

Deacon Ministerial Policy For Parish Collaboratives

1. Preamble

The restoration of the Diaconate as a permanent order at the Second Vatican Council has been an abiding and profound gift to the Church. In the Archdiocese of Boston, Deacons have served with distinction and grace since the first ordination class in 1976. In a world hungry and thirsty for convincing signs of the compassion and liberating love of God, the Deacon sacramentalizes the mission of the Church in his words and deeds, responding to the Master's command of service and providing real-life examples of how to carry it out (USCCB National Directory, 38). As Blessed John Paul II noted, "the deacon's task...was and is that of a greater and more direct presence of Church ministers in the various spheres of the family, work, school", and so deacons, both married and celibate, serve God's People by their witness to the gospel value of sacrificial love, a quality of life too easily dismissed in today's society (USCCB National Directory, 30). The Archdiocese of Boston has great love and appreciation for its Deacons, their wives, and families for their authentic living of the gospel in their families, parishes, communities, and workplaces, and sees them as a great resource for evangelization to our world that is so in need of hearing the good news of Jesus Christ.

2. Introduction

The Archdiocese of Boston is entering a new period of Pastoral Planning in response to the changing needs of the local Church. The implementation of the pastoral plan described in the document "Disciples in Mission" requires the formation of Pastoral Service Teams working in collaboratives of multiple parishes under a single Pastor, and Deacons, as part of these teams, will play an increasingly important role in the ministerial and Pastoral life of the Archdiocese. To help the Archbishop fulfill his Pastoral responsibility to the people, to provide him with the needed flexibility in assigning Deacons where the greatest needs exist, and to help Deacons fully embrace their vocational charism and broaden their ministerial skills, an updated Deacon Assignment Policy is needed. The purpose of this Policy is to clarify and codify the assignment process of Deacons and to explicitly describe the expectations of the Collaborative and the Deacon. As the implementation process moves forward it is expected that there will be opportunities for some Deacons to serve in a ministerial capacity as an employed member of a Pastoral Ministry Team serving a collaborative of parishes. Most Deacons, while still being full members of the Pastoral Team, will continue to serve in part time ministries within such collaboratives as their family and secular employment responsibilities allow. As the implementation process evolves this policy may need to be adapted to better serve the needs of the Archdiocese.

3. General Understanding

We are blessed in the Archdiocese of Boston to have both married and celibate Deacons serving in ministry. Most Deacons in the Archdiocese are married men and, therefore, have the responsibility to care for and support their spouse and children. Married Deacons provide a powerful sign value to the sacredness of marriage in our communities as they live out this primary vocation. In addition, the majority of our married and celibate Deacons make their living in secular employment where

they are able to be ministers of the New Evangelization in the workplace. With generosity of spirit, and with the support of their families and communities, they have answered the call to serve Christ and His Church in diaconal ministry of service and charity. Mindful of their need to balance their responsibilities to family and employment with their service as ordained clergy in the Archdiocese, the following policy is offered for Deacon Assignments and support.

4. Assignment Policy

The Archbishop of Boston makes the final determination for the assignment of each Deacon, with the assistance of the Office of Clergy Personnel, in accordance with the needs of the Archdiocese and the gifts, abilities, and availability of the Deacon. Deacons will carry out their assigned ministry under the direction of a Pastor (or supervisor for those who are assigned to a hospital or prison chaplaincy position). Assignments will be made in a manner that ensures the proper exercise and balance of liturgical and Pastoral functions (see Collaborative Responsibility section below). There are benefits for Deacons to be assigned in or near their home as they know and interact in the community and neighborhoods, and the proximity to the Deacon's home minimizes commuting time and allows them to be more involved in Pastoral ministry.

For all Deacon assignments the following considerations should be noted:

