DIOCESE OF WORCESTER

PERSONNEL POLICIES FOR DEACONS

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PREAMBLE

The Lord Jesus said:
   “But if I washed your feet,
   I who am teacher and Lord,
   Then you must wash each other’s feet.
   What I just did was to give you an example:
   As I have done, so you must do!”
   John 13: 14-15

The concept of mission has its source in God. The Son was sent by the Father, and the Holy Spirit was “sent” by the Father and the Son. The Church, too, is missionary by its very nature. “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” (John 20:21)

The Church’s ministry of word, sacrament, witness, and service is Christ’s ministry. Ordained ministry, therefore, means primarily, to exercise a mission in the name of Jesus Christ, Lord and Teacher.

Through the imposition of hands by the Bishop, the deacon shares sacramentally in the diaconal ministry of Christ. A collaborative bond is thereby established between the deacon and the Bishop and his priests to carry on the mission of Christ among His people.
SECTION ONE

ADMINISTRATION

I. THE DIRECTORS AND ASSISTANTS

The Director of the Diaconate, as representative of the Bishop, is directly responsible for the entire Diaconate program. An Assistant Director for Formation, appointed by the Bishop, and a Coordinator for Diaconal Family Activities and an Assistant Director of Ethnic Diversities will assist the Director. In addition, because the program involves a large sphere of operations, the following committees have been established to assist the Directors in all areas of diaconal concern.

II. THE DIACONATE ADVISORY BOARD

This Diaconate Board is a consultative committee made up of men and women who are supportive of the diaconal ministry in the Diocese of Worcester. This board assists the Directors in determining policies concerning recruitment, selection, and formation of diaconal candidates as well as in considering policies relative to continued spiritual and academic development of those ordained to the Diaconate.

The Director and the Assistant Directors are ex-officio members. Other members may include priests (some of whom are pastors), deacons and their wives, men and women religious, and lay people.

III. THE DIACONATE SELECTION COMMITTEE

The purpose of this committee is to assist the Directors in interviewing those who have inquired about the Diaconate program. The committee’s participation in the actual selection of candidates for the program is absolutely essential, most especially in the areas of screening and recommending or not recommending acceptance of applicants. Because of the sensitivity of these issues, a serious allegiance to confidentiality underlies all discussions.

The Selection Committee will develop criteria for screening applicants and their wives, if married, to discern which inquirers may have a call to the Diaconate. From the Committee, teams of two or three members will conduct two interviews: one with the inquirer and his wife; the other with the inquirer and members of his household.

Before the actual selection of candidates, the Directors will review the reports and recommendations of the two selection committee interviews. If there is a concern, there will be a further review with the interview teams. The final decision is based on the Directors’ screening interview, the selection committee’s recommendations, and the staff’s evaluation.
SECTION TWO

APPLICANTS/ASPIRANTS/CANDIDATES

I. ADMISSIONS AND SCREENING PROCESS

A. Admissions Criteria

As one who shares the Sacrament of Holy Orders with bishops and priests, the deacon is called to serve and to lead through service, liturgy, and the Word. Because the deacon carries out very important spiritual and ecclesial responsibilities among the People of God, he must be able to meet the demands of preparation for ordination and a life of service as an authentic servant of the Church in the name of Jesus, the Lord. Therefore, a process of screening possible candidates has been designed.

1. Basic Criteria

The candidate must be a baptized and confirmed male, a practicing member of the Latin Catholic Church who is at least 31 years of age and not older than 60 at the time of application. He may be single or married. If married, he must give evidence that the marriage is stable; the candidate’s wife and family must fully support the candidate in his decision to prepare for and to serve as a deacon.

Each candidate must

a. be in sound physical and mental health.

b. have attended four years of college and received a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent.

c. have been a practicing Catholic for at least the five years previously.

d. have been active in his parish for at least five years.

e. have a mature vocational call and a well-integrated spirituality.

f. enjoy a well-adjusted family and be able to dedicate the required time for academic and spiritual preparation and for ministry in the parish after ordination.

g. have sufficient reading and writing skills to undertake the academic and spiritual formation program.

h. at some point, present a letter from his personal physician who attests to the candidate’s good health.
i. present certificates of Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage (if applicable).

j. be a United States Citizen.

*Waivers may be granted, in certain instances, depending on the circumstances of an individual applicant.*

2. **The Process In General**

   - Inquiry through the Office of the Diaconate.
   - Initial interview with the Director, the inquirer and, if married, his wife.
   - Two other interviews with teams from the Selection Committee.

B. **The Screening Process**

Inquirers may learn of the diaconal program by attending “Information Nights or by contacting the Office of the Diaconate. If he is still interested, both he and, if married, his wife, should then expect to arrange for the first of three interviews in a screening process designed to determine whether or not an applicant is eligible and ready to enter into the discernment process. The first interview is conducted with the Director and the inquirer and his wife. It is a general interview which assures the Director that

1. the criteria listed have been met;

2. the inquirer’s wife and family completely approve;

3. the inquirer has a sound understanding of the demands of the program.

A decision will then be made whether or not to advance the inquirer and his wife to a second interview with a team made up of members from the Selection Committee. The interviewing Director may ask for a second initial interview to be carried out by an Assistant Director. The second interview is called the Thematic Interview and is directed by a team of members of the Selection Committee. This interview seeks to look further into the areas of family, faith, one’s “personal story,” and once again, the reasons for pursuing diaconal ministry. The third interview takes place in the home. A different team of interviewers will direct this meeting which focuses mainly on the stability of the family and their responses to the expectations of diaconal formation and ordained ministry. At a staff meeting, the information from the three interviews is reviewed in strictest confidence to determine who should or who should not be admitted into the discernment process. The final decision is based on the Director’s screening interview, the selection committees’ recommendations, and the staff’s evaluation. There may also be a decision to postpone admission to another time.
C. The Discernment Process

Upon receiving a letter of admission from the Director, the inquirer and his wife are then expected to complete the process of discernment.

- The twelve-week discernment process begins in September and continues through November. Although it is not an academic pursuit, inquirers and, if married, their wives meet in an academic setting. The inquirers have an opportunity to examine both spiritual and temporal aspects of the Diaconate. By the end of the discernment process, the inquirers will have been given the tools to make a sound decision whether or not they want to pursue the academic and spiritual formation of the Diaconate program.

- Sessions take place on Monday and Wednesday from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

- The Monday meetings explore the spiritual dimensions of authenticating one’s call from the Lord. Coupled with Mass or prayer times, these meetings offer inquirers the spiritual means to probe their holy invitation to serve God’s people as a deacon. The spiritual discernment process draws from examples of discernment from Sacred Scripture, the Church Fathers, the Second Vatican Council, and St. Ignatius of Loyola. This part of the process looks at personal prayer lives through Liturgical Prayer and through the Liturgy of the Hours. In all, it seeks to offer the inquirer a time to develop a “discerning heart.”

- The Wednesday gatherings center on the “temporal” aspects of preparing for Diaconate and living out the life of a deacon. These sessions include:
  - A history and theology of the Diaconate;
  - Psychological testing;
  - Testing for academic aptitude;
  - Panel discussion by active deacons on the topic: “The deacon’s relationship to family, work, and Church”;
  - Panel discussion presented by deacons’ wives on the topic: “Learning to grow and cope with a different lifestyle;”
  - An explanation of special ministries for deacons;
  - Presentations on the liturgical role of the deacon;
  - The deacon as a leader;
  - The diaconal policies of the diocese.

