacons in the United States" revised by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2021 and recognized by the Holy See. To fully comprehend our norms specific to our diocese, every deacon should have a copy of the national directory.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael W. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher
Bishop of Buffalo

I. FORWARD

The life of the deacon as directed by the United States Conference of Bishops should be referred to in the 2nd Edition of The National Directory For the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States of America. (pub. August 2021) The following guidelines concerning the Permanent Diaconate in the Diocese of Buffalo are intended to serve as the rules for our particular diocese that may be different from or need to have a greater detail of explanation. The second edition of the directory and this guideline shall be referred to when seeking consultation.

It is our hope that the following will offer a clear and understandable source of information regarding the policies, practices, rights and obligations for Deacons and all aspects of diaconal ministry in the Diocese of Buffalo.

This Norms and Guidelines for the Permanent Diaconate in the Diocese of Buffalo shall be reviewed every 2 years so that as needs arise, the Deacon Community Board will recommend additions and changes in a timely manner. Any subjects not addressed in this handbook should be referred to the Director of the Permanent Diaconate

II. MISSION / VISION STATEMENT

Mission Statement [Who Is A Deacon?]

As the image of Christ, the Servant, we are ordained not as priests or as bishops but as permanent deacons, ministering through the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, proclaiming the Gospel message, and performing charitable works. We are available to all people as channels of understanding, communication, and healing. We are the voice of the voiceless and provide protection for the weak. Our ordination calls us to foster a life of holiness. We work to maintain our spiritual growth and health in order that we can say, "We are Diakonia, service in Christ for the world."

Vision 2028

We seek to bring the Gospel to the world, with humility and courage, by taking the Church where it is not. In collaboration with our brother deacons, we will search for opportunities to serve in new and traditional ways. We commit to go where we are sent and make visible the call of the Gospel.

1. ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE DEACON

The Deacon exercises his ministry within a specific pastoral context — the communion and mission of a diocesan Church. He is called to collaborate in ministry with other leaders of the church.

Relationship with the Diocesan Bishop

A deacon is in direct relationship with the diocesan Bishop with whom he is in communion and under whose authority he exercises his ministry. In making his promise of respect and obedience to his Bishop, the Deacon takes as his model Christ, who became the servant of his Father.

The Bishop enters a relationship with the Deacon since the Deacon is his collaborator in the service of God's people. It is, therefore, a particular responsibility of the Bishop to provide for the pastoral care of the Deacons of his diocese. The Bishop discharges this responsibility both personally and through the Director of Permanent Diaconate.

The Bishop appoints the Deacon to a specific assignment normally by means of an official letter of appointment. The principal criteria for the assignment are the pastoral needs of the diocesan family parish and the personal qualifications of the Deacon, as these have been discerned in his previous experience and the course of his formation. The assignment also acknowledges the Deacon's family and occupational responsibilities.

The Bishop promotes a suitable catechesis throughout the diocesan Church to assist the lay faithful, religious, and clergy to have a richer and firmer sense about the Deacon's identity, function, and role within the Church's ministry. In fact, such a catechesis is also an opportunity for the Bishop, Priests, religious, and laity to discern the needs and challenges of the local Church, to consider the types of services needed to meet them, to tailor a diaconal program to address them, and to begin the process of considering which men in the church might be called upon to undertake diaconal ministry.

The assignment of a Deacon to a specific ministry, the delineation of his duties and responsibilities, and the designation of his immediate pastor or pastoral supervisor, should always be clearly stated in the letter of appointment signed by the Bishop. An accompanying document should make as explicit as possible the implicit expectations of the participants, thereby establishing a clear line of mutual responsibility and accountability among them. The Director of the Permanent Diaconate, together with the Deacon's

designated pastor or supervisor, a representative of that office or agency, and the Deacon are to be involved in the preparation of this document.

For the good of the Deacon and to prevent improvisation, ordination should be accompanied by clear investiture of pastoral responsibility. Although the wife of a married Deacon has already given her permission before her husband's ordination to the demands of the diaconal ministry, nevertheless she should be kept duly informed of her husband's activities to arrive at a harmonious balance between family, professional and ecclesial responsibilities. Until the letter of appointment is signed by the Bishop and publicly announced by the Bishop's office, all parties are bound to confidentiality.

In the formation of Deacons, the first sign and instrument of the Spirit of Christ is the proper Bishop. He is the one ultimately responsible for the discernment and formation of aspirants and candidates, as well as the pastoral care of Deacons. He discharges this responsibility personally, as well as through suitable associate who assists him – The Director of the Permanent Diaconate is accountable directly to the Bishop or in his absence, to a Priest whom the Bishop has appointed as his delegate e.g., Vicar General or Vicar for Clergy. While the Bishop may exercise his responsibility through his formation associates, nevertheless he will commit himself, as far as possible, to personally knowing those who are preparing for the diaconate.

It is a particular responsibility of the Bishop to provide for the pastoral care of the Deacons and the diaconal community in his diocese. Special care should always be shown to those Deacons experiencing difficulties because of personal circumstances. Whenever possible the Bishop should attend the Deacons' community meetings, as well as those of the Deacon Community Board. If the Bishop is unable to attend, he may designate a delegate to represent him in his absence.

Relationship with the Director of the Permanent Diaconate

The diocesan Bishop appoints the Director of the Permanent Diaconate. He is directly responsible to the Bishop or his representative. The director, who is to be a Deacon, should have regular and comprehensive communications with the Bishop or his representative on matters regarding individual Deacons, as well as their families.

In fulfilling his responsibilities, the Director of the Permanent Diaconate should be thoroughly familiar with the intent and context of the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the

United States, the Basic Norms and Guidelines for the Formation of Permanent Deacons, especially the post-ordination components.