- a. Mindful that they have been ordained to serve the needs of the Archdiocese, Deacons should be open to new assignments.
- b. Any new assignment will be consistent with the Deacon's employment and family obligations as well as his skills and time availability, and will be made in consultation with and agreement by the Deacon.
- c. Deacons will be assigned within a reasonable distance and travel time from his home. In general this will be considered a 10-15 mile or 30 minute drive radius of their homes. Longer distances may be considered in exceptional cases after consultation with and agreement by the Deacon.
- d. The Deacons initial assignment following ordination will be for a 5-year term that can be extended for additional periods as pastorally appropriate for the collaborative and the Deacon and his family, and the needs of the Archdiocese.
- e. After his initial assignment, subsequent assignments will be for 5 years with a possibility for extension.
- f. Deacons may request a new assignment after serving three years in one location. In extenuating circumstances a new assignment can be considered earlier at the request of the Deacon or the Pastor.
- g. Deacons who hold a paid ministerial assignment outside of a particular collaborative (e.g., hospital chaplaincy, prison chaplaincy, etc.) may also be given a collaborative assignment to exercise his liturgical and sacramental ministry. The collaborative will recognize that the available time of the Deacon for parish-based ministry will be limited in such a situation.
- h. Secondary assignments to Archdiocesan agencies or offices that a Deacon may hold will nominally be for a period of 3 years with an annual review. Such assignments may be extended.

Assignment Process

There are two assignment processes that will be followed: one for posted diaconate openings during the normal annual assignment cycle (in the spring of each year), and the other for the newly ordained Deacons (noting that ordinations to the Permanent Diaconate currently take place in the fall) and any diaconate openings (or transfer requests) that occur during the year but outside of the normal annual assignment cycle. The processes are summarized as follows:

Annual Posted Openings and Newly Formed Collaboratives:

Each year, during the normal annual assignment cycle, diaconal openings will be posted by the Office of Clergy Personnel in the monthly mailings. A Deacon may apply for an available assignment by submitting a written letter to the Office of Clergy Personnel stating, in two or three sentences, why they believe that a transfer to a new collaborative assignment will be beneficial to them and for the people of the collaborative.

In light of the Disciples in Mission pastoral plan, as collaboratives enter the active implementation phase, the presently assigned clergy in those parishes will resign their positions in order that they may be available to respond generously to the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese. The pastors of the new collaboratives will form Pastoral Teams to address the particular needs of the evangelization mission in each collaborative. Deacons from the parishes within a given collaborative will have their names added to the list of available Deacons that the Pastor of the new collaborative will receive. Other Deacons who are interested in a new assignment may also apply to be considered for the Pastoral Team of these collaboratives and be included on the list provided to Pastors.

The Deacons may contact any of the Pastors with openings to request an opportunity to meet. Likewise each Pastor can contact any of the listed Deacons to set up a meeting. Each Deacon and each Pastor will then submit a list of 3 choices in order of preference to the Clergy Personnel Office. The Deacon will be interviewed by the Director of Clergy Personnel and the Assistant Director of Clergy Personnel for Deacons who will together then present all information to the Archbishop. The Archbishop will make the final assignment. This process parallels the Parochial Vicar process.

After an assignment has been made, the Deacon will be informed and asked to meet with the Pastor to discuss and complete a Statement of Pastoral Understanding (Contract of Diaconal Service) to be signed by both the Deacon, his wife (if married), and the Pastor.

Newly Ordained and Out of Cycle Transfers:

Deacon Candidates will provide a list of collaboratives of interest (in their geographical area) in order of preference to the Deacon Personnel Board (DPB; USCCB National Directory 291) after they have received their Call to Orders letter from the Archbishop. The DPB will get input from the Director of Formation about each Deacon Candidate's gifts and talents. This information will be compared to the needs of the collaborative obtained from the formal request form that has been submitted to the Clergy Personnel Office via the Regional Bishop's Office. The DPB will submit a minimum of 2 names to the Archbishop for his consideration for each assignment along with their recommendation. The Archbishop will make the final assignment. This process parallels the newly ordained priest process.

After an assignment has been made, the Deacon Candidate will be informed and asked to meet with the Pastor to discuss and complete a Statement of Pastoral Understanding (Contract of Diaconal Service) to be signed by both the Deacon Candidate, his wife (if married), and the Pastor.

Any Active Deacon that wishes to seek a transfer outside of the normal annual posted openings cycle in the spring should contact the Clergy Personnel Office to discuss his situation. If a collaborative opening occurs outside of the normal springtime transfer period, the opening will be posted through the monthly mailings and Deacons would indicate their interest to the Clergy Personnel Office. In these cases, the DPB will provide recommendations to the Archbishop.

The following should be noted with respect to the Deacon Personnel Board (DPB):

- a. The DPB will be comprised of five active Deacons representing the five regions of the Archdiocese. These members will be selected by the Archbishop following a consultative vote by Deacons in each region. The Archbishop may also appoint two additional members to the Board. Ex Officio members of the Board will include the Assistant Director of Clergy Personnel for Deacons, the Director of Clergy Personnel, and the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership.
- b. The DPB will submit the names of a minimum of two Deacons to the Archbishop for any given assignment. Assignments will be considered for collaboratives that have submitted a formal request for a Deacon that has been supported by the Regional Bishop/Vicar. The DPB will take into account both the collaborative's needs as well as the Deacon's assignment request, home location, experience, ministerial and collaborative skill set, and work and family obligations.