- After the discernment period, the Director will decide whether or not aspirants are prepared to begin the process of instruction and formation, which includes deeper discernment. Simultaneously, inquirers will decide whether or not they wish to continue in the program, that is, formally enter into spiritual and academic formation.

- If the decision of the Director is affirmative, the inquirer will receive a letter of acceptance. If the decision is not affirmative, the inquirer will receive a letter either postponing his admission to another time or terminating the process altogether.
Lastly, it should be noted that a candidate’s personal discernment becomes part of his spiritual consciousness. He should always probe the mystery of the call from the Lord Jesus, validating its authenticity throughout every part of his journey toward ordination.

Spiritual formation and the first semester of academic formation begin in the early part of January of the next calendar year.

II. THE SPIRITUAL/ACADEMIC/PASTORAL FORMATION OF ASPIRANTS

A. Spiritual Formation

1. Preamble

Jesus Christ, “the exact representation of the Father’s being (who) sustains all things by his powerful word” (Hebrews 1:3), is the certain and abiding Presence who creates and nourishes community among men and women of the Church. In the dispensation of truth and light in Christ, we know that we must continually pray to God in gratitude, live with one another in gentle peace, and build the community of the Church by loving and serving one another as Jesus taught us. It is Jesus who calls us to discipleship in all the dimensions of Church life.

Overall, then, encountering Jesus through prayer, a candidate should develop a personal spirituality and should learn the importance of nurturing that prayer life while ministering among the People of God. Finally, a candidate should be able to translate his personal prayer life and faith into an active ministry of caring for others, of encountering Jesus in others.

2. Goals

In the light of these truths, the Spiritual Formation Process of the Diaconate Program seeks through the celebration of Holy Eucharist and liturgies outside the Eucharist:

1. to develop and encourage an aspirant’s/candidate’s prayer life, his personal relationship with God.

2. to reinforce the understanding that a vibrant prayer life becomes a well-spring of spiritual renewal from which the aspirant/candidate may draw strength and peace in ministry.

3. to form a spirit of community among aspirants/candidates and, if married, their wives and all those associated with their spiritual and academic formation.
4. to inform and deepen an aspirant’s/candidate’s understanding of diaconia to the People of God and to probe the identity of being a deacon ecclesially, spiritually, and socially.

5. to support his relationship with a spiritual director.

3. Practicalities of Spiritual Formation

Aspirants/Candidates and their wives come from a variety of circumstances, live in all regions of the diocese, fulfill many different responsibilities in their families and their jobs. A fruitful spiritual formation process must necessarily accommodate itself to this diversity of experiences.

Therefore, aspirants/candidates and, if married, their wives will gather for prayer and reflection during the following times outside the classroom:

1. Holy Eucharist may be celebrated between 6:30 – 7:00 p.m., the time just before classes begin. However, worship in forms of prayer outside the Eucharist may also be offered, such as Communion Services, celebrated by deacons of the diocese. This spiritual formation may also include Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, Benediction, recitation of the Rosary, readings of Sacred Scripture with reflection by the director, a guest priest, or a deacon, or other devotions.

2. Days, afternoons, or evenings of reflection, which wives are required to attend with their husbands.

3. A yearly retreat which wives are required to attend.

4. Regular meetings with qualified spiritual directors.

B. Academic Formation

1. The Academic Program: General Structure

"An increasingly educated society and the roles of leadership in diaconal ministry require that a deacon be a knowledgeable and reliable witness to the faith and a spokesman for the church’s teaching." – National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States. The academic formation is composed of a four-year program based on yearly trimesters: January to March; April to June; September to November. Classes are normally conducted from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays at the Diaconate Training Center. Deacon candidates are expected to attend each class and to fulfill the requirements as set out in the syllabus written by the instructor and filed with the Office of the Diaconate.

All wives of married candidates are invited and strongly urged to attend the courses along with their husbands; they are not required to do so. Also, wives may take a course for credit (C.E.U.) simply by registering with the Office of the Diaconate. The purchase of books and supplies is the responsibility of the candidates’ wives.
2. The Academic Program Courses

The following is a list of the specific courses that comprise the complete academic program:

*Old Testament I & II*
*New Testament I & II*
*Communication Skills*
*Sociology*
*Christology*
*The Development of Spirituality*
*Introduction to Pastoral Liturgy*
*Church History*
*Ecclesiology*
*Mariology and The Communion of Saints*
*Dogmatic Theology*
*Homiletics I & II & III*

*Moral Theology I & II*
*Psychology and Pastoral Counseling*
*Leadership Training*
*Sacramental Theology*
*Introduction to Canon Law*
*Ecumenism*
*Evangelization*
*Family Life Ministries*
*Sacramental Preparation/ RCIA*
*Presiding at Liturgical Prayer (Practicum)*

3. The Inter-sessions

Inter-sessions are four-week periods following the third trimester of the first three years of formation. During these sessions, mini-courses are offered to those in training. The courses may but do not necessarily include the following:

*The Theology and Dramatic Elements of Proclamation*
*Introduction to Liturgical Terminology, Actions and Presence*
*Understanding Ethnic Diversity in the Diocese of Worcester*
*Leadership Training*
*Seminar/Field Experience*
*Pastoral Internships*

4 Grading System

Those in the Diaconate Formation Program must receive a passing grade in every subject. Candidates who receive a grade below “C-” in more than one subject will be placed on academic probation. Additional marks of “C-” or below will initiate cause for withdrawal from the program.
A grade of "incomplete" will be given for a period of three weeks at the close of a trimester to candidates who, for any reason, have failed to complete the course requirements. "Incompletes," which remain so, will be automatically changed to a grade of "F" at the end of the three-week period unless there are special circumstances that warrant a different action.

The grading system consists of twelve categories as follows:


“A” is excellent; “B” is good; “C” is satisfactory; “D” is passing but unsatisfactory; “F” is failure.

Exemption examinations, practicums, and some courses are graded on a “pass-fail” basis. The following equivalents for the twelve letter-grades are used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A−</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B−</td>
<td>80-83</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>64-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>D−</td>
<td>60-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Withdraw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP</td>
<td>Withdraw Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF</td>
<td>Withdraw Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
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Candidates will be tested and evaluated on their grasp of the material that is presented in class. Besides academic performance, instructors also evaluate candidates on class participation and their interaction with others in the class.

C. The Rites of Institution

The path leading to diaconal formation includes aspirant, candidacy, reader, and acolyte. Each step has the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions integrated into the formation process. As the candidate enters each stage of formation, a deeper understanding and commitment to each dimension is stressed.

- **Human dimension**: to develop a high degree of self-knowledge and self-esteem.

- **Spiritual dimension**: to create an environment in which the individual is encouraged to grow in his personal relationship with Christ and in his commitment to the Church and its mission to the world.

- **Intellectual dimension**: to communicate a deeper knowledge of the faith and church tradition, Catholic spirituality, doctrinal understanding of the diaconate, theological reflection and to apply the church’s social justice teaching and practice.

- **Pastoral dimension**: to develop the person’s gifts for the threefold ministry of word, liturgy and charity and his capacity to make a lifelong commitment to these ministries.
1. **The Rite of Admission to Candidacy**

After one full year as an aspirant, the candidate is admitted to the Rite of Candidacy. This is the first official recognition of the positive signs of the vocation to the Diaconate that must be confirmed in the subsequent years of formation.

