I have given you a model to follow
So that as I have done for you, you should also do. John 13:15

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR THE MINISTRY AND
LIFE OF PERMANENT DEACONS

Office of the Permanent Diaconate
Diocese of Victoria in Texas
INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to set forth policies and procedures concerning the ministry and life of permanent deacons ministering in the Diocese of Victoria, in Texas.

These policies and procedures have been developed based on the Code of Canon Law, (CIC) and the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop, December 26, 2004.

These policies do not represent a contract between the diocese, its Permanent Diaconate Office and permanent deacons. They are subject to change as program adaptations are made, or according to the will of the bishop, or as National Standards are further defined in the future.

The outlines of the specific spirituality of the deacon flow clearly from his theological identity; this spirituality is one of service. The model “par excellence” is Christ the servant, who lived totally at the service of God, for the good of humanity. He explicitly qualified his action as *diakonia* (Matthew 20:28; Luke 22:27) and he entrusted his disciples to do the same (Luke 12:37).

The spirituality of service is a spirituality of the whole church. In order that the whole church may better live out this spirituality of service, the Lord gives her a living and personal sign of his very being as servant. In a specific way, this is the spirituality of the deacon. With sacred ordination, the deacon is constituted a living icon of Christ the servant within the church.

To facilitate this service ministry, to support the diaconal community and to insure each deacon’s proper integration into the overall ministry of the church, the following policies and procedures are intended to be normative for the Diocese of Victoria.

The diaconate is a vibrant force for ministry in the church today. With many years of formation, the Diocese of Victoria is blessed
with many deacons and their wives, who generously commit themselves to the diaconal ministry, not without personal cost to their marriage and family life.

As a stable and enduring Order in the church, the diaconate is a ministry committed to and expressive of the ministry of the bishop. In communion with the presbyterate and the diaconate of the diocese, the bishop is able to extend his ministry to the whole diocese and to the entire church.

**References:**

Hereinafter, references to

- The bishop will mean the *diocesan bishop* as that term is used in the Code of Canon Law.
- The *deacon* will mean *permanent deacon*.
PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

MARY

Teacher of that Service which is hidden, who by your everyday and ordinary life filled with love knew how to cooperate with the salvific plan of God in an exemplary fashion, make deacons good and faithful servants by teaching them the joy of serving the church with an ardent Love. [Adapted from DMLPH, p. 141.]
PART ONE

THE PERMANENT Diaconate – General Principles

The Theological Foundation in Vatican II of a Servant Church

The Second Vatican Council restored the permanent diaconate as a result of its theological reflection on the church, her nature and her mission in the modern world. Indeed, Vatican II brought about the aggiornamento of ecclesiology - rooted in Scripture and Tradition and based on the historical developments within the modern world and within the church herself. This ecclesiology is found eminently in two significant documents of Vatican II: Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes.

Lumen Gentium

Lumen Gentium defines the church by her relationship with Christ, as a Sacrament: "a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men and women" (LG, #1). The Church is the image of Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the nations. Her nature and mission is founded in the dynamic action of the three persons in One God towards the whole human race. The unity of the Church as a People of God should reflect the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (LG, #4).

Vatican II therefore focused on the Church and her mission - making clear to herself and to the world how she is, and has to become, an efficacious sign or Sacrament of universal salvation. Vatican II thus converts from an attitude of self-isolation to a new missionary approach, opening a window to the world to embrace it as a Church, after the example of Jesus Christ who is sent to the world to bring it back to the Father for his honor and glory.

Accordingly, Vatican II highlights the crucial role of the laity and the secular character of their vocation and mission.

The laity are placed in the people of God and in their own way share the Priestly, Prophetic and Kings office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the church and in the world. They live in the world, are engaged in each and every work
and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were constitute their very existence (LG, #31).

_Gaudium et Spes_:  
The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, _Gaudium et Spes_, provides pastoral guidelines on how the Church wishes to foster and promote her relationship to the modern world with all the present problems that confront the human race. In _Gaudium et Spes_, the Council indicates a new approach to the many problems humanity is confronted with today; from marriage and family life, to the realm of culture, to socio-economic life, to life of the political community, to fostering of peace and the promotion of a community of nations.

_Gaudium et Spes_ specified this new approach of solidarity with concrete guidelines:

- Dialogue and collaboration with the whole of humanity to foster and promote universal love for another (GS, #3)

- Scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel

  We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live (GS, #4).

  The people of God believe that it is led by the spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Moved by that faith it tries to discern in events, the needs, and the longings which it shares with other men of our time, what may be genuine signs of the presence or of the purpose of God (GS, #11).

- The mutuality of relationships between the world and the Church.

  Just as it is in the world’s interest to acknowledge the church as a social reality and a driving force in history, so too the church is not unaware how much it has profited from the history and development of mankind (GS, #44).

These new approaches in both _Lumen Gentium_ and _Gaudium et Spes_ open the church to recognize the autonomy of the world,
proper values of people outside the church, and how they are part of God's universal plan to salvation. At the same time, she discovers her own place in the world, her relationship to the outside of the church. The new way of understanding her mission is the fruit of many historical developments in the relationship between the church and society. It is crucial for the church to receive openly and willingly impulses from outside her own visible confines as a condition to be and to become an efficacious sign of universal salvation. In the light of the above orientation, clearly present in the conclusions of Vatican II, a double dimension of the church's mission is articulated.

- The church's mission of announcing explicitly to all peoples the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to celebrate His presence and power in the Sacraments particularly in the Eucharist.

- The imperative for the church to receive openly and willingly in an attitude of dialogue, collaboration and solidarity, through the diffused reality of the world and the aspirations and accomplishments of all peoples, the stimulus of the Holy Spirit which reveals the designs of God for the whole of mankind.

This elucidates the distinction between the Priestly Dimension and Diaconal Dimension of the mission of the church. The movement from the center of the church to the periphery is the Priestly Dimension, while the opposite movement from outside the church towards her is the Diaconal Dimension. Both dimensions and directions are clearly different and distinct from one another, in fact, opposite while at the same time complimentary for the integral mission of the church.

The vision of Vatican II on the relationship between the church and the world is linked to the presence and dynamic action of the Holy Spirit, who is the power of the Risen Lord, towards the full realization of the whole plan of salvation. The Holy Spirit not only leads the church and her institutional ministry in her mission of announcing the Gospel to the world, but also the same Holy Spirit speaks to the church in a diffused way, through the complex reality of peoples, their struggles for survival and human dignity, their experiences and their aspirations. Insisting on the continuing and permanent discernment of the signs of the times,
the Council recognizes that the action and the direction of the Holy Spirit is essential to the church's mission and is the basis of her fidelity to the Lord.

These considerations by the Council of the centrality of the workings of the Spirit of Jesus in relationship to the Priestly and Diaconal dimensions for building the church and fulfilling her mission would fall short if it were not to take into consideration meaningfully the struggle of victims of injustice in the world, and the plight of the poor. That reality and struggle of these disadvantaged and marginalized people with all its socio-economic, political and cultural implications, erupts into the consciousness of the church. In the light of the new approach to the mission of the church in the modern world, the victims of injustice in the world are not anymore considered merely as objects of charity, but their struggle and aspirations become the preferential place for the Spirit's presence and communication to society and the church. With this understanding, it is not surprising that *Lumen Gentium* brought along the final break-through in article 29: - *The diaconate restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy.*

In the description of the service of the deacon, the text of *Lumen Gentium* is vague. Principally, the triad “of Liturgy, the Word and of the Loving Service” is held and the community with the bishop and the presbyterate is stressed. In the list of individual tasks, which is certainly not meant to be exhaustive, only Sacramental-Liturgical functions are specified - administration of Baptism solemnly, distribution of the Eucharist, assistance and blessing of marriages, bringing viaticum to the dying, the reading of the Sacred Scriptures to the faithful, the instruction and exhortation of the people, preside over the worship and the prayer of the faithful, the administration of Sacramentals, officiate at funerals and burial services, etc. In contrast to this, the obligations of loving service are only named very generally. In the sense of the Council, it would be wrong to understand the diaconate simply as an extension of Sacerdotal-priestly service. The Council states clearly:

> At a lower level of the hierarchy are to be found deacons, who receive the imposition of hands “not unto the priesthood, but unto ministry” (LG, # 29).
The diaconate thus represents an individual formation of the Office of service that Jesus Christ inspired in the church. This is seen in its abundance in the bishop’s office. The deacon is supposed to express the complete individual dimension of the church’s office in a special way and represent the diaconate, that is, the slave service of Jesus Christ in the church. The task of the deacon may not however be seen out of one perspective, one-sidedly as social-charitable, but must be understood in accordance with the triad of the transmission of the Word, the Liturgical service and the Loving service.