The Director of the Permanent Diaconate serves as the bishop's representative in the implementation of those in inquiry, Aspirancy and Candidacy formation as well as the post-ordination path in diaconate formation. He assists the bishop in his supervision of the spiritual and personal welfare of Deacons and their families. The Director of the Permanent Diaconate may fulfill other administrative functions as needed, except that of the spiritual direction of Deacons.

The Director of the Permanent Diaconate oversees the program for the newly ordained. He also ministers, as delegated by the Bishop, to the other Deacons in their assigned ministries, reviewing, and evaluating diaconal assignments, and making appropriate recommendations to the Bishop in consultation with the personnel board. He assists the Bishop and the Deacons' designated pastors in planning and implementing any programs for diaconate continuing formation. He further assists the Bishop and the designated pastors in their pastoral care of Deacons and their families, especially monitoring those living and ministering outside the diocese, or Deacons who may be ill or on a ministerial leave of absence.

At the discretion of the diocesan Bishop, the Director of the Permanent Diaconate may be appointed as a liaison to diocesan departments and public agencies, as well as parishes, on diaconal matters.

By his ordination, a Permanent Deacon is directly accountable to his Bishop through the Office of the Permanent Diaconate. All matters pertinent to diaconal ministry should be directed to the Office of the Permanent Diaconate.

Relationship with the Supervisor

According to the directives of the National Directory (ND #46), the newly ordained Deacon is appointed to and supervised by a Priest. As delineated in the diaconal service agreement the Deacon is accountable to his supervisor who directs the ministry activities and the Deacon's participation. The Deacon must fulfill his liturgical and service ministry as agreed.

Relationship with the Region Vicariate

The Deacon, by reason of his ministry, becomes a leadership figure and is expected to participate in regional vicariate meetings. Once assigned to ministry, a Deacon should make his desire to be of service known to the

regional Episcopal Vicar. One deacon per vicariate will also be appointed, by the diocesan bishop to serve as a liaison between the Episcopal Vicar and the deacons within his vicariate. This includes, all deacons, active or retired, and widows.

2. ADVISORY STRUCTURES

Deacon Community Board

The diocesan bishop may constitute a deacon community board (ND 303) to represent the deacons and their spouses.

Members of such a board would include the following:

- 3 deacons and 3 wives elected by the diaconal community
- Others may be appointed by the diocesan bishop

This is in accordance with the board's statutes, as approved by the diocesan bishop. The statutes should govern everything that relates to the purpose and operation of the board.

A responsibility of the community board include:

- preparation of a deacon personnel handbook specifying appropriate norms or policies rights, obligations, and responsibilities for deacons serving the diocesan Church. The diocesan bishop must approve this text and promulgate any appropriate norms or policies.
- This board also could assist the diocesan bishop and Director of the Permanent Diaconate in planning, coordinating, and evaluating the post-ordination educational and spiritual formation programs. The diocesan bishop or a cleric designated as the diocesan bishop's delegate in his absence serves as the board's president.
- Develop and review an annual assessment tool for the vicariate representatives to distribute to their assigned vicariate.

For further information on the Deacon Community Board, contact the Office of the Permanent Diaconate.

Personnel Board

It may be desirable for the diocesan bishop to establish personnel board to assist him in assigning and evaluating deacons. This will be a part of the priests' personnel board, which assists the diocesan bishop in ascertaining appropriate and suitable assignments based on the needs of the Church and the capabilities of the individual. This board would be a valuable resource to the Diocesan Bishop and Director of the Permanent Diaconate. The diocesan bishop or, in his absence, a cleric designated by the diocesan bishop chairs this board.

This board should maintain appropriate links to other diocesan entities to ensure a collaborative and integrative approach to the understanding and use of deacons and diaconal ministry throughout the diocese.

3. THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON

The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* of the Second Vatican Council specifies three ministerial areas regarding Deacons: strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the Bishop and his group of Priests, they serve the People of God in the ministry of Charity, of Liturgy, and of the Word.

Faculties

A Deacon incardinated in the Diocese of Buffalo is presented with a rescript that enumerates the faculties to be exercised by the Deacon among and for the people of the diocesan Church. These general faculties are specified further below.

The Code of Canon Law specifies the tasks of the Deacon that are to be performed with the authorization of the diocesan Bishop. The Bishop of Buffalo has authorized Deacons to perform the following functions:

1. To carry out, with Bishop and Priest, all the roles and liturgical rites which the Ritual Books attribute to you. To function as Deacon at the Eucharistic Celebration according to the directives given in the Roman Missal and the Norms and Guidelines promulgated within the Diocese of Buffalo. To function as a Deacon at the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Rite II and III, according to the directives given in the Roman Ritual. The Deacon may also lead non-sacramental celebrations, particularly in Advent and Lent, when a Priest is not available, according to the directives of the Roman Ritual. To function as a leader of the people in praying the Communal Celebration of the Hours, in the absence of the priest.
2. To administer Baptism solemnly and to supply the ceremonies that have been omitted at Baptism in the case of an infant.
3. To distribute Holy Communion at Mass and to conduct the Rite of the Administration of Holy Communion Outside of Mass.
4. To conduct the Rite for the Administration of Viaticum and Holy Communion to the Sick in their homes, in hospitals and other health care facilities according to the directives given in the Roman Ritual, and to share in the pastoral obligation of care for the sick.
5. To impart Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament to the people. This includes wearing the cope, exposing the Blessed Sacrament and giving the blessing with the monstrance or ciborium (*De Sacra Communionem et de Cultu Mysterii Eucharistici Extra Missam*, Par. 99).