2. **The Rite of Institution into the Ministry of Reader**

During the second year of candidacy, several sessions are scheduled for training in Proclaiming the Word. Candidates petition for the conferral of the Rite of Reader when they have successfully completed these training sessions.

3. **The Rite of Institution into the Ministry of Acolyte**

The candidate has been prepared, through special workshops and participation in weekly ministerial activities, to assume his duties to attend to the service of the altar and to assist the deacon and the priest in liturgical celebrations. During his final year of formation, the candidate will petition the bishop for conferral of the Rite of Acolyte. After his installation into this ministry, the candidate will be assigned to a six-month internship in a local parish under the supervision of a pastor. This is the final step prior to the canonical retreat and Ordination to the Diaconate.

4. **The Canonical Retreat**

This is a directed retreat made only by candidates (without wives) prior to ordination. All candidates make the same retreat at the same time and at the same retreat house. As a requirement of the Church’s law, the five-day canonical retreat helps to prepare the candidate spiritually for the final stages of proceeding to ordination.

5. **The Ordination to Diaconate**

The recommendation of a candidate to the Bishop for ordination is made by the Director and is based upon the successful completion of the academic and spiritual formation, the canonical retreat, consultation with faculty members and internship pastors, and a final interview with each candidate.

When a candidate is recommended, he is then called by the Bishop to the Order of Deacon. The candidate declares that he is “ready and willing” to become a visible sign of Jesus Christ as a Deacon and asks for ordination. It is then that the Bishop ordains the candidate so that he shares this clerical state with priests and bishops and functions fully in those ministries appropriate to this office.
SECTION THREE

DEACONS

I. THE ASSIGNMENT OF DEACONS

Having promised obedience in the Rite of Ordination, deacons are assigned to ministry by the Diocesan Bishop ("Bishop" herein). Therefore, the following directive will relate to the assignment of deacons:

1. The determination of assignments is generally guided by
   - the needs of the particular (diocesan) church
   - the capacities of the individual deacons

2. In preparation for and in recommending a diaconal assignment to the Bishop, there will first occur a consultation between the deacon (in appropriate instances, to include candidates to the Diaconate before ordination) and the Directors of the Diaconate Program. This discussion will appraise the deacon’s gifts, interests, and skills and will assess realistically his capacities, prior obligations, and time and travel from his place of residence.

3. Normally but not necessarily, a deacon will be assigned to basic parochial ministry. However, assignments, which involve other specific, non-parochial ministries, may be developed and considered.

4. Once the Bishop has approved the recommended assignment, a ministerial agreement is entered into between the deacon and the pastor/department head/chaplain ('supervisor' herein) in order to enunciate and clarify the deacon’s responsibilities in the parish or diocesan agency or institution.

See Appendix “A”: Ministerial Agreement Form

The fundamental goal of the ministerial agreement is to sustain a harmonious working relationship between the supervisor and the deacon. The agreement also helps

a. to eliminate unrealistic expectations,
b. to establish realistic objectives,
c. to preserve proper communication among the supervisor, the deacon and, if married, his wife, the Director and the Bishop.

In all cases, the deacon and, if married, his wife, must meet formally with the supervisor every three years in order to review the agreement and, if necessary, to set new ministry goals
for the coming year. If applicable, the inclusion of the deacon’s wife in such a meeting is most desirable in order to protect the stability of the deacon’s family life.

In all cases, a ministerial agreement will be ultimately approved by the Bishop and the Director who sign the document along with the supervisor, the deacon and, if married, the deacon’s wife.

It is normally expected that the ministerial agreement will include the following directives:

The average weekly time spent in ministry should be 12 to 15 hours.

It is strongly suggested that the pastor allow the deacon to preach at least twice a month at Lord’s Day Masses, and as often as possible at other liturgical celebrations, prayers services, etc. Preaching schedules should be rotated on a regular basis so that the deacon would not be preaching at the same Mass each time he preaches.

1. The deacon will be reimbursed monthly for out-of-pocket expenses by the parish/department/chaplaincy. Also monthly, the deacon must submit to his supervisor a list of and/or receipts for these expenses. The maximum amount is determined by the Office of the Diaconate upon the approval of the Bishop.

2. The agreement will specify the expectations of the community directly served by the deacon. Further, the agreement will clearly indicate the lines of supervision and accountability.

3. During the first year of assignment, the supervisor will submit a written and signed evaluation of the ministerial performance of the deacon. Copies of all written evaluations will be filed at the Office of the Diaconate. The supervisor will also give a copy of the evaluation to the deacon.

4. It is expected that the deacon and the pastor/supervisor will meet at least once a year for a formal written evaluation. A periodic evaluation of ministerial assignments may be made at the request of the Office of the Diaconate.

5. When a new pastor, administrator, department head, or chaplain is named to a place where a deacon is already assigned, it is expected that the current ministry agreement will remain unaltered for the first three months of the new pastor’s or supervisor’s tenure.

6. After the three-month period, if necessary, a new ministry agreement may be drawn up. The new agreement must be submitted to the Director for review. If it is acceptable, the Director will, in turn, present it to the Bishop for his approval and signature. Once again, the deacon, the Director, the wife of the deacon, and the new pastor/supervisor will sign the document.

7. A deacon is assigned for a minimum of three years. In ordinary circumstances and, at the end of three years, renewal of assignment or transfer from that assignment will be
determined after a formal consultation with the deacon, the supervisor and the Director.

8. Some deacons may seek an assignment within the area of public service. While the Code of Canon Law permits a deacon to hold political office, a deacon must consult with the Bishop before seeking or accepting such an office. In particular cases, the Bishop may forbid such an undertaking.

9. A deacon is “inactive” if he is not assigned to a parish or ministry within the diocese. If a reassignment cannot be arranged and mutually agreed upon within a period of one year, then the deacon will be placed on an “administrative leave of absence.”

II. THE TRANSFER OF DEACONS

From time to time, it may be advisable and/or necessary to transfer a deacon from his assignment to another parish or a diocesan agency. Transfers may be initiated by one of the following:

1. a directive of the Bishop
2. a request for a transfer from the deacon
3. a request for a transfer from the supervisor
4. the discernment of the Director

It is necessary and important to note that all diaconal appointments are officially made and effected only by the Bishop. No deacon or supervisor may bring about the transfer of a deacon from one assignment to another. The right of appointment of clerics belongs to the Bishop.

A. Directive of the Bishop

The Bishop may request a deacon to consider a transfer to a new assignment because of an immediate diocesan need that must be addressed. To meet the challenge, deacons, as individuals and as members of a servant community, must possess a strong ecclesial sense of mission, an ever-widening vision of ministry. Assignments will always attempt to respect the deacon’s place of residence, family responsibilities, and individual circumstances. The Body of Christ, the Church, will be well served when a deacon willingly, enthusiastically and competently accepts from his Bishop an assignment that meets the particular needs of the People of God.

The Bishop may decide to make known a certain need and may request that a deacon come forward to consider a certain ministerial assignment. In this case, it is important that there ensue collaboration among the Bishop, the deacon, the Directors, and the supervisor of the deacon’s current assignment. However, the final decision will be made by the Bishop for the good of the People of God.
B. Request for a Transfer from the Deacon Himself

A deacon himself will occasionally seek a transfer from a given assignment. The deacon must keep in mind that he has been ordained to serve the needs of the local church and not necessarily those of his home parish or of a parish of his own specific preference.