5. Deacon Responsibilities

The Deacon shall always keep his family and work commitments clearly in balance with his collaborative and Archdiocesan duties. Therefore, each Deacon will complete a Statement of Pastoral Understanding (*"Contract of Diaconal Service"*) with the Pastor of the collaborative prior to the effective date of his assignment in order to make clear his time availability and expected ministerial role. The Deacon's wife, in keeping with her partnership in the primary vocation of marriage, will also provide input to this agreement. The expectations of any non-parochial diaconal assignment should be noted in the agreement. The agreement will be signed by the Deacon and his wife, as well as the Pastor. The agreement should be reviewed each year at an annual review meeting between the Pastor and Deacon.

Deacons are required to undertake ongoing formation, attend an annual retreat, and maintain a consistent and ongoing relationship with a spiritual director. The goal of ongoing formation is to *"responsibly address the various aspects of a Deacon's ministry, the development of his personality, and, above all, his commitment to spiritual growth. (It) must include and harmonize all dimensions of the life and ministry of the Deacon....it should be complete, systematic, and personalized."* (USCCB National Directory, 239). The ongoing formation should be a *"realistic program...taking due account of the factors such as the age and circumstances of Deacons, together with the demands made on them by their Pastoral ministry"* (USCCB National Directory, 47). In order to maintain spiritual

health to serve Christ and His Church more authentically and effectively, an annual spiritual retreat is both necessary and required. Likewise, spiritual direction supports and deepens the Deacon's attentiveness to the movement of the Holy Spirit opening his eyes and heart to how God calls him into particular service ministry. Blessed John Paul II stressed the connection between our spiritual life and the Church's mission when he said: *"Heralds of the gospel are needed who are experts in humanity, profoundly knowing the heart of contemporary man, who share his hopes and joys, his fears and sorrow and, at the same time, are contemplatives in love with God"* (USCCB National Directory, 252). With these desires for the life and ministry of each Deacon, the following requirements are established:

a. Ongoing formation:

- i. All Deacons are expected to continue life-long formation and learning. For Active Deacons the requirement is completion of a minimum of 20 hours of ongoing formation each year, which may include Diaconal Convocations, academic courses, ministerial workshops, continuing education conventions, and other activities that further the spiritual, intellectual, and Pastoral formation of the Deacon and his ministry. Documentation of completion of the requirement is to be submitted to, and approved by, the Office of the Director of Diaconal Life and Ministry (DDLML). For Senior Deacons the required ongoing formation will be covered by specific programs made available by the DDLML.
- ii. During the first 3 years post-ordination a required ongoing formation program will be coordinated by the DDLML. This program is structured in order *"that the newly ordained begin their diaconate ministry in a positive and supportive manner"* (USCCB National Directory, 251).

- b. Retreat requirement: As stated in Canon 276.4, all Deacons are required to participate in an annual spiritual retreat. The retreat length must be at least a weekend in length but may be longer. Evidence of completion of this canonical requirement must be submitted to the office of the DDLML each year.
- c. Spiritual direction requirement: All Deacons are required to maintain a consistent and ongoing relationship with a spiritual director. Such direction helps the Deacon to discern the dynamics of his vocational call and the Holy Spirit's invitation to consider possible new assignments and ministries.
- d. Deacon attire: *"The Code of Canon Law does not oblige permanent deacons to wear an ecclesiastical garb (Canon 288). Further, because they are prominent and active in secular professions and society, the USCCB specifies that permanent deacons should resemble the lay faithful in dress and matters of lifestyle. Each diocesan bishop should, however, determine and promulgate any exceptions to this law, as well as specify the appropriate clerical attire if it is to be worn."* (USCCB National Directory, 89). In order to avoid confusion among the lay faithful, deacons may only wear clerical attire when functioning in a liturgical capacity, serving in prison ministry, visiting the sick or elderly at their home or in a hospital or nursing home, and officiating at a wake or graveside committal service where the sign value of such attire is helpful to the faithful. It should be noted that wearing of clerical attire is optional and not required.

