



Secretariat for the Diaconate

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3038 • FAX 202-541-3222

August 16, 2005

Your Eminence/Excellency:

Our Holy Father has transferred the competency for most matters related to priestly and diaconal dispensations from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to the Congregation for Clergy. This letter is to highlight for you one significant exception to this change.

In a letter dated 13 July 2005 (Prot. N. 1080/05), Francis Cardinal Arinze, the Prefect of the CDWDS, points out that the Holy Father has directed that this dicastery retain competence in the cases of widowed permanent deacons who seek a dispensation from the *impedimentum ordinis* in order to marry and remain in ministry. A copy of the Prefect's letter is attached for your convenience.

It is important to note several significant developments in the requirements involved for deacons who seek this dispensation. Previously, in accordance with a 1997 circular letter from the CDWDS (Prot. N. 263/97), any of three conditions "taken singly are sufficient for a favorable consideration"; namely:

- ❖ The great and proven usefulness of the ministry of the deacon to the diocese to which he belongs;
- ❖ That he has children of such a tender age as to be in need of motherly care;
- ❖ That he has parents or parents-in-law who are elderly and in need of care.

According to the current letter, however, the Prefect directs that future requests "will be taken into consideration only when the following conditions occur together: *great pastoral usefulness of the deacon's ministry, attestation by the Bishop, and the care of minor children.*" The previous conditions of "great and proven usefulness" and the presence of young children remain in place, while the specific requirement for the *votum* of the diocesan bishop is made explicit, and the former condition of the presence of elderly parents or parents-in-law has been dropped. Perhaps most significant is the requirement that all three of these conditions, as newly articulated, must be present concurrently.

If you have any questions on this revised policy, please do not hesitate to contact Deacon William T. Ditewig, Ph.D., the Executive Director of the Secretariat for the Diaconate, at 202-541-3038 or wditewig@usccb.org. He will be glad to assist you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *F. F. Campbell*

Most Reverend Frederick F. Campbell
Bishop of Columbus
Chairman



CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO
ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Prot. n. 1080/05

Vatican City, 13 July 2005

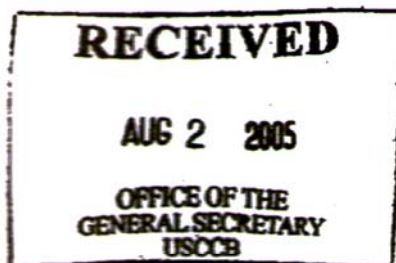
Your Eminence / Your Excellency / Very Reverend Father,

This Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments wishes to inform you that by disposition of the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, the competency for matters related to priestly and diaconal dispensations that has belonged to this Dicastery up until now will be transferred to the Congregation for the Clergy, effective 1 August 2005. Bishops, Ordinaries and Religious Superiors are therefore invited to have recourse to that Dicastery for the presentation of such cases from now on.

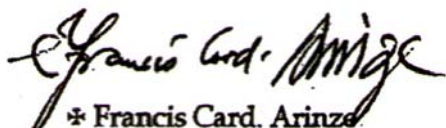
On the other hand, those priestly and diaconal cases which have reached this Dicastery prior to the present time will continue to be treated here until their definitive completion.

In addition the Holy Father, by a letter to this Congregation dated 7 July 2005, has directed that as of 1 January 2006, those Deacons who are widowed and who desire to celebrate new weddings with a dispensation from the *impedimentum ordinis* and therefore to remain in the ministry may submit their cases to this Dicastery, which will retain competency in this matter. However, these will be taken into consideration only when the following conditions occur together: *great pastoral usefulness of the deacon's ministry, attestation by the Bishop, and the care of minor children.*

With every prayerful good wish and with sentiments of the greatest esteem, I am



Devotedly yours in Christ,


✠ Francis Card. Arinze
Prefect

+ Dominic Lunter
h.c.

To the Presidents of the Conferences of Bishops
To the Superiors General