6. To assist at Marriages when delegated by the Pastor, the Local Ordinary, or the Chancery. Deacons may not be delegated to assist at marriage if either party is an Eastern Rite Catholic or Eastern Orthodox.
7. To administer the sacramentals of the Church in prescribed form. To distribute Blessed Ashes to the congregation on Ash Wednesday.
8. To lead all Rites of Christian Burial, except the Eucharist itself, according to the directives of the Roman Ritual, namely, the Vigil or Wake Service in the home or funeral chapel, the non-Eucharistic Rites of the Church (e.g., Welcome, Liturgy of the Word, Commendation, and the Rites at the Cemetery).
9. To proclaim the Gospel of the Lord and to read the Scriptures to the Faithful.
10. To preach the homily at Mass or during other Liturgies of the Word.
11. To provide a brief catechetical instruction or explanation of a Rite according to liturgical norms on those occasions when the Deacon is the celebrating minister of a Sacrament or other liturgical Rite.
12. To preside over religious worship, prayer and Bible Services where there is no Priest present to the degree permitted by the Ritual Books

Safe Environment

Deacon in the Diocese of Buffalo are required to follow the Safe Environment Guidelines in order to be in good standing.

- Submit to a background check every five years
- Sign and comply to the Code of Ethical Conduct
- Keep within 5 bulletins of their Virtus Training program initiated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to avoid suspension.

Requests for Diaconal Ministry

Pastors, directors of diocesan departments, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, relief homes and those who coordinate various diocesan programs are invited to make requests for diaconal service. Requests should be sent to the Office of the Permanent Diaconate for recommendation and action. If a Deacon is also a member of a religious institute, permission from his religious superior must be obtained before any assignment is made. To obtain a request form visit the Resources page on <https://Buffalodeacons.org>

Ministerial Placement

Permanent Deacons are obliged to accept and faithfully fulfill the office and ministry committed to them by their diocesan Bishop. The Director of the Permanent Diaconate coordinates all assignments involving Permanent Deacons. Assignments are made directly by the bishop. Two key factors affect the assignment of the Deacon: the needs of the diocese and the capacities of the individual. The Deacon's ministry may be determined by his capacities and personal circumstances, his talents, interests, training, and the time he has available to give. The Deacon and his prospective supervisor(s) will come to an understanding of the three-part ministry Charity, Liturgy, and Word, before the Director of the Permanent Diaconate recommends the assignment to the bishop for his approval. Ministry of charity assignments are required and should be separate from the parish assignment, except in cases of outreach ministry as prescribed by the family of parishes.

A mutually agreed upon service agreement between the Deacon and the designated supervisor will delineate the duties and responsibilities of the role, and the execution of the faculties of the Deacon in this assignment. This service agreement is subject to the review of the Director of the Permanent Diaconate, agreed to by the Deacon's wife and approved by the diocesan Bishop. Visit the Resources page on Buffalodeacons.org – *Diaconal Service Agreement* tab.

If the designated supervisor deems it necessary to not utilize the Deacon per the service agreement, the Deacon may be entitled due process and mediation; the service agreement may be terminated or renegotiated with 30 days' notice given by either party. If the service agreement is terminated, the diocesan bishop will reassign the Deacon. If the supervisor is reassigned, the existing service agreement is nullified and a new service agreement is to be renegotiated with the new supervisor, but the Deacon remains in his assignment until relieved of it by the diocesan Bishop.

When Does the Deacon Preach?

The ministry of preaching depends on the faculties given by the Bishop and diocesan norms. Preaching is a privilege and not a right. At no time is it acceptable to use your opportunity to preach as a means of becoming political or divisive. At no time should a deacon ever call out an individual or politician by name in their preaching or at any time during the celebration of mass.

The Deacon may preach on the following occasions when he is the presider of a sacrament or liturgical rite:

- The baptism of infants, and some of the rites of Christian initiation of adults
- The sacrament of matrimony
- The liturgy of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
- At the celebration of morning and evening prayer or other rites of the liturgy of the hours.

The Deacon may also preach at the following when not presiding:

- Any celebration of the Eucharist
- Any celebration of a sacrament
- Retreats, days of recollection, missions, novenas, etc.
- Sermons, talks, homilies to be given at an ecumenical gathering or service.

In those instances where a Deacon may wish to be a minister at a liturgical celebration in a parish or institution other than his own (e.g., marriage, baptism, funeral), he should first consult with the local authority (ex: pastor or celebrant) as a courtesy to obtain permission prior to the day of the celebration whenever possible.

Liturgical Roles

The Deacon's other liturgical roles develop from his role in the Eucharistic action. Through the service of the Deacon, people are linked more closely to their Bishops, to Priests and to the diocesan Church. The Deacon's style and modes of liturgical ministry will vary depending on circumstances.

There are times when Deacons will be invited to function at Cathedral celebrations. Such assignments will be made in consultation with the Office of the Permanent Diaconate. It is the Deacon's responsibility to see to the proper notation in the parish registers of Baptisms and Marriages, over which he presides.

Two liturgical vestments distinguish the Deacon: stole and dalmatic. The stole hangs from the left shoulder. It is tied at the lower right-hand side for convenience only. The dalmatic is the outer garment, which may be used in assisting at Mass and at Benediction. The stole will be worn under the Dalmatic. If the Deacon is presiding at Baptisms, Marriages, the Liturgy of the Hours, and Benediction, a cope may be worn over the alb and stole.

Other Deacons are invited to attend and to participate in liturgical celebrations vested as at the Stational Mass according to the norms

established in the Ceremonial for Bishops and the Newsletter of the Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy (July/August 1982: October 1981). The following are occasions given for such participation:

Major solemnities of the Liturgical Year; Mass of Chrism, the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

In celebrations of the Patron Saints of Churches or the Patron of the diocese, St. Joseph (March 19)

On the anniversary of the Bishop

During the occasion of gatherings of the Christian people

A pastoral visitation of the diocesan Bishop or his delegate.

