

## 5000 SERIES

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## CONTINUING EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR ORDAINED DEACONS

**I. PURPOSE:** The Second Edition of *The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* (refer to ND #251-269) requires that each diocese establish a minimum number of continuing education hours to be completed and reported annually by all active deacons. This does not include, but is in addition to, the requisite annual deacon retreat. This guideline provides deacons of the Diocese a standardized method of evaluating their continuing education. It describes the basic requirements, how to record credit hours, and when to submit reports for inclusion into their personal files at The Office of the Diaconate. It is intended to be a self evaluation guide.

**II. REQUIREMENTS:** That all active deacons given faculties to function within the Diocese of Columbus successfully complete a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education each year.

Deacons as a body of professionals in ministry must constantly update themselves with practical continuing education to ensure a feeling of self confidence and adequacy in their ministry, as well as demonstrate to the church they serve that they are professionally accountable.

This program relies upon the member's willingness to not only continue their growth but to document it for all to see. It is not a required program in the sense of a mandatory obligation to maintain membership. Rather it is a program based upon self-motivation and self-direction.

**III. GENERAL CRITERIA:** To ensure these educational requirements are achieved, certain criteria are established and stated here to assist each deacon in determining the number of credit hours achieved through various modes of instruction. Basic considerations:

A. The scope and nature of instruction should encompass the three general dimensions of a deacon's ministry: spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. The continuous updating of these three dimensions is necessary to maintain the deacon's ability to properly minister to the People of God in both sacrament and charity. The application is to both present and future ministry.

B. Because continuing education is part of the ongoing formation of the deacon, consideration should be given to the general path of the process. Specifically, in the first five years of ordination, the focus should be on deepening the deacon's understanding and skills involved in the basic ministries of word, liturgy, and charity. In succeeding years, the deacon should approach a more in-depth study of all the components of diaconal ministry, including, as applicable and practicable, any second languages used in the diocese. This should be a part of a broader focus on mission.

C. Credit may be recorded in whole or in part using the following areas defined in the ND. All must comply with the general guidelines stated in Par. A., above, and must have the approval of the Office of the Diaconate.

1. Conferences at the diocesan, regional, or national level (e.g., the Clergy Conference).
2. Workshops and seminars.
3. Retreats and days of reflection that provide educational and/or developmental themes **in addition to the spiritual renewal theme.**
4. Self-guided study. This allows a self-paced manner of learning involving a variety of techniques. No more than 50% or 6 credit hours of self-study per year may be applied to the 12-hour annual requirement. Self-study includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Individual reading other than for leisure.
  - b. Library research.
  - c. Audio or video media.
  - d. Attending interfaith liturgies for the purpose of learning about other faiths.
  - e. Any other forms of study as approved by the Office of the Diaconate
5. Distance learning (e.g., using the internet or correspondence to access an approved course of study)
6. Ministry reflection groups
7. Mentoring groups in which deacons discuss their ministries, experiences, and continuing formation, as well as encourage each other in being faithful to their diaconal calling.
8. In addition, the following as authorized by the Office of the Diaconate may apply as continuing education:
  - a. Certificate courses. All credit hours shown in the certificate may credited. (Note: many national, regional, and local courses issue a certificate at the end of an instructional seminar or conference – see Nos. 1 & 2, above.)
  - b. Credit courses announced and provided through the Office of the Diaconate, as well as some programs provided by other diocesan offices.
  - c. College courses. Because of the variety of methods used to denote college credits, it is not possible to automatically convert college credits to credit hours in our program. Instead, count one hour for each class hour (contact hour) attended.
  - d. Any adult enrichment courses at parishes or local high school programs. Count one credit hour for each class or lecture hour (contact hour) attended.

D. Credit hours are to be distinguished from total hours. The 12-hour requirement is credit hours. The following activities are **not** normally considered credit hours.