*Ad Gentes*, the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, (AG #16) talks about the ministry of the deacon as a catechist in the preaching of the Word and as governing scattered Christian communities in the name of the bishop or parish priest, or exercising charity in the performance of social or charitable works. The Decree further states:

If they were to be strengthened by the imposition of hands......They would be more closely bound to the altar and their ministry would be more fruitful through the sacramental grace of the diaconate (AG #16).

**The Order of Deacons**

The Sacrament of Holy Orders marks deacons “with an *imprint* (‘character’) which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the ‘deacon’ or servant of all” (CCC #1570). For this level of Holy Orders, Christ calls and the Church asks the bishop to ordain deacons to be consecrated witnesses to service (NDFML #28). Ordination confers an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It configures the deacon to Christ’s consecration and mission. It constitutes the deacon as “a sacred minister of the hierarchy,” with a distinct identity and integrity in the Church that marks him as neither a lay person nor a priest. Rather, the deacon is a cleric who is ordained to *diakonia*, namely, a service to God’s people in communion with the bishop and his body of priests. “The principal function of the deacon, therefore, is to collaborate with the bishop and the priests in the exercise of a ministry which is not of their own wisdom but of the Word of God, calling all to conversion and holiness” (NDFML #29).
The Deacon and the Threefold Munera of Christ: Word, Liturgy and Charity

By the grace of the Holy Spirit in baptism, the individual Christian - the deacon, the priest, the bishop, as well as the whole body of the Church - participate in the role of Christ himself as Prophets, Priests, and Kings, in the image of Christ, prophet, priest, and king. The ministry of the deacon is characterized by the exercise of the threefold munera proper to the ordained ministry according to the specific perspective diakonia.

Munus Docendi: The deacon as Evangelizer and Teacher

In reference to the munus docendi, the deacon as a martyria is called to witness and to proclaim the Scriptures. He also instructs and exhorts the people (LG #29). This work finds expression in the presentation of the Book of the Gospels, foreseen in the rite of ordination itself.

Munus Sanctificandi: The deacon as Sanctifier

For the deacon, as for all members of the Church, the liturgy is “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church’s power flows” (SC #10). In the deacon’s liturgical ministry, as in a mirror, the church sees a reflection of her own diaconal ministry and is reminded of her mission to serve as Jesus did (NDFML #33). In the Liturgia, the diaconal ministry has its point of departure and arrival in the Eucharist, and cannot be reduced to simple social service.

Munus Regendi: The deacon as Witness and Guide (Charity and Justice)

The deacon’s ministry, as St. John Paul II wrote, “is the Church’s service sacramentalled” (ADUS). Therefore, the deacon’s service in the church’s ministry of Word and Liturgy would be severely deficient if his exemplary witness and assistance in the church’s ministry of Charity and Justice did not accompany it (NDFML #36). The kingship ministry of the deacon is exercised in Diakonia, in dedication to works of charity and justice. This is the ministry most characteristic of the deacon. “This is at the very heart of the diaconate” (ADUS).
The Diaconate Rooted in Scripture and Tradition

From the documents of the Council, it is clear that the Council only describes the old but nevertheless new service of the deacon. Church history shows that the office of the deacon was clearly outlined in the early Church. The deacons are clearly witnessed in the New Testament (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8ff) even though their area of service is not clearly defined. Liturgical and catechetical services were named in the early Church. Above all, the deacon was the leader of the charitable organization of the Church and the administrator of the Church's property. In these tasks, the deacon was not the helper of the presbyter, he was allied to the bishop.

Vatican II describes the position held by deacons in the ministerial hierarchy, according to the old tradition. “One step below in the hierarchy, there are the deacons, who receive the laying-on of hands, not for priesthood but for service. Strengthened by sacramental grace, they serve the people of God in the diakonia of the Liturgy, of the Word, and of Charity, in communion with the bishop and his presbyters” (LG #29). The formula “not for priesthood but for service” is taken from Hippolytus’s Traditio Apostolica. In this ancient text the ministry is described as service to the bishop, the deacon’s role being the “Ear, Mouth and Soul of the bishop.” The Council however puts it in a wider perspective. The Council lays emphasis on the service to the people of God. This fundamental meaning of diaconal service had first been affirmed by Ignatius of Antioch, who called deacons “servants of the Church of God”, adding that for this reason they were obliged to please everybody. So throughout the centuries, the deacon was regarded not solely as an assistant to the bishop, but also as a servant to the Christian community.

Concluding Reflection

Those who hold offices in the church are generally described as servants of God or of Jesus, who himself did not come to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28). Jesus himself is like a deacon, that is a servant (Luke 22:26). For the descendants of Jesus, diakonia is a part of every Christian. The main task of deacons, the diaconate, is the task of the church as a whole and of that office in
particular. The deacon is therefore to officially bring the servant ministry of Charity and Justice of Jesus to the consciousness of the whole church.

The presence of deacons in the world of ordinary life works two ways.

- The deacon, ordained to the servant ministry of Christ, brings the ministry of Charity and Justice into the world of work, family and civic life.

- At the same time, the deacon brings people's needs and concerns to the church, so that the church may fittingly address those needs and concerns and bring them to the Lord in prayer; especially in the Liturgy.

For this reason, the office of the deacon is formed like the office of the service of Jesus Christ through ordination and prayer and equipped with Jesus's Spirit of serving.

**The deacon in everything is like the eye of the Church, a model of Christ's charity for the Church.**
PART TWO

THE STRUCTURES RELATED TO THE
PERMANENT DIACONATE OF THE DIOCESE
OF VICTORIA

The Office of the Permanent Diaconate serves the diaconal community of the diocese in two areas, each with a Director appointed by the Bishop:

- Formation
- Ministry and Life

The Office of the Permanent Diaconate is directed by the Director of Formation and the Director of Ministry and Life. The Director of Formation is assisted by a Formation Spiritual Director and a Field Supervisor. These individuals appointed by the bishop constitute the staff for Diaconate Formation.

**The Director of Formation**

The Director of Formation, in consultation with the bishop is responsible for interviewing prospective candidates and coordinating the academic, spiritual, human, and pastoral/social aspects of the formation of diaconate candidates. He recommends suitable candidates to the bishop for ordination.

For information regarding the policies governing the structure of the Diaconate Formation program from admission of aspirants to ordination, see the Deacon Formation Handbook.

**The Director of Ministry and Life**

The Director of Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons, in consultation with the bishop is directly responsible for permanent deacons' affairs.
The Deacon Community Board

The Deacon Community Board is a consultative body. It is responsible for the professional, institutional, ministerial policies and procedures and the educational and spiritual programs concerning the ministry and life of deacons in the Diocese of Victoria. The board consults with the deacons of the diocese on concerns and issues of the diaconate ministry and life. It is a structure through which the bishop may receive recommendations on matters of policy and procedure that impact the quality of the diaconate life and ministry. The Director of Ministry and Life is assisted in his ministry to the diaconal community by the Deacon Community Board.

The Deacon Community Board is made up of representatives elected by the deacons and approved by the bishop. Membership includes deacons and wives of the diaconal community. It is recommended to have a member from each deanery. The bishop will appoint a priest to serve as a liaison with the Presbyteral Council. The bishop, or in his absence, the Director of Ministry and Life serves as the President of the Deacon Community Board (NDFML #290). A deacon shall be elected as chairman from among the membership of the board. Board Members serve for three years per term and can serve for two consecutive terms. All policies approved by the consensus of the board will be presented as recommendations to the Director of Ministry and Life for the consideration of the bishop.
PART THREE
THE POLICIES CONCERNING THE MINISTRY
AND LIFE OF DEACONS

The Relationships of the Deacon

Relationship with the Diocesan Bishop

The deacon exercises his ministry within a specific pastoral context, the communion and mission of a diocesan Church. He is in direct relationship with the diocesan bishop with whom he is in communion and under whose authority he exercises his ministry (NDFML #41). In making his promise of respect and obedience to his bishop at ordination the deacon takes as his model Christ, obedient *par excellence*, who became the servant of his Father. This vision of obedience also predisposes acceptance of a more concrete detailing of the obligation assumed by the deacon at ordination, in accordance with the provisions of law (CIC, c.274, #2). This obligation is based on participation in the bishop's ministry conferred by the Sacrament of Holy Orders and by canonical mission (DMLPD #8). The bishop also enters into a relation with the deacon since the deacon is his collaborator in the service of God's people.