There are also rarer occasions at which the visual representation of the body of Deacons would offer a sign of solidarity. The primary instance when this would be true is at the celebration of ordination of another Deacon. Other times when Deacons might function as an order would be at the Mass of Christian Burial of a Deacon and at various diocesan or regional celebrations. The documents are not restrictive or taxative in listing occasions when the body of Deacons vests for special liturgies. The documents though are quite clear in requiring a distinction between the order of Deacon and that of Presbyter. This difference should be evidenced by placement in procession, in the body of worshipers, and by posture.

The directive for Deacons when in the body of worshipers is to kneel when kneelers are present between the time when the celebrant extends his hands over the gifts until after the elevation of the chalice at the consecration. The Deacon rises when the celebrant rises after the genuflection following the elevation of the chalice.

4. OTHER PARTICULAR NORMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A deacon has one foot in the church and one in the secular society. It is important for a deacon to represent himself as a man of the church in all settings.

Clerical Title

While various forms of address have emerged about Deacons, the Congregation for the Clergy and the diocese of Buffalo determined that in all forms of address for Permanent Deacons, the appropriate title is Deacon. [ex., Deacon Pat Smith]

Clerical Attire

The Code of Canon Law does not oblige Permanent Deacons to wear an ecclesiastical garb. Further, because they are prominent and active in secular professions and society, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops specifies that Permanent Deacons should resemble the lay faithful in dress and matters of lifestyle in the secular setting. Each diocesan Bishop is enjoined to determine and promulgate any exceptions to this law, as well as specify the appropriate clerical attire if it is to be worn.

For this reason, the policy of wearing the Roman Collar by a Permanent Deacon will serve to identify him as clergy in ecumenical and public settings outside his Church and within his Family of Parishes. Permanent Deacons may wear the clerical garb when:

Serving within his Family of Parishes or visiting other families of parishes
Visiting the sick
Officiating at the funeral home or the cemetery
Visiting the imprisoned
Witnessing a marriage in another denomination's Church
Representing the Church in a government or academic setting

If wearing the clerical garb, Permanent Deacons will adhere to the following policies:

- Prominently wear a Deacon cross or pin on their shirt or jacket.
- At medical or Correctional Facilities, they should wear nametags identifying them as Permanent Deacons.
- Accepted Color of Clerical Shirt:
 - In all instances, the color of the clerical shirt is gray, except:
 - In Correctional Facilities, the required color of clerical shirt is to remain black or as required by the facility.

- At no time should a deacon wear any type of sports team, or branded regalia over the top or in conjunction with clergy apparel.

Social Media

Every Deacon is held accountable to abide by the [Diocese of Buffalo Social Media and Website Guidelines](#) as accepted in 2018. These guidelines also apply to personal social media pages. We cannot separate our personal life from that of our diaconal life. A current Code of Conduct is to be kept in the deacon's permanent file.

Recruitment

Each Deacon is encouraged to reach out to those they perceive to be potential candidates for the diaconate and urge them to explore the possibility of such a vocation.

5. DEACON STATUS

To maintain faculties as a deacon in the Diocese of Buffalo, one must be compliant with the Protecting God's Children initiative.

Letter of Good Standing

An Active, Senior, or Retired deacon, as well as a deacon who is on an approved Temporary Leave of Absence will need to request a letter of Good Standing when ministering outside the assigned Diocese. To receive a letter, a deacon must have a signed Code of Conduct and Uniform Release Authorization in his file and be current with Virtus training and bulletins. Refer to website, <https://buffalodeacons.org/resources/> for appropriate form. Please allow approximately 3 weeks to have this letter sent to the appropriate people.

As of January 2024, to receive a letter of Good Standing, a deacon must have completed the following and log it with the office of the Permanent Diaconate:

- Completed a retreat in the prior year
- Completed a minimum of 12 hours of continuing formation
- Be current with Virtus bulletins

Active

A Deacon who is functioning legitimately within the parish and ministry of charity to which he is assigned and is fulfilling liturgical, ministerial, and staff functions. This also entails annual retreats and continuing formation.

Senior Status

At age 70, a deacon may request "Senior" Status. If approved, he may continue to minister in a manner that is acceptable to him, his pastor, and the diocesan Bishop.

Retired from Active Ministry

A Deacon may retire from active ministry at age 70 or sooner because of infirmity. He may, however, continue to minister in whatever manner is acceptable to him, his pastor, and the diocesan Bishop. Deacons must meet with the Director of the Permanent Diaconate concerning possible retirement from formal assignments by the bishop when he becomes 75 years of age to state his intentions. He may remain active as long as he is able to meet the needs of the faithful. A retired deacon still remains a deacon for life.

Inability to Perform Diaconal Ministry

If a Deacon becomes unable to fulfill his duties for an extended period, he must notify the Office of the Permanent Diaconate to change his status or request a leave of absence in writing.

Temporary Leave of Absence

This is a Deacon who at his own request has been granted authorization by the bishop to withdraw from active ministry for a pre-determined, fixed period of time.

ex., Family Leave is a temporary leave of absence due to family circumstances such as mental or physical health issues or death of a loved one.

Administrative Leave of Absence

This is a Deacon who has been relieved of all responsibility by the bishop or his representative from any ecclesiastical office or function, as well as participation in active ministry. He may not function or represent himself as a Deacon while this status is in effect.

Suspension

This is a Deacon whose faculties are suspended by the Ordinary or his representative and may not function or represent himself as a Deacon in any parish of the diocese. The Chancery will issue a letter notifying the Deacon of the suspension of faculties.

Inactivity

This is a Deacon who through his own action/inaction or through mutual agreement is not functioning in an assigned diaconal role. Faculties as a Deacon may be suspended until the period of inactivity is terminated. A deacon who has moved outside the diocese without notifying the Deacon Director could be an example of an inactive deacon. Always notify the Deacon Director when you relocate.