Therefore, the deacon will essentially review those requests for diaconal services that have been addressed to the Director of the Diaconate. The Director will consult with the deacon until a mutually agreeable assignment is identified.

In the case of a request for a transfer which comes from the deacon himself, the following procedure will be observed:

1. The deacon will contact the Director in order to discuss the feasibility of a transfer and to initiate the process for such a transfer.

2. The deacon will make known to his supervisor his desire to be reassigned.

3. The deacon will then notify in writing the Director of his desire to seek a new assignment.

4. Before proceeding any further, the Director will notify the Bishop of the deacon’s initial request. The Bishop will consider the request in terms of the needs of the diocese, the reason(s) for the request for transfer, and the recommendations of the Director.

5. If the Bishop approves the request of the deacon and the recommendations of the Director, then the director will meet with the deacon to ascertain the specifics of a new assignment. The deacon will then meet with a pastor, department head, or chaplain who may be interested in diaconal services. The Diaconate office may arrange these meetings.

6. When the new assignment has been agreed upon and a ministerial agreement has been drawn up and mutually signed, the deacon will notify the Director by sending them a copy of the agreement. The Director will review the agreement for approval and subsequently submit this agreement to the Bishop.

7. If the ministerial agreement is approved by the Bishop, the Office of the Diaconate will notify by letter all parties involved concerning the dates of the official termination of one assignment and the beginning of the new assignment. A deacon may not leave his assignment until he has received the official letter of appointment to his new assignment by the Director.

*It is understood that the Bishop reserves the right to meet with the deacon at any point in this process.*
C. Request for Transfer of a Deacon from a Pastor or Supervisor

There may be occasions when the request for the transfer of a deacon comes from the supervisor. In those cases, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The pastor or supervisor will notify the Office of the Diaconate in writing in order to arrange a meeting to discuss the reasons for the request for the transfer of the assigned deacon.

2. The Director may then meet with the deacon and the pastor or supervisor to discuss the reasons for the requested transfer. The deacon should be given the opportunity to participate in these initial discussions.

3. At this point, the Director will inform the Bishop of the pastor/supervisor’s request for the transfer of the deacon. The Bishop will consider the request in terms of reasons given, the needs of the diocese, and the recommendation of the Director.

4. If the Bishop approves the request of the pastor/supervisor and the recommendations of the Directors, then the Director will consult with the deacon relative to the specifics of a new assignment and/or to discuss with the deacon those requests for diaconal services which have been received by the Office of the Diaconate from other pastors, department heads, and chaplains.

5. Modern communication methods may be used to discuss information (email, teleconferencing, etc.)

From this point, the process will continue, beginning with Step #5 on the previous page under “Request for a transfer from the deacon himself.”

D. Request for a Transfer in the Discernment of the Director

The Director may initiate the transfer of a deacon. Some of the reasons which may prompt the consideration of the transfer of a deacon by the Director are the changing needs of the diocese, the availability of deacons in the overall diocesan mission, or a change in the staff of a parish or agency which would alter the original ministerial agreement.

If such a consideration is made, the following procedure will be observed:

1. The Director will meet with the Bishop to present the request for the transfer of the deacon along with their reasons for the transfer.

2. If the Bishop approves the initial request from the Director, then the Director may meet jointly with the deacon and the supervisor to present the need and to discuss the reasons for the request for the transfer.
3. It will be the responsibility of the Director to consult with the deacon about the next assignment in terms of the requests for diaconal services which have been sent to the Diaconate Office or in terms of the Director’s own recommendation for a specific assignment.

4. The Director will then present the recommendation of the next assignment to the Bishop.

5. If the Bishop approves the recommendation, the Director will notify both the deacon and the prospective pastor or supervisor relative to the Bishop’s approval and the drawing up of a ministerial agreement with the deacon.

From this point, we will follow Steps # 6 & 7 as listed on page 17 under “Request for a transfer from the deacon himself.”

It is understood that the Bishop reserves the right to meet with the deacon at any point in this process.

III. CONTINUING EDUCATION OF DEACONS

A. Purpose

An increasingly educated society demands that deacons be knowledgeable and reliable witnesses of the Faith and spokesman for the Church’s teachings. Continuing Education for deacons is a requirement that ensures that every deacon in the Diocese of Worcester pursues a plan of education throughout his life in order to remain currently informed about the Church’s teachings.

The subject matter of all continuing education must relate to the charitable, liturgical, sacramental, and theological aspects of the deacon’s ministry. This continuing education should include the gathering of background information to nourish current ministry or to prepare for future ministry. Other courses that help one in ministry or prepare one to better serve the People of God should also be included.

As professionals in ministry, deacons need constantly to renew themselves with practical continuing education in order to affirm self-confidence and to maintain competence in their ministry. All deacons should demonstrate to the Church that they remain professionally accountable. This is a program based upon self-motivation and self-direction and designed to enhance each deacon’s ability to serve the Church of Worcester in the future.

B. Requirements

Each deacon shall complete a minimum of thirty (30) hours of Continuing Education during every reporting period of the calendar year between January and December. Credit hours may
be earned in any or all of the four categories listed below. At least two (2) hours shall be devoted to the study of homiletics each year and one workshop every other year. The diocese shall offer or approve workshops and other programs related to homiletics to enable the deacon to satisfy this mandatory requirement.

C. Sources for Continuing Education

1. **National and Regional Conferences** -- These conferences usually provide excellent sources of continuing education through noteworthy keynote speakers and workshop presenters. At the end of such gatherings, certificates of attendance and participation are offered and contain the number of contact and/or credit hours issued for that conference. Registration receipts will be accepted as verification of attendance.

   Deacons should consult with the Director prior to registering for these conferences in order to determine the number of credit hours that will be applicable toward the thirty (30) mandatory hours for the calendar year. The National Association of Diaconate Directors and Regional Conferences are pre-approved.

2. **Formal Programs** -- Continuing Education activities shall include those that are approved and offered by the Diocesan Collaborative for Education and Ministry, colleges, agencies of the Diocese, hospitals, and social service institutions. All workshops, programs, and other activities offered by the Diocese or any of its departments shall be deemed approved unless specifically stated to the contrary. Count one credit for each classroom hour attended.

3. **Self-Study** -- Self-study credit may be given for viewing videotapes or DVDs, listening to audiotapes or CDs, and reading written materials. These may include books, religious publications, magazines and periodicals. Self-Study materials must be related to diaconal ministry. Count one credit hour for each thirty (30) pages of reading and one credit hour for each hour of viewing or listening.

4. **Research and Publication** -- Credit may be earned through writing based on research. The subject matter for research must be approved by the Director, and the deacon must publish his research in the form of an article, chapter, or book written, in whole or in part, by the deacon himself.

D. Reporting Period

Each reporting period shall end in December of that year and the Annual Report shall be filed with the Office of the Diaconate no later than December 15. While it is not necessary to submit more than thirty (30) hours of contact hours, deacons are encouraged to submit all their continuing education activities so that their educational file may be complete and up-to-date.

See Appendix B: Annual Report Form (Refer to diocesan web site-copies have this attached)
E. How to Count Credit Hours

1. **Formal Activities** -- Credit for attending approved continuing education activities shall be based on net actual instruction time. These activities may include classes, workshops, lectures, panel discussions, or film instruction in organized presentations.

2. **Tapes, CDs or DVDs** -- Credit for viewing video material or listening to audio material shall be based on the actual running time, i.e., one credit hour for every hour of viewing or listening.