Relationship with the Diocese

While assuming different forms of diaconal ministry, a deacon exercises his service in both a diocesan setting and in an individual assignment. He may be assigned to an administrative position at a diocesan or parochial level (DMLPD #41). Deacons called to exercise such offices should be placed so as to discharge duties which are proper to the diaconate. In order to preserve the integrity of the diaconal ministry “the deacon should recall that every action in the Church should be informed by charity and service to all....” (DMLPD #42).

Deacons who possess the necessary requirements may be appointed to the diocesan finance council and to diocesan pastoral work in specific social contexts. They may exercise the offices of chancellor, judge, assessor, auditor, promoter of justice, defender of the bond, and notary of the diocesan tribunal, or as the
diocesan finance officer. Deacons may not “be constituted judicial vicars, adjunct judicial vicars or vicar forane, since these offices are reserved for priests” (DMLPD #42).

Deacons may be entrusted under a pastor or priest supervisor, to assist in the pastoral care of a parish or to temporarily guide a parish that lacks, because of a shortage, the immediate benefit of a resident pastor. In these extraordinary situations, deacons “always have precedence over the non-ordained faithful, and their authority and responsibility should always be clearly specified in writing when they are assigned office” (DMLPD #41).

**Relationship with the Priesthood**

Deacons exercise their ministry in communion not only with their bishop but also with the priests who serve the diocesan Church. As collaborators in ministry, priests and deacons are two complementary but subordinate participants in the one apostolic ministry bestowed by Christ upon the apostles and their successors. Deacons and priests, as ordained ministers, should develop a genuine respect for each other, witnessing to the communion and mission they share with one another and with the diocesan bishop in mutual service to the people of God (DMLPD #37).

**Relationship Among Deacons and Those in Formation**

By virtue of their ordination, a sacramental fraternity unites deacons. They form a community that witnesses to Christ, the Deacon-Servant.

The diaconal community should be, for those in the aspirant and candidate paths in formation, “a precious support in the discernment of their vocation, in human growth, in the initiation to the spiritual life, in theological study and pastoral experience” (BNFPD #26).

**Relationship with Women and Men Religious**

Deacons ought to promote collaboration between themselves and women and men religious who also have dedicated their lives to the
service of the Church. Pastoral sensitivity between deacons and religious should be carefully nurtured (NDFML #55).

**Relationship with the Laity**

By ordination, deacons are members of the clergy. The vast majority of deacons in the United States, married or celibate, have secular employment and do not engage exclusively in specific church-related ministries. This combination of an ordained minister with a secular occupation and personal and family obligations can be a great strength, opportunity, and witness to the laity on how they too might integrate their baptismal call and state in life in living their Christian faith in society. Through his ordination to service, the deacon promotes, in an active fashion, the various lay apostolates and guides these in communion with the bishop and local priests (NDFML #56-57).

**Relationship with Society**

The diaconate is lived in a particularly powerful way in the manner in which a deacon fulfills his obligations to his secular occupation, to his civic and public responsibilities, and among his family and neighbors. This, in turn, enables the deacon to bring back to the church an appreciation of the meaning and value of the Gospel as he discerns it in the lives and questions of the people he has encountered. Through his ministry, the deacon animates, motivates and facilitates a commitment among the lay faithful to an evangelical service in the world (DMLPD #43). The deacon is ordained precisely for service in both the sanctuary and in the marketplace.

**Diaconal Spirituality**

**Spiritual Life**

The primary sources of a deacon’s spirituality are his participation in the Sacraments of Christian initiation, as well as his sacramental identity and participation in ordained ministry. To live their ministry to the fullest as servants, “deacons must know Christ intimately so that He may shoulder the burdens of their ministry” (DMLPD #50).
Deacons are obligated to give priority to the spiritual life and to live their diakonia with generosity. They should integrate their family obligations, professional life, and ministerial responsibilities so as to grow in their commitment to the person and mission of Christ, the servant. Deacons are to nourish their spiritual life through participation in daily Mass, praying the Liturgy of Hours, Lectio Divina, and regular access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Deacons are to participate in regular spiritual direction or personal counseling and an annual retreat.

**Simplicity of Life**

Deacons are called to a simple lifestyle. Simplicity of life enables a cleric “to stand beside the underprivileged, to practice solidarity with their efforts to create a more just society, to be more sensitive and capable of understanding and discerning realities involving the economic and social aspects of life, and to promote a preferential option for the poor” (PDV #30).

**Pastoral Service**

While transforming the world is the proper role of the laity, the deacon, in communion with his bishop and diocesan presbyterate, exhorts, consecrates, and guides the people of God in living faithfully the communion and mission they share in Christ, especially in making the Gospel visible in their daily lives through their concern for justice, peace, and respect for life (ADUS).

**The Deacon in His State of Life**

**The Married Deacon**

Married deacons bring to the Sacrament of Holy Orders the gifts already received and still being nurtured through their participation in the Sacrament of Matrimony. “In particular the deacon and his wife must be a living example of fidelity and indissolubility in Christian marriage before a world which is in dire need of such signs....” (ADUS).

A married deacon, with his wife and family, gives witness to the sanctity of marriage. They give to the Christian community a model of Christ-like love, compassion, and self-sacrifice. The married
deacon through his sacramental participation in both vocational Sacraments, first in Matrimony and again in Holy Orders is challenged to be faithful to both. With integrity he must live out both Sacraments in harmony and balance (NDFML # 68).

The Celibate Deacon

The celibate commitment remains one of the most fundamental expressions of Jesus' call to radical discipleship for the sake of the kingdom on earth and as an eschatological sign of the kingdom of heaven (LG #42). If the celibate deacon gives up one kind of family, he gains another. In Christ, the people he serves become mother, brother, and sister. In this way, celibacy as a sign and motive of pastoral charity takes flesh. The celibate deacon takes on the likeness of Jesus Christ...as a full and joyful availability in his heart for the pastoral ministry (PDV #50).

Celibacy Affects Every Deacon

In one way or another, celibacy affects every deacon, married or unmarried. Understanding the nature of celibacy, its value and its practice, are 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 the possibility of living celibate chastity should his wife predecease him. This concern is particularly unique within the diaconate. All deacons need to appreciate the impact celibacy can have on their lives and ministry (NDFML #73).

The Widowed Deacon

The death of a deacon's wife is a "particular moment in life which calls for faith and Christian hope" (DMLPD #62). It 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 (DMLPD #62). As required, a widowed deacon should be assisted to seek professional counsel and spiritual direction as he encounters and integrates the bereavement process.
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. Widows of deacons ought to remain connected with the diaconal community, not only because of support and encouragement, but because of the unique bonds that had been forged by virtue of her husband’s ordination.

**Dispensations for Remarriage or from the Obligations of the Clerical State**

In exceptional cases, the Holy See may grant a dispensation for a new marriage ([DMLPD, note 193, citing Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Circular Letter, Prot. No. 263/97 (June 6, 1997), no. 8] or a release from the obligations of the clerical state. However, to ensure a mature decision in discerning God’s will, effective pastoral care should be provided to maintain that a proper and sufficient period of time has elapsed before either of these dispensations is sought. If a dispensation for a new marriage is petitioned and granted, additional time will be required for the formation of a stable relationship in the new marriage. This will enable his new wife to obtain sufficient understanding and experience about the diaconate in order to give her written informed consent and support (NDFM #75).

**A Deacon and Family Confronting Divorce**

Divorce between a deacon and his wife can happen. Suitable pastoral care should be offered to the deacon, his wife, and their children in this situation. The determination of the divorced deacon’s ministerial status requires sensitivity and prudence on the part of the bishop. Members of the diaconal community are also to reach out, as appropriate to help the divorced couple and family deal with the challenges the divorce may entail.

**The Permanency of the Order of Deacons**

Underlying the restoration and renewal of the diaconate at the Second Vatican Council was the principle that the diaconate is a stable and permanent rank of ordained ministry. Since the history of the Order over the last millennium, however, has been centered
on the diaconate as a transitory stage leading to the priesthood, actions that may confuse the stability and permanence of the Order should be minimized. This would include the ordination of celibate or widowed deacons to the priesthood. “Hence ordination of a permanent deacon to the priesthood....must always be a very rare exception, and only for special and grave reasons....” (DMLPD # 5).

**The Obligations and Rights of Deacons**

**Incardination/Excardination**

Incardination is a juridical bond by which a cleric attaches himself to a particular church, personal prelature, an institute of consecrated life or society endowed with this faculty. “Through the imposition of hands and the prayer of consecration (the deacon) is constituted a sacred minister and a member of the hierarchy” (DMLPD # 1). Having already clearly expressed in writing his intention to serve the Diocese of Victoria for life, upon his ordination the deacon is incardinated in the diocese as a cleric (CIC, 265). A deacon incardinated in another diocese but who wishes to become incardinated into the Church of Victoria by the process of excardination (the releasing of a cleric from the jurisdiction of the diocese in which he is incardinated) and Incardination (the attachment of a cleric in the jurisdiction of a diocese) must use the following procedure:

- He must serve with the expressed permission of the bishop *ad experimentum*, with an openness to incardination, for at least three years (or at the discretion of the Ordinary in individual cases) and demonstrate competent and consistent service in an appropriate assignment.