Removed from the Clerical State

This is a Deacon who voluntarily or involuntarily is returned to the lay state by the Holy Father at the request of the Ordinary. The Chancery will notify the Deacon of this status. He may not represent the church in any role that is tied to diaconal functions (ex. Blessings, eucharistic ministry, lectoring)

Deacons in Military Service

Permanent Deacons in military service and serving on military installations will be extended diocesan faculties for service apart from such installations when the Deacon presents valid credentials, and the Archdiocese for Military Service recommends him.

Pastoral Care of Christian Communities

Canon 517 indicates that Deacons may be given charge over the pastoral care of Christian communities that cannot be provided for by a pastor. In the absence of Priests, the Church can invest a Deacon with the authority to carry out and coordinate the acts of pastoral care. In fulfilling this specific leadership role, the Permanent Deacon is bound by the appropriate directives as requested by the diocesan bishop.

Jury Duty

If a Deacon is summoned to jury duty, he should respond to this call according to the law and his own judgment and if necessary, seek an exemption from the courts on the grounds of ecclesiastical law and

conscience, especially in serious criminal cases or as any other citizen, based on hardship.

Political Office

While canon law permits Permanent Deacons to hold political office, a Deacon should consult with the diocesan Bishop before seeking or accepting such an office. Current policy is that deacons should not seek public office.

Incardination / Excardination

At ordination a person becomes a cleric and is incardinated in the diocese or religious institute for whose service he is ordained.

Transfer of a Deacon into the Diocese of Buffalo

A Permanent Deacon in good standing will be considered for the diaconal ministry in the Church of Buffalo in the following circumstances:

He has established permanent residence within the diocese

He has registered in his parish community within the diocese

He has obtained a letter of recommendation from the diocesan Bishop of his current diocese of incardination to the Bishop of Buffalo indicating that he is willing to approve the eventual excardination of the Deacon and making any appropriate recommendations concerning ministry. In addition, the Deacon should request the Office of the Permanent Diaconate of his current diocese of incardination to make available the following:

Baptism & Marriage Certificates

Ordination Certificate

College Transcripts (non-official)

A history of parish ministry and ministry of charity assignments

Recent record of Protecting Gods Children Requirements in his Diocese.

Current Letter of good standing from his diocese

Past evaluations of ministry

He has presented himself to the Bishop of Buffalo and to the Office of the Permanent Diaconate in the Diocese of Buffalo for an interview.

He has stated his willingness to assume those responsibilities outlined in these Norms and Guidelines.

Participated in the VIRTUS training within the Diocese of Buffalo

Once these things have been obtained, the Deacon will usually be admitted by the Bishop for service after a period of time for ecclesial authorities to become acquainted with him. During this time, usually lasting one to three years, the ministry of the Deacon will be reviewed and evaluated. The Office of the Permanent Diaconate will make a recommendation to the diocesan Bishop, who will decide upon a candidate's suitability for incardination into

the diocese of Buffalo. Incardination will follow according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law.

Relocation Outside the Diocese of Buffalo

A Deacon who moves to a place outside the Diocese of Buffalo, and who wishes to function as a Deacon within his new diocese of residence, is subject to directives established by the new diocese. However:

- To be incardinated into another diocese, a Permanent Deacon of the diocese of Buffalo must obtain a letter of excardination signed by the Bishop and in the same way a letter of incardination signed by the bishop of the particular Church in which he wishes to be incardinated. Excardination granted in this way does not take effect until incardination is obtained in the other diocese. Exchange of such letters are subject to the internal policies of other dioceses and the Code of Canon Law.
- The Office of the Permanent Diaconate of the Diocese of Buffalo should be notified as soon as possible when a Deacon learns that he will be moving into a new diocese as a permanent resident.
- Upon the request of the new diocese, a letter from the Chancellor of the Diocese of Buffalo will be sent to the new diocese attesting to the character of the transferring Deacon.
- When requested in writing by the Deacon, a resume of pertinent information regarding the transferring Deacon will be sent to the new diocese by the Office of the Permanent Diaconate. A Deacon who moves from one diocese to another will ordinarily be admitted by the Bishop only after a period sufficient for the new diocese to become acquainted with him.

6. ONGOING FORMATION

For the Deacon to grow in his ministry of the Liturgy, of the Word and of Charity, he must continually avail himself of development and training offerings which can help him to be more knowledgeable and skillful in his carrying out of these ministries. He will also take the opportunity for yearly retreats.

Deacons as a body of professionals in ministry must constantly update themselves with continuing formation to ensure a feeling of self-confidence and adequacy in their ministry, as well as demonstrate to the church they serve that they are professionally accountable.

These guidelines provide Deacons of the diocese with a standard method of evaluating their continuing formation. They describe the basic requirements,

how to record clock hours, and when to submit reports for inclusion into their personal files at the Office of the Diaconate. They are intended to be a self-evaluation guide but reporting them is essential.

All Deacons given faculties to function within the Diocese of Buffalo must successfully complete a minimum of **12** clock hours of continuing education/formation each year.

To ensure that these educational requirements are achieved, certain criteria are established and stated here to assist each Deacon in determining the number of clock hours achieved through various modes of learning.

The scope and nature of instruction should pertain to preparation for the ministries of Charity, Liturgy, and Word. Background for, or updating of current ministry, or the preparation for a future ministry should all be included. Likewise, other courses, which aid Deacons in ministry or prepare them to better serve the people of God, should be included.