1. Travel to and from the place where instruction is given.
2. Informal meetings and conferences.
3. Prayer services and liturgies.
4. Spiritual direction sessions.
5. Parish council or committee meetings.
6. Social gatherings.
7. Diocesan boards and committee meetings.
8. Administration and business meetings.
9. Diaconate assembly or council meetings.
10. Support group functions.
11. Courses not related to ministerial service.

E. While it is not necessary to submit more than 12 credit hours, members are encouraged to submit all their activities, especially those included in Paragraph C 1 through C 5 above.

**DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CERTIFICATION  
MASTER CATECHIST REQUIREMENTS  
DEACONS**

To be a **master catechist** for the Diocese of Columbus one must:

- Have a bachelor's degree with a major (30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in theology, religious education or religious studies or a bachelor's degree with another major but with course work totaling 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in theology, religious education, or religious studies). The coursework must include hours in each of the following areas: scripture, systematics, historical, moral, and liturgical theology.
- Demonstrate a good understanding and skill of the catechetical process
- Receive the recommendation from the Vicar for Clergy, Director of Ministry and Life of Deacons, and the Director of Diaconal Formation
- Meet with appropriate consultants in the Department of Education and Department of Evangelization to receive and review the current materials for teaching the certification courses
- Use the objectives and notes developed by the Department of Education and Department of Evangelization
- Be willing to work with the Director of Ministry and Life of Deacons, Director of Diaconal Formation, the Department of Education and Department of Evangelization on the continuous improvement of the certification process and the improvement of personal skills in this area.
- Have a transcript on file with the Office of the Diaconate, Department of Education and Department of Evangelization documenting appropriate background for teaching.

To **facilitate** the certification courses, one must have advanced certification and facilitator's training from the Department of Education and department of Evangelization.

## NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

1. Prior to ordination, each candidate in their final year will receive this policy statement and a continuing education record. (Hopefully, during their pre-ordination retreat.)
2. Each year, deacons who have been ordained 5 years earlier will be requested by letter to submit the continuing education record for review by the Diocesan Director of Ministry and Life of Deacons. Each 5-year anniversary thereafter a report will also be requested.
3. Each deacon should make a copy of his own record before submission to the Director of Ministry and Life of Deacons. The submitted record will become part of the deacon's records.
4. The deacon will have access to his file upon verbal request. The members of the Continuing Education Committee (if one is ever established) and the members of the Council, including secretarial employees, will have access to the file only in the performance of their official functions. The file shall be duplicated and released only to the deacon upon written request, the copies of which will be for his use, e.g., for review by the Personnel Board, or a current or prospective pastor or supervisor, etc.
5. Waiver of minimum credit or extension of time to complete the education may be granted by the Director of Ministry and Life of Deacons in exceptional cases. Such waiver may be considered upon receipt of a written request by the deacon. Waiver may be considered but is not limited to age, health, employment, family or ministry demands. Waivers or granting extensions will be announced in writing. A failure to submit the continuing education form shall be referred to the ordinary for his action.
6. **RECORDING:** The form approved for use in recording credit hours is provided in the attachment. As a general rule, always show title of course or project - dates of attendance - location - total hours attended - number of credit hours. Other helpful information may be included, such as name of instructor, a brief line of what it covered, etc. You may also attach certificates, however these should be copies. The attachment shows sample entries of various courses.

## RETREATS

According to Canon 276, Deacons, as clerics are “...bound to make a retreat according to the prescriptions of particular law...”

Remuneration and funds are provided the deacon according to the Ministry Agreement Guidelines (3005.0) and Financial Assistance Recommendations (3005.3).

## POST ORDINATION FORMATION

Under the directives from the 2nd edition of *The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons*, newly ordained deacons are to complete five years of post-ordination formation. There are matters relevant to the newly ordained. It is important, therefore, that the newly ordained begin their diaconate ministry in a positive and supportive manner. In the early phase of their ministry, ongoing formation will largely reinforce the basic training and its application in ministerial practice. Later formation will entail a more in-depth study of the various components proposed in the dimensions in diaconal formation. Consideration also should be given to introducing the newly ordained to a conversational study of a second language used within the diocese and the study of its cultural environment. Deacons, as ministers of Christ the Servant, should be prepared to link people of diverse languages and cultures into the local faith community of the diocese and parish. Deacons in their initial pastoral assignments should be carefully supervised by an exemplary pastor especially appointed to this task by the bishop.