- He must have a positive recommendation from his pastor, and intends his domicile in the Diocese of Victoria to be permanent.

- The deacon requesting incardination in the Diocese of Victoria shall indicate his desire in writing to the bishop of the diocese to which he is presently incardinated requesting
excardination in order to be incardinated in the Diocese of Victoria. In his request, the petitioning deacon states the reasons for the request and that he intends his domicile in the diocese to be permanent. A copy of this letter is sent to the bishop of the Diocese of Victoria.

- As the same time, the deacon requesting excardination requests incardination into the Diocese of Victoria by a letter to the bishop. The deacon states the reasons for the request including his intention to be permanently domiciled in the Diocese of Victoria and his desire to serve perpetually as a deacon in the diocese. A copy of this letter is to be sent to the bishop of the diocese to which the deacon is presently incardinated.

- All further correspondence is done by the bishops of the two dioceses. Upon approval, the deacon will receive a letter of excardination from the bishop of his prior diocese (which does not come into effect until the deacon receives a letter of incardination from the bishop of the Diocese of Victoria).

Requesting incardination/excardination should be taken seriously by the deacon. This request should not be made unless the chances of returning to one's original diocese are very remote.

**Temporary Transfers into the Diocese**

Deacons who are temporarily relocating into the Diocese and who are not seeking incardination must receive a decree of appointment as visiting deacons before beginning ministry in the Diocese. Visiting deacons and pastors should not negotiate any assignments or make any commitments about opportunities to minister without first contacting the Director of the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons. The process of obtaining a decree of appointment will include interviews with the visiting deacon, scrutiny of the deacon's history of ministry, personal situation, and securing references from his bishop and supervisors.

"A diocesan bishop is under no obligation to accept a permanent deacon, ordained or incardinated elsewhere – for assignment to a
diocesan or parochial ministry. Nevertheless, since a permanent deacon is a cleric, the bishop may not ordinarily forbid a visiting permanent deacon the exercise of his Order provided that the deacon is not under censure” (NDLM # 102).

Temporary Transfers out of the Diocese

A deacon of the diocese who is temporarily relocating to another diocese and who desires to minister as a deacon in the diocese that will be his temporary residence should contact the office responsible for the oversight of permanent deacons to inform them of his intention and obtain information on their process for obtaining an assignment. At the same time, the deacon should contact the Director of the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the Victoria diocese to declare his intention.

Faculties

Unless otherwise specified in his decree of appointment, a deacon lawfully assigned to a parish or diocesan ministry in the diocese has the following faculties, to be used under the supervision of the pastor or supervisor:

- To take part in liturgical functions assigned to a deacon in the approved liturgical books.
- To administer solemn baptism to children under the age of seven (7) and to complete the ceremonies omitted in an emergency baptism (CIC, 861.1)
- To give Holy Communion, to administer Viaticum, and to give benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament (CIC, 910.1, 921 and 943).
- To preside at funeral and burial rites (CIC, 1176.1).
- To preach and to instruct the faithful (CIC, 764).
- To witness marriages in his assigned parish and to witness marriages with the specific delegation of the pastor when functioning in parishes other than his assignment (CIC, 1168 & 1169.3).
Withdrawal of Diaconal Faculties/Suspension

Bishops are reminded that if the ministry of a permanent deacon becomes ineffective or even harmful due to some personal difficulties or irresponsible behavior, his ministerial assignment and faculties are to be withdrawn by the diocesan bishop in accord with Canon Law (NDFLM #100).

For a grave reason, the bishop may suspend a deacon *de facto* prohibiting him from exercising his diaconal faculties. Some of the grave reasons that could lead to suspension may be: refusal to function as a deacon and/or fulfill one's canonical duties assigned by the bishop, attempted marriage after ordination without dispensation, attempted remarriage after a valid marriage, scandal, public crime, or heterodox teaching or preaching. In such cases, a deacon may be suspended pending investigations after an appropriate investigation. The deacon could be reinstated or the process of laicization could be initiated by the bishop.

Loss of Diaconal Status/Laicization

A deacon can be returned to the lay state by canonical dismissal or because of a dispensation granted by the Holy Sec. Once dismissed or dispensed, he no longer enjoys any rights or privileges accorded clerics by the Law of the Church (CIC, 290-293). Any responsibility, financial or liability, ceases on the part of the diocese (NDFLM #99).

Resignation and Retirement

The procedures to be followed in these cases should be those adopted for the priests of the diocese.

A deacon because of age or reasons of health may request to be placed on retirement status by the bishop. In these cases, the deacon is not obliged to fulfill any particular assignment. He will retain his faculties but must obtain permission from the appropriate authority to exercise them. Retirement from the ordinary obligations of active ministry does not relieve the deacon of his personal obligations as a cleric of the diocese.

Significant family or work-related matters beyond the deacon's control which can reasonably be expected to inhibit the ability of
the deacon to exercise any diaconal ministry may justify retirement. Deacons will receive notice in writing from the bishop granting them retirement status.

*Study Absences – Sabbatical*

A study absence is a leave of absence from ministerial duties for the purpose of spiritual or professional enrichment or education. A deacon may request a study absence every seven years.

It should be noted that study absences are intended to be a time of focusing on growth, development and renewal and as such are distinct from “time off to be with family” or an extended leave for vacation. Taking in consideration the unique circumstances of deacons who share the integral vocations of ordination and marriage, deacons may request study absences at times in which a focused attention toward renewing their marriage will facilitate a renewed and strengthened ministry.

*Leave of Absence*

A leave of absence is a time of release from the ministry of a deacon. During a leave of absence, the deacon is prohibited by the bishop from exercising his diaconal faculties. A leave may be requested in writing from the bishop. If granted, the bishop will inform the deacon in writing.

Possible reasons for a leave of absence resulting in a withholding of the authorization to utilize diaconal faculties include:

- Health reasons, understood to include issues relating to a spiritual, mental and physical well-being;
- Family reasons, understood to include issues relating to the immediate family, or to especially close members of an extended family.
- Personal reasons, understood to include any other reason that would have a significant probability of adversely affecting a deacon’s ministry for an extended period of time.
Examples of personal reasons might include, but not be limited to, job changes and employment issues.

In cases, when a deacon is placed on a leave of absence, he is relieved of his ministerial assignments and is prohibited from exercising his ministry except when permission is sought in writing from the bishop for a singular exercise of his ministry and it is approved in writing by the bishop. For example, a deacon on a leave of absence can by a letter to the bishop request permission to baptize an individual infant or witness a specific marriage. The bishop, depending on circumstances, may grant or deny that request. Deacons on leave of absence are prohibited from assisting at Mass, baptizing, presiding at vigils or funerals, witnessing weddings or preaching.

In accordance with the provisions of canon law, the bishop may place a deacon on involuntary administrative leave pending investigation into alleged violations of canon law. The bishop may also place a deacon on involuntary administrative leave for violations of the civil law, the seriousness and circumstances of which can reasonably be expected to compromise the ability of the deacon to minister effectively.

Leaves of absence will be for a specific period of time. After one year, consideration will be given to continuing the leave for an additional period of time or reinstating the deacon. When a deacon has been on leave for more than one year, procedures for suspension and loss of clerical state can be initiated at the direction of the bishop.

A deacon may seek readmission to diaconal ministry by making a formal written request to the bishop. The Director of Ministry and Life would meet with the deacon who is requesting a return to ministry to ensure that the concerns which led to the leave have been sufficiently resolved. If appropriate, the Director would meet with the Deacon Community Board, which would make a recommendation to the bishop regarding the terms of reinstatement and a new decree of assignment. The bishop may grant or refuse the deacon reinstatement in writing.
Business, Employment and Participation in Political Office

A deacon is free to engage in business, acting as a union official, holding public office or administering property belonging to the laity. Without the prior written permission of the bishop, the deacon may not accept a nomination, an appointment to public office, or actively and publicly participate in another’s political campaign (DMLPD #13). In particular cases, the bishop may forbid such an undertaking. Care should be taken that deacons do not work in a profession or trade that is a cause of scandal or will interfere with the fruitful exercise of their office.

Deacons are to take care of their own and their family’s needs using income derived from their full-time employment by the diocese, parish or secular profession. In an individual situation of need, the Church of Victoria ought to assist the deacon and his family in charity and in so far as it is able to do so.