Credit may be recorded in whole or in part on the <https://buffalodeacons.org/reporting-hours/> website using the following guidelines:

- Each Deacon must submit a review of his continuing education/formation on an annual basis with the Director of the Permanent Diaconate to be considered active.
- St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry. Each year, deacons are allowed to audit classes as offered for only the cost of registration. The class itself will be free. -
- Certificate courses - many national, regional, and local courses issue a certificate at the end of an instructional seminar or conference. All credit hours shown on the certificate may be credited.
- College courses - because of the wide variety of methods used in college credit systems, it is not possible to convert college credits - count one clock hour for each classroom or lecture hour attended.
- Other courses, conferences, seminars, and workshops - this includes any course offered within the guidelines stated above - count one clock hour for each classroom or lecture hour attended.
- While it is not necessary to submit more than 12 clock hours, Deacons are encouraged to submit all their activities.

The following activities are not considered toward continuing education/formation:

- Travel to and from the place where instruction is given.

- Informal meetings and conferences.
- Prayer services and liturgies
- Spiritual direction sessions.
- Pastoral Council or committee meetings.
- Social gatherings.
- Diocesan boards and committee meetings.
- Administration and business meetings,
- Diaconate assembly or council meetings.
- Courses not related to ministerial service.
- The annual retreat.
- Reading a book

Annual Retreat

According to Canon 276, Deacons, as clerics, are "...bound to make a retreat according to the prescriptions of particular law..."

Each Deacon is required to make an annual spiritual retreat consisting of at least one weekend (2 complete days) guided or unguided experience. It is acceptable that married Deacons include their wives in this experience for both to benefit from the spiritual enrichment whenever possible or practical.

Each Deacon must report completion via the website of his retreat on an annual basis to the Director of the Permanent Diaconate.

Remuneration and funds are provided to the deacon according to the Ministry Agreement and Financial Assistance guidelines.

Spiritual Direction

Each Deacon is to have Spiritual Direction conducted with a qualified Spiritual Director. This spiritual director and the Deacon shall have regularly planned meetings. The Diaconate Office will assist in obtaining a director if requested by the Deacon.

The Dimensions of Formation in the Post-Ordination Path

The post-ordination path should provide the Deacon with ample opportunities to continue to develop and integrate the dimensions of formation into his life and ministry. In this way, the quality of his life and ministry will be ensured, avoiding the risk of ministerial burnout. In certain

cases of difficulty, such as discouragement or a change in ministry, post-ordination formation can entail a process of renewal and revitalization.

Mentoring and the Initial Year

Every newly Deacon will be assigned a mentor who has at least 5 years of experience in the role of a Deacon. This will occur prior to ordination in the final year of formation. The Bishop, upon the recommendation of the Director of Deacons, will assign the Mentor in collaboration with the Deacon candidate (ND #293). The mentor will act as a resource for the new Deacon, helping him to adapt to his role in the clerical environment. Mentoring will include helping the new Deacon prepare for his first Mass, helping him choose the things he will need to perform his duties such as vestments and providing guidance, support, and role modeling. The mentoring is to last for the first year of ordination.

Ongoing Fellowship and Support

Recognizing the need for both ongoing fellowship and support for both Deacons and their wives, there will be opportunities to meet as follows:

- Meetings will be spread out through the diocese based on vicariates, so everyone has access to a meeting in their area.
- Each area will have up to four gatherings per year. The deacon vicariate representative will be asked to coordinate the meetings
- Meetings are to be put together by the assigned Deacon as they choose.
- Meetings may begin with Evening Prayer as an option. There may be a presentation on a topic of interest to Deacons and their wives with discussion. Meetings will always include the opportunity for faith sharing and fellowship.
- All meetings are open to any Deacon and their wife regardless of the area it is held in. You may go to the meeting in your area or travel to another area if that works better for you.
- Deacons are encouraged to attend as many of these meetings as possible with the requirement to attend at least two meetings per year.

Spiritual Dimension: Universal Call to Holiness

In the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the Deacon receives a new consecration to God through which he is configured to Christ the Servant

and sent to serve God's people. Growth into holiness, therefore, is a duty binding all the faithful. But for the Deacon it has a further basis in the special consecration received. It includes the practice of the Christian virtues and the various evangelical precepts and counsels according to his own state of life.

Some recommended spiritual exercises to assist the Deacon in developing and promoting his spiritual life include the following:

Discerning different spiritual disciplines to find one that allows you to enrich your personal relationship with God.

Daily or frequent participation in the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life

Eucharistic adoration, as often as his secular employment and family requirements permit

Regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Daily celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially morning and evening prayer

Shared prayer with his family

Meditative prayer on the holy Scriptures—*lectio divina*

19th Annotation in the Ignatian Tradition

Devotion to Mary, the Mother God

Prayerful preparation of oneself prior to the celebration of the Sacraments, preaching, or beginning one's ministry of charity

Theological reflections

Regular spiritual direction

Participation in an annual retreat

Authentic living of one's state of life

Time for personal and familial growth

Intellectual Dimension: Theological Renewal

Study days, renewal courses and participation in academic institutes are appropriate formats to achieve the goal of the Intellectual Dimension. It is of the greatest use and relevance to study, appropriate and spread the social doctrine of the Church. A good knowledge of that teaching will permit many Deacons to mediate it in their different professions, at work and in their families. The Bishop may choose to invite those who are capable to specialize in a theological discipline and obtain the necessary academic qualifications at those pontifical academies or institutes recognized by the Apostolic See, which guarantee doctrinally correct information. Ongoing formation cannot be confined simply to updating but should seek to facilitate a practical configuration of the Deacon's entire life to Christ who loves all and serves all.

Pastoral Dimension: Methodology for an Effective Ministry

For an adequate pastoral formation, it is necessary to organize encounters in which the principal objective is the reflection upon the pastoral plan of the Diocese. When the diaconate is conceived from the start as an integral part of an overall pastoral plan, Deacons will have a richer and firmer sense of their own identity and purpose.