6. Collaborative Responsibilities and Support

A. Active Deacons:

The Pastor is to support the Active Deacon in exercising the three munera of his ministry – Sacrament, Word, and Charity. For example, depending on his skills and availability, the Deacon should be included in the sacramental rotation of the collaborative for baptisms and marriages, preaching on a regular basis (ordinarily a minimum of once per month), providing assistance at wakes, funerals, and committals as his time allows, and providing leadership or support in teaching (e.g., baptismal preparation, RCIA, faith formation, etc.). The Deacon must also be provided time and opportunity to serve in ministries of charity, which define the charism of his vocational call. These ministries may include serving the poor, sick, dying, and homebound, both within the collaborative, the Archdiocese, and beyond, as outlined in the Statement of Pastoral Understanding. Many Deacons also serve in an Archdiocesan assignment, which will involve some commitment of time away from the collaborative. In all aspects of his ministry due regard must be given to the Deacon's responsibility to attend to the needs of his family life (for married Deacons) and secular employment (for both married and celibate Deacons) recognizing the evangelizing fruit that comes from the lived example of a sacred and joyous marriage and the Deacon's faith-filled presence in the workplace (USCCB National Directory, 246). As a member of the Pastoral Staff the consideration should be given for the Deacon to be able to be present at Pastoral Staff meetings and fully integrated into the life and celebrations of the collaborative.

The collaborative is also expected to support the active, assigned Deacon's ongoing formation, his (and if married his wife's) annual spiritual retreat, and some of his ministerial expenses, or in some cases salary, as follows:

- a. Ongoing formation support: The collaborative is responsible for supporting the ongoing formation of the Deacon. Specifically, the collaborative will provide up to \$750 per year of support, which may include the Deacon's attendance at annual convocations, ministry workshops, academic courses, conventions, and the like. These funds are only to cover actual expenses. Any non-Archdiocesan or USCCB sponsored events or programs must receive prior approval from either the Pastor or the DDLM. Any balance of funds from a given year may be carried over for one additional year to provide flexibility in covering more extensive formation opportunities, such as an academic course for example.
- b. Annual retreat support: The collaborative is responsible for covering the cost of one annual retreat for the Deacon and, if married, the Deacon's wife, up to 8 days in length. This support will include up to a total of \$500 annually for each person. These funds are only to cover actual expenses, and the check must be made payable directly to the retreat house or institution.
- c. Vestment support: The collaborative is expected to have appropriate vestments for the Deacon in keeping with the dignity of the liturgical life of the Church. This includes dalmatics and stoles for the each of the proper liturgical colors matching the vestments of the priest. These vestments remain the property of the collaborative. Each Deacon should already own a white Boston dalmatic and stole.

d. Stipends and salary considerations

Mindful that the Deacon is the Icon of Christ the Servant and that the diaconal charism and role is therefore connected to charitable service without remuneration, there are situations in which a Deacon may receive some form of compensation (Canon 281.3):

- i. Given the pastoral responsibilities of the collaborative, it is reasonable and appropriate to provide reimbursement to deacons for expenses incurred from ministry in the collaborative. Such expenses might include, but not be limited to, mileage costs, books and ministry resources, and the like.
- ii. Deacons may serve a collaborative in a ministerial capacity as a full time employed member of the Pastoral Team. In these situations the appropriate title is Deacon. In some situations, depending on the Deacon's background, experience, and training, the full time Deacon may serve as the *Coordinator of Pastoral Ministry*. The Deacon, as a cleric, is not to be defined as a Pastoral Associate, which is a title reserved for lay ecclesial ministers. The salary range for full time paid Deacons will follow the approved ranges defined by The Archdiocesan Human Resources Office.
- iii. Deacons with the appropriate skills and background may serve as a Business Manager, DRE, Music Director, or other position in a collaborative and will be paid in the equivalent salary range as a lay person serving in the same capacity. If a Deacon is employed in such a non-clerical role, the Deacon's parochial assignment may be in a different collaborative.

B. Senior Deacons:

Senior Deacons offer a wealth of experience and wisdom to our Archdiocese and as such are a profound gift to our Church. Those who are able often have a great desire to continue to serve Christ and His Church in ordained ministry and their service is both welcomed and deeply appreciated. Because Senior Deacons are not officially assigned to a particular collaborative, they are provided with ongoing formation and retreat support through programs organized by the DDLM. As such, collaboratives are not required to provide any specific financial support to Senior Deacons.