Clerical Title

In accordance with the regulation of Congregation for the Clergy, permanent deacons of the Diocese of Victoria will be addressed as Deacon in all forms of address. This use of the title extends to all written and published communication at the diocesan and parish levels (NDFML #88).

Clerical Attire

The Code of Canon Law exempts permanent deacons from wearing an ecclesiastical garb because they are prominent and active in secular professions and society (CIC #288). The National Directory provides that deacons should “resemble the lay faithful in dress and matters of lifestyle” (NDFML #89). Accordingly, deacons in the Diocese will normally wear non-clerical clothing, decent and appropriate for the circumstances. A name tag identifying the deacon or a diocesan deacon logo is encouraged.

Liturgy of the Hours

Deacons are required to include as part of their daily prayer those parts of the Liturgy of the Hours known as morning and evening prayer. Deacons are obliged to pray for the universal church.
Whenever possible, they should lead these prayers with the community to whom they have been assigned to minister.

**Spiritual Direction and Spiritual Retreat**

Each deacon is expected to choose and regularly meet with a personal spiritual director. While the preference is that Spiritual Directors be priests, it is appropriate and encouraged to have a trained and/or certified director, whether clergy, religious, or lay. Each deacon is to set aside time for retreats and days of reflection. An annual retreat is required for all deacons and wives.

**Integration**

Deacons “should integrate their family obligations, professional life and ministerial responsibilities so as to grow in their commitment to the person and mission of Christ the Servant” (NDFML #63).

**Sexual Misconduct**

Sexual misconduct by any clergy is an issue of professional ethics and may also be an issue of canonical, criminal and/or civil law. This type of misconduct has the potential to do serious harm to the Body of Christ and the Diocese. Deacons are to be mindful that they are in public positions of leadership and influence, which can enhance the seriousness of any alleged misconduct. In all matters concerning sexual misconduct, deacons will follow the Code of Pastoral Conduct and Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors Handbook of the Diocese.

**Diocesan Liability**

The same policies that govern liability for priests in the diocese should be applicable to deacons.

**Assignments**

The primary objective in the assignment of deacons will be to meet the needs of the People of God in the Diocese of Victoria, as determined by the bishop. Assignments of deacons in the diocese are made by the bishop by way of a decree of appointment that will
state with some specificity the deacon's duties and responsibilities. (NDFML #44). Deacons may be assigned either to parish ministry or a diocesan or special non-parochial ministry that may include a limited parochial assignment in order to provide the deacon with a community for liturgical service. Deacons will be expected to provide ministerial services in accordance with the provisions of the bishop's decree of appointment.

Deacons receive a canonical assignment that is binding until a new canonical assignment is made by decree of the bishop. Pastors cannot remove a deacon from a canonical assignment, nor may deacons remove themselves from a canonical assignment. Deacons may not negotiate new assignments or move from their parishes without reassignment or direction by the bishop. The change of a canonical assignment requires the action and decree of the Ordinary of the diocese (CIC #273 and 274).

Ministerial Agreements

The practice in the Diocese of Victoria is for deacons to complete a ministry agreement which specifies the kinds and degree of ministerial activity expected of the deacon in the course of his assignment. This agreement is signed by the deacon, his wife, the pastor or priest-supervisor and the Director of Ministry and Life. In addition, deacons complete an annual Ministry Report that specifies the scope of the ministry the deacon has exercised for the past year. This data is used to provide reports to national bodies studying the diaconate.

Active deacons must submit the Diaconate Ministry Report to the Director of Ministry and Life annually.

Deacons with retired status are required to submit the Annual Ministry Report, even though retired deacons are not required to submit Ministry Agreements.

Active deacons are to complete a new Ministry Agreement upon reassignment or at the time of their first assignment after ordination.

Deacons in active ministry are required to submit ministry agreements to the Director of Ministry and Life every fourth year.
unless they are reassigned to a parish or special diocesan ministry in which case a new Ministry Agreement must be submitted.

Even though the canonical assignment of a deacon continues during a vacancy or change of a pastor, when a new pastor, or administrator is appointed to a parish, or a new supervisor is named to a diocesan ministry, active status deacons must complete a new Ministry Agreement as soon as reasonable.

**Compensation**

Canon law specifies that, normally, the income of a deacon will be derived from non-church sources. Typically, there is no remuneration for diaconal services. Various out-of-pocket expenses incurred in an approved diaconal ministry should, however, be reimbursed to the deacon. Such reimbursable expenses may be, but are not necessarily limited to, mileage, professional development, specifically designated conference expenses, and annual retreat expenses.

Even though a deacon is not normally compensated for diaconal service, he shall be entitled to receive stipends or stole fees for such ministerial services as weddings, funerals or baptisms, on the same basis as priests in the parish in which the services are provided.

Deacons engaged in full-time or part-time paid church employment will be compensated according to the terms of their letter of employment, and any diocesan or parish policies applicable to such employees.

**Preaching Stipends**

Deacons who are asked to preach outside of their assigned parish or institution for Sunday Mass or special celebrations, have a right to ask to be compensated for the time of preparation, travel and delivery of the homily. Deacons should be compensated a suggested $50 for preaching a single homily plus mileage according to the current IRS rate and $35 for assistance at each additional weekend Mass or special celebration plus mileage according to the current IRS rate. These dollar values are intended to provide a just compensation for extern preaching by deacons.
while protecting parishes and deacons from an abuse of inappropriate or competitive stipends.

Parish/Diocesan Commitments to Deacons

The following support for the deacon will be provided by the parish or diocesan ministry to which he is assigned:

- A suggested expense allowance of $750 per year for the purpose of defraying the costs of continuing education, workshops and other forms of continuing formation including travel.

- Furnishing vestments required for the carrying out of liturgical roles including albs, stoles and dalmatics.

- A designated area suitable for counseling, study and preparation for preaching and teaching.

- Provisions for release from his normal responsibilities to participate in recommended spiritual exercises for the deacon.

- Payment for annual Spiritual Retreat expenses up to the diocesan limit.

On-Going Formation

The National Directory requires that the diocese establish a program of on-going formation for deacons. This program of on-going formation is in addition to time allocated for an annual spiritual retreat or diaconal community retreat. Distance learning courses from approved institutions are mentioned in the National Directory as a possible means of fulfilling the on-going formation requirement.

Deacons are required to complete 18 hours of continuing education each fiscal year. Hours are calculated on the basis of contact hours.

- A minimum of 12 of those contact hours must be an academic program such as those offered by the diocese, institutions of higher education, conferences or seminars.
• Up to six hours credit can be earned through attending mandatory diocesan training meetings, participation in additional educational programs, or special work on diaconate-related projects as approved.

Parishes within their means could budget in excess of the suggested amount to meet the specific needs of the parish. Expenses would include tuition or registration fees and could be used for travel to attend workshops or conferences. Any expenditure for continuing education would be made with the prior approval of the pastor or ministerial supervisor for those deacons who are assigned to special ministries.

**Nota Bene:** Parishes without adequate financial resources may negotiate an appropriate continuing education budget within their means and can appeal for additional funding for diaconal continuing education from the diocese. Allocation of payment for the deacons' annual continuing education and retreat are signs of the parish's commitment to support deacons and their families in the light of their ministry rendered without cost to the parish.

Participation in continuing education will be reported as a part of the annual diaconate ministry report or evaluation to be submitted to the Director of Ministry and Life. Deacons failing to fulfill the continuing education requirement will be contacted by the Director of Ministry and Life to determine an appropriate course of action. Failure to fulfill the requirement as determined by the Director of Ministry and Life may result in temporary or permanent loss of certain ministerial functions.

While spouses of deacons are not required to participate in continuing education, they are certainly welcomed and encouraged to participate, when appropriate, in continuing formation programs with their husbands. Parishes should be very supportive of wives in ministry and set aside some funds for wives of deacons who are engaged in ministry.