3. **Reading Material** -- Credit for reading material shall be based on the number of pages read, i.e., one hour of credit for every thirty (30) pages.

**N.B.** : Many books and audio/visual material are available through the library in the Religious Education Resource Room at the Chancery. A limited number of these resources are located in the Office of the Diaconate. Funds have been allocated for each fiscal year to add a substantial number of these items to the Library of the Diaconate Office. A request may be made to have these items mailed. Deacons and their wives are encouraged to take advantage of these resources as often as possible.

4. **Course Work** -- Credit for approved course work sponsored by the Diocesan Collaborative for Education and Ministry, or at any other approved institution, shall be based on the number of contact hours, that is, one hour of credit for each contact hour.

F. Activities Not Acceptable for Credit Hours

1. Travel time to and from classes or activities
2. Informal meetings and discussions
3. Prayer services and liturgies
4. Spiritual direction sessions
5. Parish Council meetings
6. Social gatherings
7. Diocesan board meeting/functions
8. Diaconate assemblies
9. Support group meetings/functions
10. Regional meetings/functions
11. Courses not related to ministerial service

G. Accountability

Each deacon is responsible for fulfilling the requirements outlined in this policy for Continuing Education and shall submit the year-end Reporting Forms to the Office of the Diaconate at the appropriate time.
1. **Filing of the Annual Report** -- Each deacon shall file the Annual Report with the Office of the Diaconate no later than December 15. The form for filing this report shall be provided for the Deacons by the Director (Check Diocesan web site.)

2. **Non-Compliance Shown on the Annual Report** -- If a deacon files an Annual Reporting Form which fails to show compliance with the basic requirements of the Continuing Education policy, the Director shall notify the deacon, in writing, of such non-compliance and shall specifically identify the deficiencies. If the deacon fails or refuses to comply with the requirements within thirty (30) days from the date of the written notice, the Director shall notify the Bishop, and the deacon may be placed on an Administrative Leave of Absence until such requirements are met for the Annual Report in question.

3. **Failure to File an Annual Report** -- If a deacon fails to file an Annual Reporting Form within fifteen (15) days after the end of the Reporting Period, the Director shall notify the deacon, in writing, of such a failure to file. The deacon shall have fifteen (15) days from the date of such notice to file an Annual Reporting Form showing compliance with the basic requirements of this Continuing Education policy. If the deacon fails again to file, the Director shall notify the Bishop, and the deacon may be placed on an Administrative Leave of Absence until requirements are met for the Annual Report in question.

4. **Exemptions** -- With good cause, a deacon may file a written request for exemption from compliance with any of the requirements of this policy. "Good Cause" exists when a deacon is unable to comply with the requirements of the Continuing Education policy because of illness, medical disability, extraordinary hardship, or extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the deacon.

5. **Extension of Filing Time** -- Deacons may file for an extension of time
   - To comply in general
   - To comply with a deficiency notice
   - To file the Annual Reporting Form.

Such requests for exemption or extension must be filed with the Director before the due date of the Annual Reporting Form.

6. **Spouses** -- Wives of deacons are invited and encouraged but not required to participate fully in the diaconal program of continuing education. Occasionally, a session will be limited to deacons only or to wives only.
IV. CONTINUING SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF DEACONS

Very importantly, Continuing Spiritual Formation includes ongoing development of the spiritual dimension in the life of a deacon. Therefore, the following endeavors should be considered minimum requirements by the deacon to maintain a successful and fruitful spiritual formation program.

A. Liturgy of the Hours

Deacons are not bound by the universal Church to pray the entire Liturgy of the Hours everyday. They are, however, obliged to recite morning and evening prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours and should not hold themselves lightly excused from this obligation.

B. Annual Retreat

The Code of Canon Law states that “clerics are also bound to make a retreat according to the prescriptions of particular law.” Accordingly, the Bishop requires that every deacon in active ministry and, if married, a deacon’s wife should make an annual retreat in order to enrich one’s spiritual life and nurture its growth. The retreat should be at least a weekend experience, and the format of the retreat is left to the choice of the individual deacon and his wife.

The deacon may fulfill this obligation by attending the annual Worcester Diocesan Diaconate Retreat, usually scheduled for the weekend following Labor Day. The retreat is specifically designed for deacons of the Diocese of Worcester. Retired deacons and widows of deacons are always encouraged and welcomed to participate in the communal Diaconate Retreat.

A deacon may, however, fulfill this obligation through participation in another retreat experience of his choice. **If a deacon does not choose to take part in the annual Diaconate Retreat for the diocese, then he must contact the Office of the Diaconate in writing to notify the Directors that he will make his retreat elsewhere.** He must also state the specific times and location of his retreat. Other retreats include private retreats, directed retreats, retreats organized by a deacon class or a group of deacons, couples retreats, preached/directed retreats at local retreat centers, etc.

C. Day of Recollection

Each deacon is urged to participate in at least one day of recollection during the calendar year. This day may be one of several sponsored by the Office of the Diaconate or may be one privately scheduled by a group of deacons. There are times during the Church year when Days of Recollection are most valuable, for example, during the great liturgical seasons of Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter.

D. Spiritual Direction

Deacons are required to have a spiritual director, who is a priest, with whom they confer regularly. In order to assist deacons in selecting a spiritual director, the Office of the
Diaconate provides a referral list of the names of recommended directors. The Directors will also assist any deacon’s wife who is seeking a spiritual director.

E. **Area Meetings**

Area meetings are to be scheduled twice each year for prayers, discussion, sharing, and help in personal development and ministry. These groups are assembled and the meetings facilitated by a deacon who has been appointed the Area Coordinator by the Director.

The general areas of the diocese include the following:

**Area One:** **Deaneries I, II, and III** – Leicester, Paxton, Rochdale, and all Worcester parishes except Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Bernard, St. Christopher, St. George, and St. Joan of Arc

**Area Two:** **Deaneries IV, V, VI** – Jefferson, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling, West Boylston, House of Correction Chaplaincy, Worcester parishes of Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Bernard, St. Christopher, St. George, and St. Joan of Arc, Auburn, Grafton, Millbury, South Grafton, Sutton, Boylston, Northborough, North Grafton, Shrewsbury, Southborough, Westboro

**Area Three:** **Deaneries VII, IX** -- Charlton, Dudley, North Oxford, Oxford, Southbridge, Sturbridge, Webster, Barre, South Barre, Wheelwright, Brookfield, East Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield, Gilbertville Spencer, Warren, West Warren

**Area Four:** **Deanery VIII** – Blackstone, East Douglas, Hopedale, Linwood, Manchaug, Mendon, Milford, Millville, Northbridge, Upton, Uxbridge, Whitinsville

**Area Five:** **Deaneries X, XI** – Berlin, Bolton, Clinton, Harvard, Lancaster, Leominster, Lunenburg, Fitchburg

**Area Six:** **Deanery XII** – Ashburnham, Athol, Baldwinville, East Templeton, Gardner, Otter River, Petersham, South Ashburnham, Westminster, Winchendon

F. **Support Groups**

Each deacon in the Diocese of Worcester should participate in a diaconal Support Group that will meet several times a year. Wives of deacons are encouraged to join their husbands in attending support group meetings. Retired deacons and widows of deacons are also encouraged to continue their participation within a support group of their choice.

