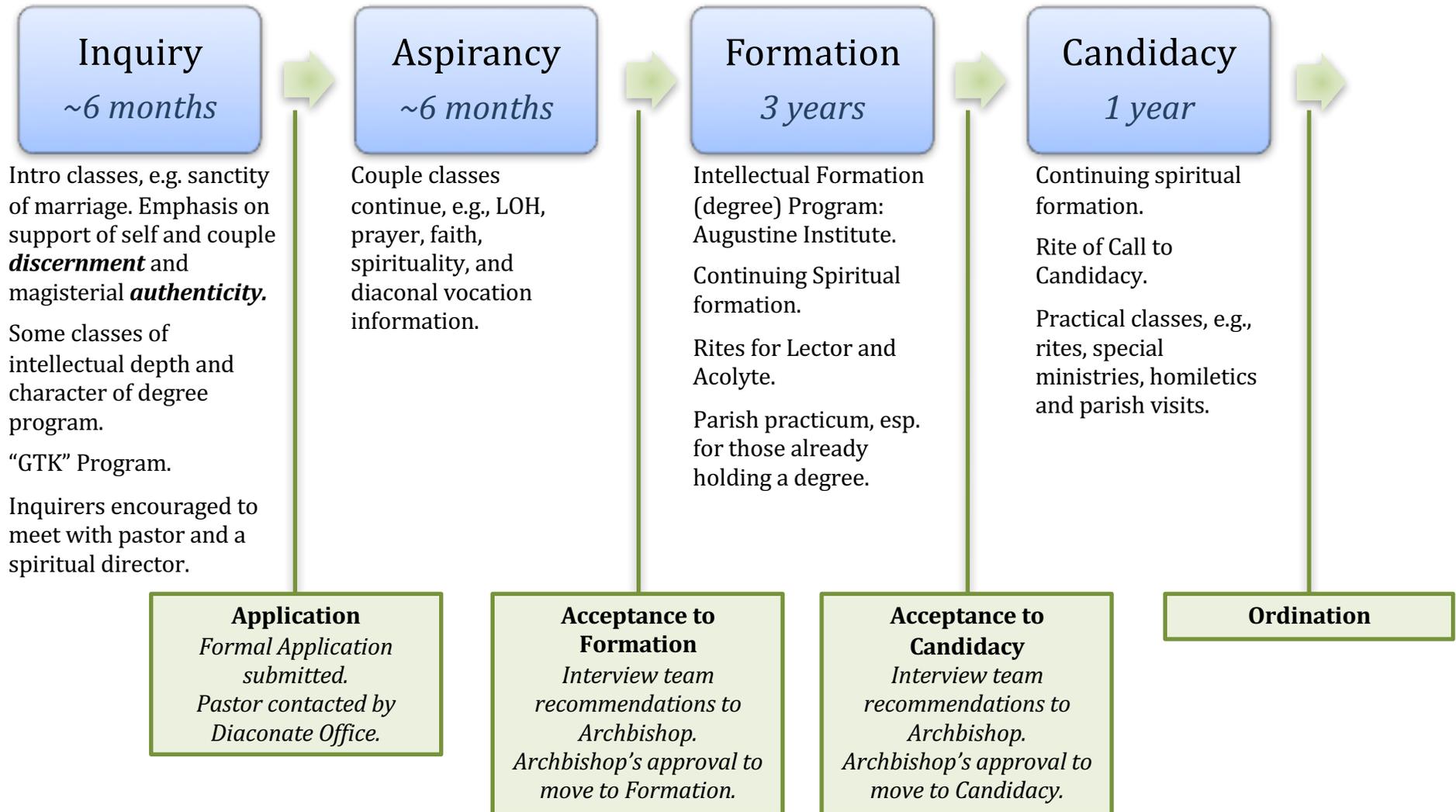




# The Formation Process





# ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

## Process Leading to Ordination as a Permanent Deacon

The process of formation leading to service as an ordained permanent deacon in the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon reflects the 1998 Vatican *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* and the 2004 USCCB *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*. Although the USCCB document speaks of a “Call to Candidacy” immediately after the Aspirancy period and prior to theological studies, the Archdiocese of Portland waits until after theological studies for the Call to Candidacy. This more closely parallels seminary practice.

### Inquiry Period

In response to your inquiry, a packet of information and forms is mailed to you. The packet includes this paper (*Process Leading to Ordination as a Permanent Deacon*), a document on *Criteria for Diaconate Applicants*, a *Diaconate Preliminary Information Form*, and several items of background information.