The costs of theological/spiritual books can be reimbursed with the use of continuing education funds as approved by the pastor or ministerial supervisor.
**Guidelines for the Christian Burial of a Deacon**

Deacons should candidly and faithfully share their ideas and desires with their immediate families regarding arrangements for their Christian burial. This will help them recognize death not as a tragic finality, but as the proclamation of the fullness of life, our participation in the victory of Christ. Accordingly, a deacon is asked to complete the Funeral Instructions for a Deacon of the Church within six (6) months after his Ordination. This form will be kept on file at the Office of the Director of Ministry and Life, and should be reviewed by the deacon at least every year. It is important to understand that the wishes of the deacon as well as the following guidelines are suggestions to assist the widow and family upon his death. It is not the wish of the Office of the Director of Ministry and Life or the Bishop to do anything contrary to the wishes of the family; family wishes will always have the highest priority in any arrangements. However, the deacon should make sure that his family knows and understands that the Liturgy of the Christian Burial of a Deacon appropriately lies with the Office of the Bishop. These guidelines are offered to assist the appropriate individuals with steps to be taken in order that the Diocese of Victoria may respect the memory of one of its good servants.
PART FOUR

POLICIES CONCERNING THE LITURGICAL MINISTRY OF DEACONS

Mass with a Deacon

A deacon is an ordinary minister at the Mass and therefore “when he is present at the celebration of the Eucharist, a deacon should exercise his ministry, wearing sacred vestments.....” (G.I.R.M. 171) The General Instruction also states:

After the Priest, the deacon, in virtue of the sacred Ordination he has received, holds first place among those who minister in the celebration of the Eucharist. For the sacred Order of the Diaconate has been held in high honor in the church even from the early time of the Apostles. At Mass, the Deacon has his own part in proclaiming the Gospel, from time to time in preaching God’s Word, in announcing the intentions of the Universal Prayer, in ministering to the priest, in preparing the altar and in serving the celebration of the Sacrifice, in distributing the Eucharist to the faithful, especially under the species of wine, and from time to time giving instructions regarding the people’s gestures and posture. (G.I.R.M. 94)

Minimally, deacons are to assist at one Sunday Liturgical Celebration in their parishes. At the most, in keeping with the canonical regulations for the presbyters, deacons should assist at no more than three Masses on any given Sunday or Holy day. While in their assigned parish, in extraordinary circumstances such as weddings of their children, wedding anniversaries, deacons may elect to remain in the pew with the spouse. The rightful place for the deacon at Mass is in the sanctuary, assisting with the liturgy. When at Mass outside his assigned parish, the deacon participates from the pew unless invited to assist at the Mass. If a deacon has assisted at the vigil or Sunday Mass in the parish, for the sake of marriage, a deacon would be excused from functioning in this role in order to participate in the Mass from the pew with his wife and family. Care should however be exercised that the identity of the deacon is maintained and may not be
compromised through such practices. The proper place of the deacon is at the ambo and the altar fulfilling his liturgical ministry.

**The Introductory Rites**

Carrying the *Book of the Gospels* slightly elevated, the deacon precedes the priest as he approaches the altar or else walks at the priest's side. (G.I.R.M. 172) If there is another deacon (or several), one deacon walks by the side of the priest; such would also be the case if there were no *Book of the Gospels* to carry in procession. When the deacon does carry the *Book of the Gospels*, he walks behind the lector and precedes any concelebrants and the priest-presenter. Since proclaimation of the gospel is properly a diaconal ministry, it belongs to the deacon to carry the *Book of the Gospels* in the procession. This is attested to by the handing on of the *Book of the Gospels* by the Bishop during the rite of ordination:

Receive the Gospel of Christ,
Whose herald you have become.
Believe what you read,
Teach what you believe,
And practice what you teach.

When he reaches the altar, if he is carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, he omits the *reverential* (sign of reverence) and goes up to the altar. It is a praiseworthy practice for him to place the *Book of the Gospels* on the altar, after which, together with the priest, he venerates the altar with a kiss. (G.I.R.M. 173) (i.e. the deacon does not make the "sign of reverence" before the altar but continues moving without a pause to the altar table and places the *Book of the Gospels* on it. He waits there for the priest and then together they kiss the altar. Traditional Roman practice is to place the *Book of the Gospels* flat on the altar, although the G.I.R.M. does not prescribe any particular way for placing it on the altar.) If, however, he is not carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, he makes a profound bow to the altar with the priest in the customary way and with him venerates the altar with a kiss. Lastly, if incense is being used, he assists the priest in putting some into the Thurible and accompanies the priest in incensing the cross and the altar. Once
the altar has been incensed, the deacon goes to chair together with the priest and there stands at the priest’s side and assists him as necessary. (G.I.R.M. 174)

The Liturgy of the Word

During the singing of the Alleluia or other chant, if incense is being used, the deacon ministers to the priest as he puts incense into the thurible. Then, bowing profoundly before the priest, he asks for the blessing, saying in a low voice, Your blessing, Father. The priest blesses him, saying, “May the Lord be in your heart.” The deacon signs himself with the Sign of the Cross and replies, Amen. Having bowed to the altar, he then takes up the Book of the Gospels which was placed on it and proceeds to the ambo, carrying the book slightly elevated. He is preceded by a thurifer carrying the smoking thurible and by ministers with lighted candles. At the ambo, the deacon greets the people, with hands joined, saying, The Lord be with you. After this, at the words, A reading from the holy Gospel, he signs with his thumb the book and then himself on his forehead, mouth, and breast. He incenses the book and proclaims the Gospel reading. When this is done, he acclaims, The Gospel of the Lord, and all reply, Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ. He then venerates the book with a kiss, saying quietly the formula Per evangelica dicta (Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away) and then returns to the priest’s side.

When the deacon is assisting the bishop, he carries the book to him to be kissed, or else kisses it himself, saying quietly the formula Per evangelica dicta (Through the words of the Gospel). In more solemn celebrations, if appropriate, the bishop may impart a blessing to the people with the Book of the Gospels.

Lastly, the deacon may carry the Book of the Gospels to the credence table or another suitable and dignified place. (G.I.R.M. 175) This suggests a useful liturgical principle: that the book – as any significant liturgical symbol – cannot be ignored once its primary purpose has been fulfilled, but must be treated with respect throughout the whole celebration. Moreover, if there is no suitable reader present, the deacon should proclaim the other
readings as well. (G.I.R.M. 176) In fact, the deacon carries out the duties of other ministers himself, if necessary, when none of them is present.

After the introduction by the priest, it is the deacon himself who announces the intentions of the Universal Prayer, usually from the ambo. This draws a distinction between lay and ordained ministers.

**The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

After the Universal Prayer, while the priest remains at the chair, the deacon prepares the altar, assisted by the acolyte, but it is a deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels himself. He also assists the priest in receiving the people's gifts. After this, he hands the priest the paten with the bread to be consecrated, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly, By the mystery of this water, etc. and after this presents the chalice to the priest. He may also carry out the preparation of the chalice at the credence table. If incense is being used, the deacon assists the priest during the incensation of the offerings, the cross, and the altar; and after this the deacon himself or the acolyte incenses the priest and the people (G.I.R.M. 178) This article describes the deacon's actions as he fulfills his role “as minister of the altar” (Rites of Ordination no. 199)

During the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon stands near the priest, but slightly behind him, so that when necessary he may assist the priest with the chalice or the missal.

From the epiclesis until the priest shows the chalice, the deacon usually remains kneeling. If several deacons are present, one of them may place incense in the thurible for the consecration and incense the host and the chalice at the elevation. This is to distinguish clearly between the deacon who serves the priest and the priest who “offers the sacrifice in the person of Christ. (G.I.R.M. 179)
The usual criteria for not kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer apply here (G.I.R.M. 43) If a deacon were unable to kneel and then to rise without assistance, he would not kneel; if among several deacons, one were unable to do so, then no deacon would kneel.

At the concluding doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon stands next to the priest, and holds the chalice elevated while the priest elevates the paten with the host, until the people have acclaimed, Amen. (G.I.R.M. 180)

This action recalls a traditional image of the deacon as the cupbearer, who was eventually restricted to dispensing the chalice alone (and not the consecrated bread). While the Tridentine Rite required that the deacon stand at the right of the priest for the doxology, the current instruction does not stipulate.

After the priest has said the prayer for the Rite of Peace and the greeting The peace of the Lord – be with you always and the people have replied, And with your spirit, the deacon, if appropriate says the invitation to the Sign of Peace. With hands joined, he faces the people and says, Let us offer each other the sign of peace. Then he himself receives the Sign of Peace from the priest and may offer it to those other ministers who are nearest to him. (G.I.R.M. 181) The instruction that the deacon receives the sign of peace from the priest indicates that this is not a mutual exchange of peace but one which the priest initiates and the deacon receives. It draws a clear distinction between the deacon and the priest.