### POST-ORDINATION FORMATION PLAN FOR THE NEWLY ORDAINED DEACON:

The on-going formation plan for the newly ordained deacon shall include attendance at the Annual Diaconate Convocation and special workshops and on-line classes planned for the newly ordained on topics that incorporate continual formation in the dimensions of human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral over a five-year period.

The newly ordained deacon will complete a minimum of 100+ clock hours of post-ordination formation which shall include the convocation, formation sessions and the option of completing various online courses from the Pontifical College Josephinum Diaconate Institute. The coordinator of post-ordination formation,

along with the Director of Diaconal Formation, and Director of Ministry and Life of Deacons will serve as advisors to the newly ordained.

## **PARTICIPATION:**

Attendance is mandatory once the Deacon contacts the post-ordination coordinator informing him of his option. Should an emergency arise or a conflict, please notify the Director of Life and Ministry of Deacons in writing asking permission to be excused. The newly ordained deacon must plan with his pastor to be free from parish duties and responsibilities when involved in post ordination formation. Post-ordination Formation takes precedent over parish assignment and ministerial duties.

*The National Directory of the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* (2nd edition) explains these four pillars of Post-ordination Formation:

### **HUMAN DIMENSION:**

#### ***Developing “Human Qualities as Valuable Instruments for Ministry”***

“To effectively carry out his diaconal ministry, the deacon must extend himself generously in various forms of human relations without discrimination so that he is perceived by others as a credible witness to the sanctity and preciousness of human life. Post-ordination formation should enable the deacon to pursue this witness to the faith with greater effectiveness. Cultural sensitivity is an important trait for the deacon, as he may be called upon to minister to others who do not share his culture or his native language. It is also important for the pastor who is assigned a deacon to be sensitive in identifying and helping to address any cultural challenges that the deacon may face in his assignment (ND #257).”

### **SPIRITUAL DIMENSION:**

#### ***“Diaconal Spirituality”***

“In Baptism, each disciple receives the universal call to holiness. In the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the deacon receives a “new consecration to God” through which he is configured to Christ the Servant and sent to serve God’s people. Growth into holiness, therefore, is “a duty binding all the faithful.” But “for the deacon it is has a further basis in the special consecration received. It includes the practice of the Christian virtues and the various evangelical precepts and counsels according to [his] own state of life.” The celibate deacon should, therefore, “be especially careful to give witness to [his] brothers and sisters by [his] fidelity to the celibate life the better to move them to seek those values consonant with man’s transcendent vocation.” He also must be “faithful to the spiritual life and duties of [his] ministry in a spirit of prudence and vigilance, remembering that ‘the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’” For the married deacon, the Sacrament of Matrimony is a gift from God and should be a source of nourishment for [his] spiritual life. . . it will be necessary to integrate these various elements [i.e., family life and professional responsibilities] in a unitary fashion, especially by means of shared prayer. In marriage, love becomes an interpersonal giving of self, a mutual fidelity, a source of new life, a support in times of joy and sorrow: in short, love becomes service. When



lived in faith, this family service is for the rest of the faithful an example of the love of Christ. The married deacon must use it as a stimulus of his diakonia in the Church. To foster and nurture his diaconal ministry and lifestyle according to his state in life, each deacon must be rooted in a spirit of service that verifies “a genuine personal encounter with Jesus, a trusting dialogue with the Father, and a deep experience of the Spirit (National Directory paragraph 258).”