Human Dimension: Human Qualities as Instruments for Ministry

To effectively carry out his diaconal ministry, the Deacon must extend himself generously in all forms of human relations without discrimination to others.

7. Financial

While a deacon may not incur a regular pay/stipend from the parish, he is to be supported by his parish to defray certain costs. Reimbursements can be found on the Resources page on Buffalodeacons.org – *Diaconal Service Agreement* tab.

Remuneration

Each Deacon is to be supported by the parish to which he is assigned to defray the costs for continuing formation and a yearly retreat, and others; beyond this necessary funding, out of pocket reimbursements shall be made for expenses incurred in ministry such as travel, vestments, books, etc.

When presiding at wedding and funerals, the Deacon is entitled to the same stipend in accordance with the current diocesan guidelines for clergy. The disbursement of all offerings for baptisms, weddings and funerals celebrated in the parish of assignment is to be determined in consultation with the pastor. When these services are performed at a place other than his assigned parish, the pastor or administrator of that parish must approve of the Deacon's role in the celebration of these events. It is then that pastor or administrator's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate offering, fee, or stipend is given to the Deacon for the ministerial service he provided. The Deacon may retain gifts received for services outside the parish. We do not require a stipend for baptisms.

A Deacon does not have a right to employment from the diocese of Buffalo, nor is he to look to the diocese for any other material benefits. It is, therefore, the duty of the Deacon to provide for his present and future

material needs, and those of his wife and family through employment which he seeks out on his own initiative.

Deacons may be employed as a Pastoral Administrator of a parish in the Diocese of Buffalo according to Canon 517.2, Salary and benefits to be determined based upon current diocesan guidelines. He may also be employed in other administrative roles as well.

A Deacon requires a living wage to properly minister to others and should never be compromised by a perceived obligation to "service." Therefore, Deacons employed on a full or part time basis by the Diocese of Buffalo, a parish or any institution as a pastoral associate, DRE, chaplain, or business manager, are to be remunerated in a manner that is mutually agreed upon by the Deacon and by the parish or institution with the same consideration for salary and benefit packages available to non-clergy. (A deacon cannot receive remuneration for his ministry of charity work, homily preparation, serving at mass or other duties that would be considered diaconal in nature, beyond stipends.)

Administrative Costs and Allowances

Having the appropriate health insurance or car insurance or pension plan etc. is the personal responsibility or choice of the Deacon. These may be provided through his secular employment in part or in whole. However, under certain circumstances it may be possible for the Deacon to participate in the diocesan group plans, paying his own premiums.

The Diaconal Service Agreement contains a list of all reimbursements due to the Deacon on an annual basis. These ministry allowances for the Deacon's required retreat, continuing education, formation, and out of pocket expenses by which the Deacon exercises his ministry are to be paid out of the Deacon's assigned institution or parish funds. These reimbursements are to be given directly to the Deacon on an as requested basis, not as payments spread throughout the year.

An individual Deacon's unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses encountered while participating either as a Deacon candidate or as an ordained Deacon may be tax deductible as charitable contributions. These expenses must be directly connected with and solely attributable to the rendering of services donated to the Church. They are not inherently personal and are incurred primarily for the benefit of the Church.

8. Deacons State in Life

In all situations, divorce, widowed, or a separation, a deacon may not date or engage in relationships that will counter their declaration of sacred celibacy.

Celibacy Affects Every Deacon

Celibacy affects every Deacon, married or unmarried. Understanding the nature of celibacy – its value and its practice – is essential to the married Deacon. Not only does this understanding strengthen and nurture his own commitment to marital chastity, but it also helps to prepare him for living celibate chastity should his wife predecease him. All Deacons need to appreciate the impact celibacy can have on their lives and ministry.

Ministry as a celibate Deacon must be adequately discerned prior to the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. A deacon candidate should work with his spiritual director and the director of deacons to consider the implications of the prohibition against remarriage and the implications of such prohibition upon his life, his family, and his ministry. This must be a topic brought before the Lord in prayer with true faith and openness to whatever the Lord is asking. A deacon candidate must be at peace with the implications of the Sacrament of Holy Orders upon his state in life prior to ordination and be prepared to minister in a new and different way if that were to become necessary. This includes an understanding that if his wife were to die, he would live a life of celibacy. (NAD 248)

The Widowed Deacon

The death of a married Deacon's wife is a particular moment in life, which calls for faith and Christian hope. The death of the wife of a married Deacon introduces a new reality into the daily routine of his family and ministry. Charity should be extended to the widowed Deacon as he assesses and accepts his new personal circumstances, so he will not neglect his primary duty as father to his children or any new needs his family might have. As required, a widowed Deacon should be assisted to seek professional counsel and spiritual direction as he encounters and integrates the bereavement process. Further, the fraternal closeness of his Bishop, the Priests with whom he ministers, and the diaconal community should offer comfort and reassurance in this special moment in his life. This adjustment to a new state of life can be achieved only in time through prayer, counsel, and an intensification of one's dedication to others for the love of God in the ministry.

A similar sensitivity also should be given to the widow of a Deacon since she shared so intimately in her husband's life and ministerial witness. The Bishop and her pastor, as well as the diaconal and parish communities, should extend appropriate and adequate support in her bereavement. Widows of Deacons ought to remain connected with the diaconal community, not only because of support and encouragement, but also because of the unique bonds that had forged by virtue of her husband's ordination.