After the priest’s Communion, the deacon receives Communion under both kinds, the deacon himself administers the chalice to the communicants; and, when the distribution is over, standing at the altar, he immediately and reverently consumes all of the Blood of Christ that remains, and then carries the chalice and other sacred vessels to the credence table, where he purifies them and arranges them as usual, while the priest returns to the chair. Nevertheless, it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified on a corporal, suitably covered, on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass, following the dismissal of the people. (G.I.R.M. 183)
*Note: The Deacon waits until the priest’s Communion is finished, and receives Communion from the priest rather than taking it himself. The deacon cannot administer the Sacrament to himself. Even the priest himself receives Communion. The General Instruction prescribes that the deacon, like the priest, must receive Communion “under both kinds” even when Communion under both forms is not available for the rest of the assembly, underscoring the distinction between the ordained and the laity at Eucharist. (G.I.R.M. 182)

The deacon “immediately and reverently consumes….all of the Blood of Christ that remains.” This could be pastorally challenging, even when assisted by other deacons and priests. Norms for the distribution and reception of Holy Communion under both kinds in the Diocese of the United States of America permits extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to aid in the consumption of whatever precious blood remains. (Norms, 52)

**The Concluding Rites**

Once the prayer after Communion has been said, the deacon makes brief announcements to the people, if indeed any need to be made, unless the priest prefers to do this himself. The deacon making brief announcements reaffirms the deacon’s role as someone who communicates directly to the assembly in preaching, offering petitions, making invitations, or here making announcements. At the same time, the deacon is again cast in an auxiliary position to the priest, who can perform this ministry if he so wishes.

If a prayer over the people or a formula of solemn blessing is used, the deacon says, “Bow down for the blessing.” After the priest’s blessing, the deacon, with hands joined and facing the people, dismisses the people, saying, *Ite, missa est* (Go forth, the Mass is ended) or any of the three other formulae in the Roman Missal. (G.I.R.M. 185)

Then, together with the priest, the deacon venerates the altar with a kiss, makes a profound bow, and withdraws in a manner similar
to the entrance procession. (G.I.R.M 186) The instruction specifies that a “profound bow” follows the kissing of the altar, rather than the more ambiguous “due reverence” in earlier General Instructions.

**The Deacon in other Liturgical Situations**

*Baptisms and RCIA*

Deacons may preside at the Sacrament of Baptism for infants; that is, children up to the catechetical age that is considered to be seven years of age. The deacon may preside at the minor rites of the RCIA according to the norms for the rites.

*Marriages*

Deacons may witness and bless marriages as well as conduct the premarital investigations and preparations; request necessary permissions and dispensations; initiate the process for convalidation for declarations of nullity and/or for dissolutions of the bond; administer the Rite of Marriage within or outside of Mass; and give the nuptial blessing at marriages outside of Mass. If a deacon is witnessing a marriage outside of the juridical boundaries of the parish to which he is assigned, he must receive proper delegation from that pastor prior to the wedding. This is for the validity of the marriage.

*Funerals*

Except for the Mass, a deacon may conduct all the funeral rites. This includes conducting the Vigil, Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass, and Rite of Committal.

*Sacramentals*

Deacons may bless sacramentals including medals and religious articles with the sign of the cross and administer invocative blessings from the ritual (except where such blessings are reserved to priests). Deacons may distribute, but not bless, ashes unless the blessing of ashes is part of a liturgical service at which he presides.
Preaching

Among the primary ministries of the deacon are proclaiming the Gospel and preaching at the liturgies. As one ordained to announce the Good News, the deacon can extend this ministry in almost unlimited ways. The deacon may preach on the following occasions when he is the presiding minister of a Sacrament or Liturgical rite:

- Reception of Holy Communion outside of Mass and Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest;
- Baptism of Infants;
- Sacrament of Matrimony;
- Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament;
- Order of Christian Funerals: Vigil and related rites and prayers, Rite of Committal and Final Commendation;
- Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours; and
- Visitation of the Sick and the administration of Viaticum.

At the invitation of the presider, the deacon may also preach at any liturgy at which he is not the presider. Deacons are encouraged to preach at Sunday liturgies at least every four to six weeks.

Veneration of the Altar and the Book of the Gospels

According to traditional practice, the veneration of the altar and of the Book of the Gospels is done by means of a kiss. (G.I.R.M. 273)

Genuflections and Bows

A genuflection, made by bending the right knee to the ground, signifies adoration, and therefore it is reserved for the Most Blessed Sacrament, as well as for the Holy Cross from the solemn adoration during the liturgical celebration on Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

During Mass, three genuflections are made by the Priest Celebrant; namely, after the elevation of the host, after the elevation of the chalice, and before Communion. Certain specific features to be observed in a concelebrated Mass are noted in their proper place.
If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself. Otherwise, all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession. (G.I.R.M. 274)

Ministers carrying the processional cross or candles bow their heads instead of genuflecting. A bow signifies reverence and honor shown to the persons themselves or to the signs that represent them. There are two kinds of bow: a bow of the head and a bow of the body. (G.I.R.M 275)

A bow of the head is made when the Three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honor Mass is being celebrated. A bow of the body, that is to say, a profound bow, is made to the altar; during the prayers Munda cor meum (Cleanse my heart) and In spiritu humilitatis (With humble spirit); in the Creed at the words et incarnatus est (and by the Holy Spirit...and became man); in the Roman Canon at the Supplices te rogamus (In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God). The same kind of bow is made by the deacon when he asks for a blessing before the proclamation of the Gospel. In addition, the priest bows slightly as he pronounces the words of the Lord at the Consecration.

**Incensation**

Thurification or incensation is an expression of reverence and of prayer, as is signified in Sacred Scripture. Incense may be used optionally in any form of Mass:

- during the Entrance Procession;
- at the beginning of Mass, to incense the cross and the altar;
- at the procession before the Gospel and the proclamation of the Gospel itself;
- after the bread and the chalice have been placed on the altar, to incense the offerings, the cross, and the altar, as well as the priest and the people;
• at the elevation of the host and the chalice after the Consecration. (G.I.R.M. 276)

The priest, having put incense into the thurible, blesses it with the Sign of the Cross, without saying anything. Before and after an incensation, a profound bow is made to the person or object that is being incensed, except for the altar and the offerings for the Sacrifice of the Mass. Three swings of the thurible are used to incense: the Most Blessed Sacrament, a relic of the Holy Cross and images of the Lord exposed for public veneration, the offerings for the Sacrifice of the Mass, the altar cross, the Book of the Gospels, the paschal candle, the priest, and the people. Two swings of the thurible are used to incense relics and images of the Saints exposed for public veneration; this should be done, however, only at the beginning of the celebration, following the incensation of the altar. The altar is incensed with single swings of the thurible in this way: if the altar is freestanding with respect to the wall, the priest incenses walking around it. If the altar is not freestanding, the priest incenses it while walking first to the right hand side, then to the left. The cross, if situated on the altar or near it, is incensed by the priest before he incenses the altar; otherwise, he incenses it when he passes in front of it. The priest incenses the offerings with three swings of the thurible or by making the Sign of the Cross over the offerings with the thurible before going on to incense the cross and the altar. (G.I.R.M. 277)

The Purification

The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon or an instituted acolyte after communion or after Mass, in so far as possible at the credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then consumed by whoever does the purification. The paten is wiped clean as usual with the purificator. Care is to be taken that whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ after the distribution of communion is consumed immediately and completely at the altar. (G.I.R.M 279)

If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently; and if any of the precious blood is spilled, the area where the spill
occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the *sacrarium* in the sacristy. (G.I.R.M 280)

**Sacred Vestments**

In the church, which is the Body of Christ, not all members have the same function. This diversity of offices is shown outwardly in the celebration of the Eucharist by the diversity of sacred vestments, which must therefore be a sign of the function proper to each minister. Moreover, these same sacred vestments should also contribute to the decoration of the sacred action itself. The vestments worn by priests and deacons, as well as the attire worn by lay ministers, are blessed before being put into liturgical use according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual. (G.I.R.M. 335)

The sacred garment common to all ordained and instituted ministers of any rank is the alb, to be tied at the waist with a cincture unless it is made so as to fit even without such. Before the alb is put on, should this not completely cover the ordinary clothing at the neck, an amice should be used. The alb may not be exchanged for a surplice, not even over a cassock, on occasions when a chasuble or dalmatic is to be worn or when, according to the norms, only a stole is worn without a chasuble or dalmatic. (G.I.R.M. 336)

The vestment proper to the deacon is the dalmatic, worn over the alb and stole; however, the dalmatic may be omitted out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity. (G.I.R.M. 338)

The stole is worn by the priest around his neck and hanging down in front of his chest, while it is the worn by the deacon over his left shoulder and drawn diagonally across the chest to the right side, where it is fastened. (G.I.R.M. 340)

It is fitting that the beauty and nobility of each vestment not be sought in an abundance of overlaid ornamentation, but rather in the material used and in the design. Ornamentation on vestments should, moreover, consist of figures, that is, of images or symbols,
that denote sacred use, avoiding anything unbecoming to this. (G.I.R.M. 344)

Diversity of color in the sacred vestments has as its purpose to give more effective expression even outwardly whether to the specific character of the mysteries of faith to be celebrated or to a sense of Christian life's passage through the course of the liturgical year. As regards the color of sacred vestments, traditional usage should be observed, namely:

- The color white is used in the Offices and Masses during Easter Time and Christmas time; on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity; and furthermore on celebrations of the Lord other than of his Passion, celebrations of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Holy Angels, and of Saints who were not Martyrs; on the Solemnities of All Saints (November 1) and of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24); and on the Feasts of St. John the Evangelist (December 27), of the Chair of St. Peter (February 22), and of the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25).