“Some recommended spiritual exercises to assist the deacon in developing and promoting his spiritual life include the following: (ND #259)

- a. Daily or frequent participation in the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life, as well as daily or frequent Eucharistic adoration, as often as his secular employment and family requirements permits.
- b. Regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- c. Daily celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially morning and evening prayer
- d. Shared prayer with his family
- e. Meditative prayer on the Holy Scriptures—*lectio divina*
- f. Devotion to Mary, the Mother God
- g. Prayerful preparation of oneself prior to the celebration of the sacraments, preaching, or beginning one’s ministry of charity
- h. Theological reflection
- i. Regular spiritual direction
- j. Participation in an annual retreat
- k. Authentic living of one’s state of life
- l. Time for personal and familial growth”

#### **INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION:**

##### ***Theological Renewal***

“The intellectual dimension of diaconate formation does not end with ordination but is an ongoing requirement of the vocation. The theological demands of their call to a singular ministry of ecclesial service and pastoral servant-leadership require of deacons a growing love for the Church—for God’s Holy People—shown by their faithful and competent carrying out of their proper functions and responsibilities. The intellectual dimension of post-ordination formation must be systematic and substantive, deepening the intellectual content initially studied during the candidate path of formation. Study days, renewal courses and participation in academic institutes are appropriate formats to achieve this goal. In particular, it is of the greatest use and relevance to study, appropriate and diffuses the social doctrine of the Church. A good knowledge of that teaching will permit many deacons to mediate it in their different professions, at work and in their families. [It may also be useful to] the diocesan bishop [to] invite those who are capable to specialize in a theological discipline and obtain the necessary academic qualifications at those pontifical academies

or institutes recognized by the Apostolic See which guarantee doctrinally correct information. . . Ongoing formation cannot be confined simply to updating but should seek to facilitate a practical configuration of the deacon's entire life to Christ who loves all and serves all (ND #260).”

#### **PASTORAL DIMENSION:**

##### ***“Pastoral Methodology for an Effective Ministry”***

“Pastoral formation constantly encourages the deacon “to perfect the effectiveness of his ministry of making the love and service of Christ present in the Church and in society without distinction, especially to the poor and to those most in need. Indeed, it is from the pastoral love of Christ that the ministry of deacons draws its model and inspiration.” “For an adequate pastoral formation, it is necessary to organize encounters in which the principal objective is the reflection upon the pastoral plan of the Diocese.” When the diaconate is conceived from the start as an integral part of an overall pastoral plan, deacons will have a richer and firmer sense of their own identity and purpose. Thus, an ongoing pastoral formation program responds to the concerns and issues pertinent to the deacon's life and ministry, in keeping with the pastoral plan of the diocesan Church and in loyal and firm communion with the Supreme Pontiff and with his own bishop (ND #261).”

##### ***Option #1 for Five Year Post Ordination Process***

#### **Year One – Meet Quarterly at various parishes of the newly Ordained.**

Winter - Introduction to the Process

Spring – topic to be determined.

Summer- Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall - topic to be determined.

#### **Year Two – Josephinum Diaconate Institute**

Winter / Spring – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

Summer – Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

#### **Year Three – Meet Quarterly at various parishes of the newly Ordained.**

Winter - topic to be determined.

Spring - topic to be determined.

Summer – Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall - topic to be determined.

#### **Year Four – Josephinum Diaconate Institute**

Winter / Spring – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

Summer – Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

**Year Five – Combination of Course Work for JDI and Meet at various parishes of the newly Ordained.**

Winter / Spring – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

Summer - Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall – Presentations and Evaluation of Process

*Option #2 for Five Year Post Ordination Process*

**Year One – Combination of Course Work for JDI and Meet at various parishes of the newly Ordained.**

Winter – Introduction to the Process

Spring – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

Summer – Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall – Meet at Parish for Presentations

**Year Two – Josephinum Diaconate Institute**

Winter / Spring – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

Summer – Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

**Year Three – Combination of Course Work for JDI and Meet at various parishes of the newly Ordained.**

Winter / Spring – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

Summer – Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall - Meet at Parish for Presentations

**Year Four – Josephinum Diaconate Institute**

Winter / Spring – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

Summer /- Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

**Year Five – Combination of Course Work for JDI and Meet at various parishes of the newly Ordained.**

Winter / Spring – One JDI Course or module—topic to be determined.