It is recommended that support groups be formed within geographical areas throughout the diocese in order to minimize distance and travel time. Other groupings may be formed to respond to the needs of individual deacons.
G. **Annual Report**

At the end of each calendar year, each deacon shall file a report regarding his ongoing spiritual development according to the requirements stated in this section of the policy relative to spiritual formation. Report forms will be made available by the Office of the Diaconate and must be filed no later than December 15.

**V. SEPARATED AND DIVORCED DEACONS**

The teaching of the Church on marriage and family is very important in the diaconal community of the Diocese of Worcester. However, some married couples have suffered the pain of separation and divorce. The demands made on married life can sometimes become difficult and overwhelming, causing couples to question the integrity of their relationship. The ministry of the deacon, together with the expectations of the community in which he ministers, can also add to this situation. When there is either a separation or a divorce of a deacon and his wife, the Directors will meet with the couple or with each individual to assess the situation and the development of an appropriate response.

If the couple has not sought counseling, then the Directors will arrange for such counseling.

A separation or a divorce will require an evaluation of the status of the deacon. The Bishop will normally recommend an “Administrative Leave of Absence.” During this leave, the deacon will obtain appropriate assistance to respond to the physical, psychological, and spiritual adjustment of his present situation. This assistance will also be made available to the deacon’s wife.

If a deacon has been legally separated or divorced, he is required to accept the discipline of celibacy. Also, if his marriage has been annulled by the Church decree, he is required to accept the discipline of celibacy.

Depending on the nature of the case and the absence of scandal, the deacon may or may not be reinstated to “active” status in the diocese. Each request for reinstatement will be reviewed by the Bishop and the Directors.

**VI. PREACHING FACULTIES OF DEACONS**

**A. Newly Ordained Deacons**

Upon ordination, deacons are generally given ordinary preaching faculties, that is, they may preach at all liturgical functions. However, if the Directors determine that these faculties should be postponed in the case of any particular deacon, they will so inform the Bishop and recommend that the exercise of the faculties to preach be granted at a time other than ordination. The deacon will be fully informed of this decision prior to his ordination.

Pastors, as well as newly ordained deacons, will be notified by the Office of the Diaconate that newly ordained deacons must be evaluated and must, therefore, give at least six Lord’s Day homilies during the first six months of assigned ministry. These homilies must be either audio-taped or video-taped and must be submitted to the Office of the Diaconate soon after
they are recorded. The Directors and others involved in the Diaconate program will evaluate these homilies and in writing will apprise the deacon of the results of the critiques.

Preaching faculties granted at ordination are provisional. At the end of a three-year period and based upon formal evaluations, preaching faculties may be granted permanently or remain provisional for those for whom it has been recommended.

B. All Deacons

In every case, whether faculties are provisional or permanent, all deacons are required to fulfill the yearly Continuing Education Academic/Spiritual Formation Policy requirements, including the Proclamation and Preaching Workshops offered by the Office of the Diaconate in various parish churches. These workshops are given every other year, usually during the summer months. Preaching faculties may be withdrawn if deacons do not fulfill these requirements in Continuing Education.

During the Proclamation and Preaching workshops, deacons will be asked to proclaim and to preach upon the Sacred Scriptures for Lord’s Day Masses. Deacons are asked to prepare a written outline to be given to the leaders of the workshops. Each deacon will receive the completed evaluation forms relative to his own proclamation and homily. One copy will be kept for the files in the Office of the Diaconate, and one will be sent to the pastor of the parish.

VII. SPECIFIC POLICIES FOR DEACONS

A. Personnel Profile

The Office of the Diaconate shall store and keep current a personnel file on each deacon, active or otherwise. Only persons concerned with diaconal personnel files will have access to these files, namely, the Director and the Bishop.

B. Ecclesiastical Attire

In the Diocese of Worcester, the deacon is not permitted to wear a Roman collar. In fact, the Code of Canon Law (c.288) exempts deacons from the obligation of wearing ecclesiastical attire (as opposed to liturgical vesture). The Bishop may permit a deacon to wear a Roman collar to facilitate the deacon’s ministry in specific, non-parochial situations, such as hospital and prison chaplaincies. However, the individual deacon must petition the Bishop, in writing, through the Director, for this permission.

C. Ecclesiastical Title

Deacons in the Diocese of Worcester may not commonly use the ecclesiastical title “Rev Mr.” The appropriate title of address in conversation and correspondence is “Deacon.” However, the title “Rev. Mr.” must be used on official ecclesiastical documents.
D. Identification Card

Upon ordination, the deacon will receive an identification card indicating that he is, indeed, an incardinated deacon in the Diocese of Worcester. The deacon may wear the official lapel pin, authorized by the National Association of Diaconate Directors.

E. Absence from the Diocese

If a deacon knows that he will be absent from the diocese for longer than one month and in temporary residence elsewhere, he must write to the Office of the Diaconate and so inform the Director of the proposed length of his absence, his mailing address and telephone number. Since he is incardinated into the Diocese of Worcester, this procedure provides for mutual accountability during the time of absence.

If the deacon plans to become involved in formal diaconal ministry in the diocese in which he takes up temporary residence, he must obtain verification of his diaconal status and a letter of introduction prior to his departure.

In seeking formal ministry, it is expected that the deacon will follow the procedure for application specified by the diocese in which he will take up temporary residence.

The same holds forth for any deacon who moves permanently outside the canonical jurisdiction of the Diocese of Worcester and seeks incardination into the diocese in which he will reside. Again it is expected that he will follow the procedure for application specified by the diocese into which he will move permanently and in accord with the Code of Canon Law relative to the excardination/incardination of clerics.

1. Letters of Complaint and Concern

In cases of signed letters of concern (health, etc.) or complaint, the writer will be contacted for permission to use his or her name in discussing the matter with the deacon about whom the letter has been written. In matters of serious complaint or concern, the Director will investigate the matter thoroughly and make recommendations to the Bishop. As determined by prudence and brotherly concern and in response to the matter at hand, the Bishop himself or the Director will contact the deacon in question. The deacon will have the right to read the letter and to know the name of the writer. Ordinarily, the writer will receive a reply.

Only signed letters will receive responses. Unsigned letters will be ignored and destroyed. However, all letters, signed or anonymous, which allege illegal or sexual misconduct, will be submitted to the proper diocesan authorities in keeping with the diocesan policy on sexual misconduct. Both discretion and just concern for the deacon and any other person(s) named in the allegation will be carefully observed.

In cases of telephone complaints, when a caller identifies himself/herself, the name and telephone number or address of the caller will be obtained and the matter addressed in the procedure as outlined directly above in “Letters of Complaint and Concern.”
2. **Petitions** - Petitions concerning the appointment or transfer of a deacon will be ignored.

3. **Appeals Due Process** - A deacon has the right to appeal to the Bishop regarding any grievance or alleged injustice. The procedure of due process as established by the Diocese applies also to deacons, even though the statute does not use the term “deacon.” The Diocesan Statute states: “When conflict and differences arise between the Pastor and the Associate Pastor (now Parochial Vicar) which cannot be amicably settled by them, let them make use of mediation facilities available and acceptable to both parties or, if necessary, refer the matter to the Bishop.”

**F. Incardination and the Granting of Faculties**

A deacon is ordained for the service of the diocesan church. Ordained by the Bishop, the deacon stands in direct relationship with his diocesan Bishop in communion with whom and under whose authority he exercises his ministry. By virtue of his ordination, a deacon is canonically incardinated into a specific diocese. The Bishop may confer faculties upon a deacon as specified within the Code of Canon Law, the instructions found in liturgical books of ceremonies, rituals, blessings, and other sources pertaining to his ministry.