Most deacons are expected to embrace celibacy if widowed after ordination. The exception from the ordinary requirement of clerics to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom is extended to Deacons regarding the marriages they have prior to the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Only in exceptional circumstances involving minor children can the exercise of ministry continue, and the clerical state be retained if a deacon is to enter a new marriage.¹

If a widowed deacon is to discern, after a significant time of prayer and reflection, that he cannot maintain perfect and perpetual continence, he is to approach the director of deacons regarding the consequences of his discernment upon his ministry. In most circumstances, a widowed deacon seeking remarriage would be required to seek removal from the clerical state and dispensation from the obligation of the celibacy. While he would remain a deacon forever through the indelible mark of Holy Orders, he would no longer be able to exercise that ministry in this world. Only in exceptional circumstances, if the deacon is caring for minor children, would it be possible to seek a dispensation from the obligations of celibacy and to retain the clerical state. Seeking this dispensation from the Holy See does not guarantee that it will be granted.

The Deacon and Family Confronting Separation or Divorce

Separation and divorce between a Deacon and his wife can happen. In this situation, suitable pastoral care should be offered to the Deacon, his wife, and their children. This pastoral care, which would be facilitated by the Director of Deacon Personnel, the Diocesan Counseling Center, or any other qualified person on behalf of the Bishop, should include ample time to work through the various stages of grieving and adjustment caused by separation or divorce. The determination of the divorced Deacon's ministerial status will require sensitivity and prudence on the part of the Bishop, the pastor or pastoral supervisor, the ministerial community, and other institutions which the Deacon serves. Members of the diaconal community are also in a unique position to reach out, as appropriate, in order to help the separated or

¹ Great pastoral usefulness of the deacon's ministry, attestation by the Bishop, and the case of minor children. 2005 Letter from Cardinal Arinze to Presidents of the Conferences of Bishops

divorced couple and family deal with the challenges the separation or divorce may entail.

9. THE CHRISTIAN BURIAL OF A PERMANENT DEACON

When a Deacon dies, the entire diaconate community may be involved. At the ordination of the Deacon, all in the community become brother and sister to the Deacon and his family in a special way. This special relationship continues even after the death of the Deacon.

The celebration of Christian Burial announces the paschal mystery of Christ. Those who in death to life are to be purified in soul and welcomed into the fellowship of the saints in heaven. They look forward in blessed hope to His second coming and the bodily resurrection of the dead. The Church therefore celebrates the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ's Passover for the dead and offers prayers and petitions for them. In communion with all Christ's members, the prayers, which bring spiritual help to bring consoling hope.

For those who are configured into Christ through sacred ordination, these celebrations demonstrate respect and honor for a servant in the image of Christ. The various funeral rites provide an opportunity to reach out in love to others in this same manner.

The members of the immediate family, the diaconate family and the various parish families are all urged to pray for the dead and profess their faith in eternal life. It is the Church's desire through these guidelines not only to commend the dead to God but also to support Christian hope in the faithful and give witness to its faith in the future resurrection of the baptized with Christ.

Permanent Deacons should candidly and faithfully share their ideas and desires for funeral arrangements with their immediate families. It is recommended that a will be drawn concerning the disposition of all temporal affairs. Similarly, a document concerning the wishes and desires of the Deacon relative to funeral rites is also recommended. See website <https://buffalodeacons.org/resources/>. To recognize death not as a tragic finality but the proclamation of the fullness of life - this is the celebration of the final victory of the Christian. The celebration of Christian Burial will enable Deacons to show loving concern for the diaconate family in support of one another while involving each Deacon as much as possible in the carrying out of the funeral celebration.

Widows of Permanent Deacons will remain members of the diaconate community and are invited to participate in social and spiritual activities of

the diaconate community. The entire permanent diaconate community should always be supportive of the widows of Deacons, not only during the bereavement period, but also in future community endeavors.

Funeral Arrangements

Upon the death of a Permanent Deacon, the Bishop's office should be notified as soon as possible. The deacon may have made their wishes known to the diaconal office in writing. The following steps are requested.

- The immediate family makes all arrangements for the funeral of a Permanent Deacon.
- The Office of the Permanent Diaconate is available to assist the family in whatever way it is invited.
- When arrangements have been completed a member of the family or funeral home is asked to notify the Office of the Permanent Diaconate who will communicate the information to the Bishop, Priests, Deacons, candidates, formation faculty members, and Catholic Center staff via email.
- Diocesan notice cards, if desired, are the responsibility of the family.
- The funeral director will notify the secular press for general information.

The body of the Deacon may be vested in an alb, (dalmatic), and stole; or other suitable attire as directed by the Deacon's wishes or his spouse or family. If cremation is chosen as the manner of final disposition, the rites outlined here should take place before the cremation itself.

Vigil Service – Transferral of the Body

On the evening prior to the Mass of Christian Burial, at a time mutually agreed upon by the family and the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, the body of the deceased Deacon may be transferred from the place of the wake to the parish church of his ministry or his home parish.

The recitation of the Office of the Dead is offered to be celebrated at the vigil service. This vigil liturgy will constitute the primary celebration of the Permanent Diaconate community. The casket may be open or closed depending on the wishes of the family, however during the Mass the casket will be closed.

Another option would be to leave the deceased at the funeral home of the wake, until the morning of the Mass of Christian Burial, and have a vigil service at the funeral home.

Deacons attending the vigil service should be vested in alb and white diocesan stole.

The Mass of Christian Burial

The principal celebrant for the Mass of Christian Burial for a Permanent Deacon is the Bishop of the Diocese. He may designate an auxiliary Bishop or Priest. It is important that the family contact the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, as arrangements are being made, to schedule the Liturgy at a time agreeable to the family and to the Bishop.

Deacons should be vested. A designated clergy will preside over the final commendation according to the Order of Christian Funerals.

At the Grave

The pastor, pastoral supervisor (if a Priest or Deacon), or a Deacon selected by the family may lead the final prayers at the grave.

Responsibilities of The Office of the Permanent Diaconate

The office is to be available to assist the immediate family in whatever way it is invited.

Deacons and other clergy, along with widows and candidates are to be notified regarding funeral arrangements.