

Seeking Men with a Deacon's Heart

Deacon Bill Gervais, Office of the Permanent Diaconate

The Archdiocese of Kingston is currently planning an inquiry session for those who are interested in becoming permanent deacons. While there are specific qualifications required of candidates for the Permanent Diaconate, perhaps the most important is that he “possess a deacon’s heart”.

The first characteristic of a man with a deacon’s heart is his recognition that a true vocation does not spring from personal ambition. He does not seek ordination because it is something to do in retirement, or because it will give him a high profile in the parish. Rather, he knows that it is a call from God to the service of His people. The ministry of deacon is a gift with its own charism and contribution to the life of the Church.

The second characteristic of a man with a deacon’s heart is a willingness to live the Gospel values of simplicity of life, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and obedience throughout his ministry.

The third quality of a man with a deacon’s heart is an understanding that a deacon is called to be a sign of the servant Christ in his community. This requires him to actively seek to serve the needs of the poor, the forgotten, and the neglected. He acknowledges that service at the table of the poor is a prerequisite for service at the altar.

The fourth characteristic of a man with a deacon’s heart is the ability to balance his service to the Church with the responsibilities of family and employment. He understands that an ordained minister gives public witness by following Christ in all areas of his life – his marriage, his family, his secular occupation, and his lifestyle.

The fifth quality of a man with a deacon’s heart is the ability to be an intermediary and an animator. He recognizes that a deacon has a foot in both worlds – religious and secular – and that this is not an identity crisis but, rather, an opportunity to be a bridge between the sacred and secular in a unique vocation that serves the needs of all the baptized.

The sixth characteristic of a man with a deacon’s heart is the desire and ability to be a man of the Word. He knows that the foundation of diaconal ministry flows from the words of the bishop as he places the book of Gospels in the hands of the newly ordained deacon: “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.” He understands that, since a deacon is charged with the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel at Mass, he must constantly reflect on the Word of God and allow Scripture to shape his life, so that, by both preaching and example, he shows how the Word of God guides the hearts and minds of all who follow Christ.

If you believe that you have a deacon’s heart and would like to find out more about this sacred vocation, please contact Deacon Bill Gervais, Office of the Permanent Diaconate, 390 Palace Rd. Kingston, K7L 4T3; telephone 613-548-4461; email deacon@romancatholic.kingston.on.ca. The next inquiry session is scheduled for September 2021.