**G. Excardination of Deacon from Diocese Seeks Incardination into Diocese of Worcester**

To assist a deacon who, with his family, has recently located his residence within the canonical jurisdiction of the Diocese of Worcester and who seeks incardination into the Diocese of Worcester, the following procedure is recommended:

a. If a deacon seeks to be incardinated into the Diocese of Worcester, he must be residing in and registered at a local parish for at least two months before such a request is made.

b. As soon as he decides to seek incardination after the two-month period, the deacon must send a letter of petition to the Bishop and at the same time, request a personal interview with the Director.

c. The deacon will be asked to submit the following credentials:

1. all official documents related to his ordination
2. a transcript of his academic preparation
3. letters of recommendation and permission for the deacon to seek incardination in the Diocese of Worcester from his (arch) bishop, the director(s) of the Diaconate and the pastor of the parish to which he was last assigned.

d. Following his interview with the Director of the Diaconate, a series of interviews will be arranged with two members of the Selection Committee and then with the bishop.
VIII. THE STATUS OF DEACONS

A. Active Deacon

A deacon in good standing is one who has been assigned by the bishop to ministry in a parish or agency, department, or chaplaincy within the diocese and who is satisfactorily fulfilling the responsibilities as specified in the ministerial agreement.

B. Inactive Deacon

An inactive deacon is one who is not functioning in the ministry to which he has been assigned and who has not requested any leave of absence or sought laicization. During this period of inactivity, the deacon does not enjoy the faculties of the diocese. This deacon will meet with the Director of the Diaconate to review the reasons for inactivity and to explore remedies.

C. Unassigned Deacon

An unassigned deacon is one who is in good standing but who has no specific ministerial responsibilities to which he has been officially assigned. An unassigned deacon retains his diocesan faculties. However, an “unassigned” status is always seen as temporary, and a resolution must be reached as soon as possible.

D. Retired Deacon

By diocesan ordinance, a deacon who reaches the age of seventy-five must submit to the bishop a letter requesting retirement from active ministry. This letter must be forwarded to the Director at least three months prior to the Deacon’s seventy-fifth birthday. If the Deacon is in good health and wishes to remain active, he should so state this in his letter. If he experiences poor health or any other serious difficulty, a deacon may petition the bishop for retirement before he reaches the age of seventy-five. If a retired deacon seeks to retain his full faculties, he is, therefore, obliged to fulfill the regulations as outlined in the Continuing Education Policy and to attend the Preaching and Proclamation Workshop offered every other year.

E. Suspended Deacon

For grave reasons, a deacon may be suspended by the bishop and in some instances automatically by the law itself. For certain infractions, specified by the Code of Canon Law, he may be removed from all active ministry. A suspended deacon may not function as or represent himself as a deacon in any parish, agency, department, or chaplaincy of the diocese until the cause(s) for the suspension is resolved.
F. Laicized Deacon

A laicized deacon is one who is returned, voluntarily or involuntarily, to the lay state by the Holy Father. He loses all rights, privileges, offices and is relieved of obligations pertaining to the clerical state. The procedures for this process as prescribed by Canon Law must be followed.

IX. VARIOUS LEAVES OF ABSENCE

A. Voluntary/Temporary Leave of Absence

If a deacon seeks a temporary leave of absence from official assignment by the diocesan bishop, the following procedure will be observed:

1. The deacon must first write a formal request for a leave to the Director of the Diaconate. The Director will meet with the deacon to discuss the reasons for the request for a leave of absence, i.e., personal problems, family circumstances, temporary relocation outside the diocese, etc.

2. The Director will then present the petition to the bishop for final response granting the leave of absence.

A voluntary leave of absence will be granted for a period of time agreed upon by the Director and the deacon. The situation will be evaluated upon the expiration of the time period and may be extended if all agree that an extension is both necessary and advisable. A deacon on a voluntary leave of absence may request a return to ministry before the agreed-upon date of expiration.

A deacon on temporary leave still possesses good standing in the diocese and is encouraged to participate in all spiritual, social, educational activities within the diaconal community. However, the deacon on temporary leave does not enjoy diaconal and diocesan faculties and may not function in any ministerial capacity. If a deacon on temporary leave wishes to function ministerially for a specific reason, he must petition the bishop through the Director. If granted, this permission is given in writing by the bishop.

B. Sick Leave

A sick leave is granted to a deacon because of poor or declining health. A deacon on sick leave will continue to enjoy the faculties of the diocese.
C. Administrative Leave of Absence

The bishop grants an administrative leave for reasons not related to health, family circumstances, or temporary relocation outside the diocese. A deacon on administrative leave will be relieved of all responsibility for any ecclesiastical office or ministry and all active ministry. He may not function or represent himself as a deacon while this leave remains in effect. Faculties will be suspended pending the resolution of the problem which brought about the imposition of this administrative leave.

X. DIACONAL CELIBACY AND REMARRIAGE

Prior to 1997, married deacons who became widowed after ordination were unable to contract another marriage. Ordination to the Diaconate was an impediment to entering into a second marriage as noted in Canon 1087: “Persons who are in holy orders invalidly attempt marriage.”

However, it became apparent that this norm caused serious difficulties to those deacons who had become widowed after ordination yet who also wanted to remain active in ministry. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments was entrusted to consider the matter and to offer a recommendation to the Holy Father.

In June of 1997, the Holy Father approved a ruling formulated by the above-noted dicastery (see footnote, page 33) which enunciated three conditions under which a widowed deacon could apply for dispensation from the impediment imposed by Canon 1087.

Taken individually, any one of the following three conditions may offer sufficient cause to seek a dispensation from the impediment as stated in Canon 1087:

- ✓ There is a great and proven usefulness of the ministry of the deacon to the diocese to which he belongs.
- ✓ He has children of such young ages as to be in need of motherly care.
- ✓ He has parents/parents-in-law who are elderly and in need of care.

Therefore, if a widowed deacon seeks to be dispensed from the impediment of Canon 1087, he must formally submit in writing a letter to the Bishop through the Office of the Diaconate, stating clearly the reason(s) for which he is seeking a dispensation from the impediment to marry a second time. The Office of the Diaconate will, in turn, present the petition to the Bishop who will decide, after consultation with the Directors and the Judicial Vicar, whether or not to proceed in forwarding the petition to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. In the name of the Holy Father, this dicastery will adjudicate the matter, either granting or denying the petition for dispensation.
XI. GUIDELINE UPON THE DEATH OF A DEACON

A. Funeral Policy

Because a deacon is an ordained minister of the church, the family must make funeral arrangements in consultation with the Office for Worship and the Office of the Diaconate. The Director of the Office for Worship, who represents the Bishop in planning liturgical ceremonies, will direct all liturgical preparations with the family, honoring the requests of the deacon. These requests are kept on file in the Office of the Diaconate.

See Appendix "C": *Funeral Form for Deacons* (Also available at worcesterdiocese.org)

B. Notification of a Deacon’s Death

The family is asked to notify the Office of the Diaconate upon the death of a deacon. The Bishop, the deacon’s Pastor Supervisor, the Pastor of his home parish, the Office for Worship, and the Office of Communications will then be called. Notification of a Deacon’s death will be published in the diocesan and local newspaper.

C. Making Liturgical Preparations

Within the guidelines of approved liturgical norms, the wishes and plans of the deacon (on file in the Office of the Diaconate), his spouse and his family will be accommodated as much as possible.