- The color red is used on Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion and on Friday of Holy Week (Good Friday), on Pentecost Sunday, on celebrations of the Lord's Passion, on the “birthday” feast days of Apostles and Evangelists, and on celebrations of Martyr Saints.

- The color green is used in the Offices and Masses of Ordinary Time.

- The color violet or purple is used in Advent and Lent. It may also be worn in Offices and Masses for the Dead.

- Besides the color violet, the colors white or black may be used at funeral services and at other Offices and Masses for the Dead.

- The color rose may be used, where it is the practice, on Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and on Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent).

- On more solemn days, festive, that is, more precious, sacred vestments may be used even if not of the color of the day.
• The colors gold and silver may be worn on more solemn occasions.

Ritual Masses are celebrated in their proper color, in white, or in a festive color; Masses for Various Needs, on the other hand, are celebrated in the color proper to the day or the time of year or in violet if they have a penitential character. Votive Masses are celebrated in the color suited to the Mass itself or even in the color proper to the day or the time of the year. (G.I.R.M. 347)
PART FIVE

THE STATUS OF THESE POLICIES

Particular Law

These policies and procedures, once approved by the bishop of Victoria in Texas, become normative in the diocese until amended by the bishop or his successor.

Amendments

Recommendations for amendments to these policies and procedures may be offered by the Deacon Community Board upon a consensus vote of the membership. As the body is only a consultative body, the bishop is under no obligation to accept the recommendations of the board or to amend these policies and procedures.

Approved this 7th day of December 2016.

+Brendan J. Cahill

The Most Rev. Brendan J. Cahill, S.T.D.
Bishop, Diocese of Victoria in Texas
Diocese of Victoria  Pastor/Deacon Ministry Agreement
Name of Deacon: ______________________________

The purpose of this agreement is to help the Pastor and Deacon understand the ministry responsibility of the deacon. The needs of the parish, and not personal preferences, should be the determining factors. This agreement is to be submitted to the Director of Ministry and Life every fourth year, or when a change of a pastor occurs or upon reassignment of the deacon. Describe in reasonable detail the expectations of the deacon in each function.

Possible Pastoral Functions
A. Religious Education
   1. Adult Education
   2. RCIA
   3. High School/CCD
   4. Other Pastoral Functions

B. Sacramental Preparation
   1. Baptismal Preparation
   2. Marriage Instruction
   3. Other Sacramental Preparations

C. Tribunal Work
   1. Annulment Preparation
   2. Advocate for Tribunal

D. Other Pastoral Functions

Possible Liturgical Ministry
   A. Assist at the altar during Mass    Yes  No
   B. Preach                          Yes  No
   C. Baptize                        Yes  No
   D. Witness Marriage               Yes  No
   E. Preside at funerals (Rosary, graveside) Yes  No
   F. Conduct Communion Service       Yes  No
   G. Preside at Benediction and Exposition Yes  No
   H. Other Liturgical Ministries     Yes  No
Possible Service Ministry (Specify on additional sheet if necessary)

A. Visiting hospitals and nursing homes, hospice, shut-ins  
B. Ministry to the poor/homeless  
C. Youth ministry  
D. Ecumenical ministry  
E. Ministry to jails and /or prisons  
F. Other service ministry

Other Activities

A. Work with parish organizations  
B. Attend Parish Council and Board Meetings  
C. Other activities

Is there an unmet ministerial need in the community? If so, will the deacon assist in addressing the need?

Expenses: Diocesan Policy provides that the Parish will reimburse the deacon for certain out-of-pocket expenses. The Parish should be willing to pay for an annual retreat and annual continuing education for the deacon and is urged to pay for the deacon’s wife for both functions. The amount to be budgeted for the deacon is covered in the deacon policy handbook.

Will Parish pay for deacon’s annual retreat and continuing education?  Yes  No  
Wife’s expenses  Yes  No

How will deacon be reimbursed for expenses?

Signature of Pastor
Date
Parish

Signature of Deacon
Date

Signature of Wife
Date

Director of Ministry and Life
Date
Diocese of Victoria
Office of Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons
Annual Ministry Report

Name___________________________________________

Each year, active deacons must complete:
1. An annual retreat: and
2. 18 hours of continuing education (see Deacon Personnel Handbook)

Retreat: I attended _________________________________________
(name of retreat)

on __________________________ at ____________________________
(dates) (location)

Classroom or Seminar Instruction: I attended the following courses or seminars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Course or Seminar</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Hours</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>5.</td>
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Total Class Hours

Other Approved Educational Programs
(Description of Program)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Hours</th>
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</table>

Total Class Hours

Who is your spiritual director? ____________________________

How often do you meet? ____________________________

Where are you currently assigned? ____________________________
What ministries have you participated in this past year.  (Give estimates of how many times you performed these ministries)

What are the most significant events you experienced this past year?

How are you doing physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually?

Are there any other issues or concerns you would like to make known to the Director of Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons?

___________________________   ________________________
Signature                      Date

Return to: Director of Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons
Diocese of Victoria
P.O. Box 4070
Victoria, Texas 77903
Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria
FUNERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR A DEACON OF THE CHURCH

(Complete this information and leave it where it will be easily found upon your death.)

Final Directions and Instructions upon the Death of ________________________________  Print Deacon’s Name

Please notify the following as soon as possible upon death:
Bishop’s Office 361 573 0828
Deacon Dennis Kutach 361 741 2657  deacon@stjcatholicchurch.com

Copies of this form have been given to:
☐ Director of Ministry and Life
☐ Wife ___________________________ ___________________________
   Name                          Address/Phone
☐ Relative ______________________ ___________________________
   Name                          Address/Phone
☐ Parish ________________________ ___________________________
   Name                          Address/Phone

Information for death notice and documents:
Deacon’s Full Name: ___________________________ Date of Ordination: ______
Address: ___________________________ Place of Ordination: ______

Date of Birth: ___________________________ Place of Birth: ______
Father’s Full Name ___________________________ Living: ☐ Deceased: ☐
Mother’s Full Name ___________________________ Living: ☐ Deceased: ☐
Wife’s Full Name ___________________________ Living: ☐ Deceased: ☐
(Including maiden name)

Names, addresses and telephone numbers of other children, living brothers and sisters:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Occupation: ___________________________ Phone Number: ___________
Employer: ___________________________

Ministries / Interests in Life:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Military Service – Branch: ____________ Dates of Service: ______________________
My funeral arrangements have been made at: (Name and Address):
________________________________________________________________________
Cemetery (Name and Address): ________________________________________________
INSTRUCTIONS FOR FUNERAL RITES

FUNERAL VIGIL REQUESTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location Name</th>
<th>Street Address</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City, State and Zip</td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Presiding Minister:
Music Minister:
Scripture Reading(s): Reader:
Intercessions prepared by family ☐ or ☐ Church Reader:
Individual(s) offering eulogy:

FUNERAL MASS REQUESTS*
Music and Scripture

| Entrance Song: |
| Song at Preparation of Gifts: |
| Communion Song: |
| Recessional Song: |

| Old Testament Reading: Reader: |
| Psalm: |
| New Testament Reading: Reader: |
| Gospel Acclamation: (will be sung) |
| Gospel: Reader: (Priest or Deacon) |
| Intercessions to be prepared by family ☐ or ☐ Church Reader: |

Other Ministers of the Liturgy

| Presider - The Bishop usually presides: |
| Deacons: of the Word: of the Eucharist: |
| Music Minister |
| Altar Servers: 1) 2) |
| Gift Bearers: Bread Wine |
| Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: 1) 2) |
| Optional: Those involved in the placing of Christian Symbols |
| Pall: Book of the Gospels: Crucifix: |
| Individual offering post-Communion reflection: |

Deacon Signature __________________ Wife Signature __________________ Date ____________

REVIEW THIS FORM ANNUALLY – UPDATE AS NECESSARY – DISTRIBUTE UPDATES AS REQUIRED
**Permanent Deacon Logo**

Logos suggested to be used on stationery for the Office of the Permanent Diaconate of the Diocese of Victoria, are illustrated below. The logo could also be used as the official lapel pin for the deacons of the diocese.

*Example 1*
Example 2

I have given you a model to follow.
So that as I have done for you, you should also do. John 13:15

Example 3