If you wish to continue, and return the completed forms, the Diaconate Office upon review of the forms may invite you (and if married your spouse) to have a “couple interview” with Diaconate Office personnel. Following that, you (and your spouse) may be invited to attend an orientation day at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center, usually held on an August Saturday in even-numbered years.

If you (with your spouse’s approval) decide to continue in Inquiry, the following will need to be completed by December of that even-numbered year:

1. Complete a formal *Diaconate Formation Application*
2. Have a background check completed at your parish within the last three years
3. Have couple-to-couple meetings with three separate deacon couples, and submit meeting impressions
4. Write one or more reflection papers on assigned topics
5. Complete a psychological personality profile (spouses may also need to complete a profile)

During the Inquiry period and the Aspirancy Period following, the process typically consists of at least six weekend class sessions or prayer/study days (all day Saturday and Sunday). Typical topics include marriage;

diaconate; faith, prayer and spiritual direction; human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development; and continuing self-education. Both you and your spouse are required to attend these meetings.

You may then be invited to continue to the next step of the process: Aspirancy.

### Aspirancy Period

Aspirancy is a period of deep discernment of the authenticity of your call to diaconal ordination. It includes both self-discernment on your part (along with your spouse), but also discernment on the part of the Church. In some sense your discernment began the moment you first considered the diaconate; for the Church’s part discernment begins with receipt of the *Preliminary Information Form*. Discernment is not limited to the Aspirancy period: for both individual and the Church, discernment continues up to ordination, or up to your withdrawal from the program.

This period should be marked by prayer, reflection and self-assessment on your part and on the part of your spouse, your family and many other persons whom you know and who know you well.

At the end of Aspirancy, usually in May-July, you will go through an in-depth interview process involving both you and your spouse. This is also part of the Church’s discernment process. After this, the Diaconate Office will consult with many other people you have encountered in the process to date, and your pastor, to make a recommendation to the Archbishop on whether or not you will be called to the next step in the process: Formation.

## Formation Period

While the entire process described here is ultimately formation, the period termed "Formation" is the time of primarily intellectual formation. This period typically lasts three years as you work toward your master's degree. The particular program you pursue will be at the discretion of the Archdiocese of Portland. In rare cases and for specific cause, other programs may be considered for this period, but they require pre-approval of the Diaconate Office.

If you come to the program already holding a master's level degree in a theological discipline, the formation period is usually shortened to a single year with involvements as listed below for everyone. This single year alternate may include a practicum in some area of diaconal charism.

During the formation period, you should:

- Supply the Diaconate Office with an annual list of courses taken, grades received, and your evaluation of the course/professor
- Continue in self formation in those areas not covered by academic classes which are listed in the *Directory*, keeping the Diaconate Office apprised of your choices and progress
- Develop a strong fraternal bond with all men in formation, and when possible, with deacons already ordained
- Attend an annual day, or special days, of reflection as directed by the Diaconate Office
- Attend special training to be prepared for the liturgical rites of installation as reader, then acolyte.
- After installation as reader, then acolyte, you will be asked to become involved in your parish in these ministries, and to keep the Diaconate Office apprised of your involvement

During the period of formation, your wife is strongly encouraged to develop a sisterly bond with the wives of

other aspirants through personal and group contact and prayer.

Failure to complete any requirement may delay progress to the next step of formation or acceptance into the candidacy period. In some cases, failure to complete requirements may be taken as self-withdrawal from the program.

At the end of the formation period, a second in-depth interview process will involve both you and your spouse. Along with all other accumulated data and experience with you that the Diaconate Office has documented, this will result in a recommendation to the Archbishop to accept you for the candidacy period.

## Candidacy Period

The candidacy period includes a formal Rite of Call to Candidacy, and the period itself usually lasts about a year, leading up to ordination. During this time group classes and training cover such topics as homiletics, church administration, sacramental records, counseling, marriage cases, and liturgical rites. The classes and training during this period usually follow a similar meeting schedule as the inquiry and aspirant periods. These classes are not required for spouses.

A challenge for those who have served extensively in parish ministry is to identify with the missionary or evangelistic identity of the diaconal charism, with a different center from that of the priest or lay employee.

## Additional Information

The deacon is ordained for service of the Archbishop and Archdiocese, not specifically for a particular parish. You may or may not be assigned to your "home" parish for your service. You will always be assigned to a parish for a liturgical base, but you may have an additional assignment or ministry to exercise your diaconal charism.