The Office for Worship will guide the family in liturgical preparations for both the wake service and funeral liturgy, that is, in making the selection of hymns, and choosing readers, gift-bearers, and those who place the pall over the casket at the funeral liturgy.

D. Liturgical Celebrations

Because a deacon enjoys clerical status in the life of the Church, his family shall note the following:

1. **The Vigil/Wake Service**

   a. The body may lie in state in the church and if so will be clothed in the liturgical vesture proper to a deacon, i.e., with an alb, a stole and a dalmatic or an alb with stole. See Funeral Planning Form for 2006 approved by Bishop McManus 11/18/06. Page 6 “Presentation of the body” etc.

   b. The Book of Gospels, as a symbol of the office, may be placed on or in the vicinity of the bier. A cross or a funeral pall may be used in place of the Book of Gospels if the casket is closed during the wake. The American flag is an important symbol for those who have served our country. It must be folded properly and may be placed near the bier. The flag cannot be draped over or placed upon the casket when the casket is reposed inside the church.
c. The Director of the Diaconate or a delegate will be the Presider for the Vigil.

d. The body may be laid out in the funeral home for calling hours. However, the body must be brought to the Church for the wake service. However, the body must be brought to the Church for the wake service.

e. If the deacon has not already chosen the homilist, then the family is entitled to make that selection. If the homilist is a deacon, then he must have the faculty to preach.

2. **The Funeral Liturgy**

a. The Bishop of the diocese or his appointed representative will be the principal celebrant of the funeral liturgy.

b. The body of the deacon is offered the same reverence normally accorded to a bishop or a priest and, therefore, is entitled to have his head facing out to the people.

c. Every consideration will be given to provide proper seating for the members of the deacon's family so that their places will not be obstructed during the liturgy.

d. If the deacon has not already chosen the homilist, the family is entitled to do so. If the homilist is a deacon, then he must have the faculty to preach.

3. **Burial Service**

a. The family may request a deacon or a priest to lead the prayers at the Rite of Committal, which takes place at the cemetery or another place of interment.

b. In the case of cremation, it is the expectation of the Bishop that the body be present during the wake service and the funeral liturgy. Cremation must follow the funeral liturgy, and the ashes must be interred or buried in accord with the Church's teaching and liturgical regulations.

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Footnote:
By the word “dicasteries” are understood the Secretariat of State, Congregations, Tribunals, Councils and Offices. The “dicasteries” are composed of the cardinal prefect or the presiding archbishop, a body of cardinals and of some bishops, assisted by a secretary, consultors, senior administrators, and a suitable number of officials. They deal with matters which are reserved to the Apostolic See and those which exceed the competence of individual bishops and their conferences, as well as those matters committed to them by the Supreme Pontiff.
APPENDIX "A"

MINISTERIAL AGREEMENT FORM
AGREEMENT

Pastor/Agency Supervisor and Deacon

The assignment of a deacon is a direct appointment of the Bishop and reflects a threecfold ministry: Service of the Word, Service of the Altar, and Service of Charity. This ministry encompasses specific expectations of the deacon’s services in the parish or agency under the direction and guidance of the pastor or supervisor as well as the parish’s or agency’s responsibility to pay for expenses incurred by the deacon’s ministry.

I. SERVICE OF THE WORD is far-ranging and may include in addition to proclaiming the gospel, preaching, offering catechetical instruction, counseling, instructing catechumens, giving retreats, conducting renewal programs. (These responsibilities may not be all-inclusive and may vary week to week).

* What will be his specific responsibilities?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Total Hours Each Week __________

PREACHING------ (Guidelines state at least once each month if preaching faculties have been granted)

Deacon will preach ________ times each month
II. SERVICE OF THE ALTAR centers, above all, on the Eucharist, but includes other sacraments as well. In addition to articulating the Church’s needs in the general intercessions, the deacon prepares the gifts and distributes communion at the Lord’s table. He solemnly baptizes children and adults, witnesses marriages in the name of the Church, brings Viaticum to the dying, presides over wakes, funerals, and burial services. He presides over Liturgies of the Word, the Liturgy of the Hours and exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. He may lead non-sacramental reconciliation services, conduct prayer services for the sick and dying, and administer certain of the Church’s sacramentals. (These responsibilities may not be all-inclusive and may vary week to week).

* What will be his specific responsibilities?


Total Hours Each Week

III. SERVICE OF CHARITY is as extensive as are human needs. Deacons minister in prisons and hospitals. They visit the homebound and people in nursing homes. They serve the mentally ill, the chemically dependent, the abused, battered, the old, the young, the abandoned, the dying, the bereaved, immigrants, refugees and the victims of racial and ethnic discrimination. In doing these things, they carry out the biblical mandate to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and give relief to all in need. (These responsibilities may not be all-inclusive and may vary week to week).

* What will be his specific responsibilities?


Total Hours Each Week
IV. OTHER ROLES REQUESTED BY PASTOR

V. AREAS OF NEEDED COOPERATION (regular meetings with pastor/deacon, staff meetings, parish council, finance committee, religious education board, etc.)

VI. PARISH OR AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- The annual assessment fee to the Diaconate Office each year.
- The annual retreat for the deacon and his wife (not to exceed $500.00 total).
- Provide proper vestments (stoles and if possible, dalmatics) for the deacon's use.
- Reimburse the deacon for "out of pocket expenses" each month not to exceed $85.00. Mileage reimbursement is to be calculated at $.40 per mile. Deacons are to submit a list of expenses each month to their pastor and/or supervisor.
- Provide the deacon with suitable space in which to perform his various ministries.
- The cost of on-going academic, & spiritual formation as required by the Diaconate Office.

Other expenses approved by the pastor will include:

The areas covered by this agreement have been discussed by the pastor, deacon and his wife and they have reached an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This agreement will be reviewed every three years. In the event of a change in pastoral leadership during the tenure of this agreement, and if the deacon is to continue in the same setting, a new agreement shall be formulated and submitted to the Diaconate Office for approval. The Diaconate Office suggests a three (3) month period in which to evaluate the working relationship between the deacon and the pastor/agency supervisor.
* One third of the total hours devoted to parish/agency ministry are to be devoted to the Word and Altar. The limit of 12-15 hours does not apply to those hired as full time, salaried deacons in a parish or agency. It should be understood that all of the responsibilities in each category are not performed on a regular basis each week. Some are done sporadically as the need arises, and others each week on a regular basis. For instance: marriage/ baptism preparations do not occur every week. Funerals, wakes, etc. do not occur on a regular basis, nor do giving retreats and/or renewal programs.

_The important thing to remember is that the part-time, non-salaried deacon should not exceed the agreed upon 12-15 hours of total ministry in the parish each week._

**Please check one of the following:**

This agreement is for a part-time, non-salaried assignment (12-15 hours per week) ___
This agreement is for a full-time, salaried assignment (40+ hours per week) ___

**TOTAL HOURS COMMITTED TO PARISH/AGENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pastor</td>
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<td>Deacon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wife of Deacon</td>
<td>___________________________________________________________________</td>
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<td>Bishop:</td>
<td>___________________________________________________________________</td>
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</table>

Please return this agreement signed by the Pastor, Deacon and Spouse to the Office of the Diaconate. Once the agreement has been approved and signed by the Co-Directors and Bishop Reilly, copies will be forwarded to the pastor or agency supervisor and the deacon.