Summer - Annual Deacon Convocation

Fall – Presentations and Evaluation of Process

**JDI POST-ORDINATION CURRICULUM**

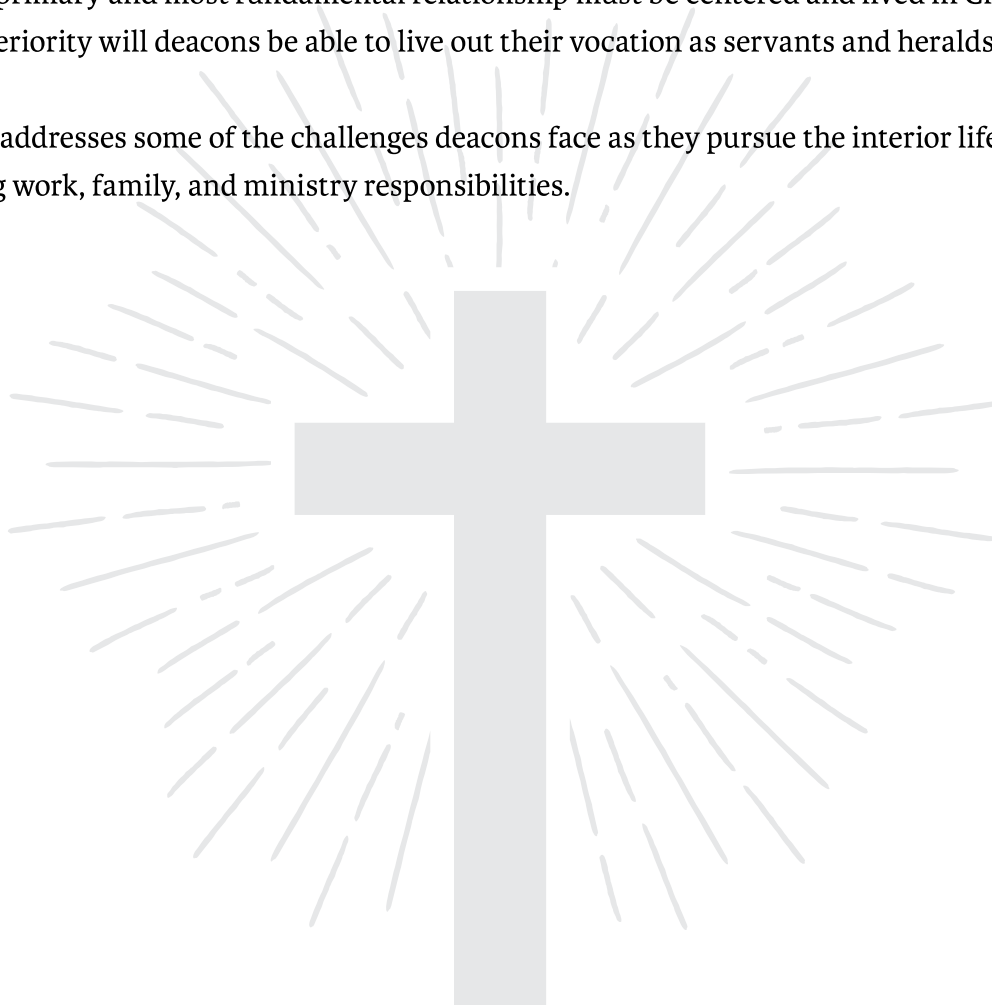
*To be determined*

## **SPIRITUAL DIRECTION**

Regular spiritual direction is a vital part of the life of a cleric, be he a bishop, priest, or deacon. All clerics are called to put Christ first in their lives by giving priority to their spiritual life and living their vocation with charity and generosity. Quality spiritual direction is an essential part of a cleric's pursuit of holiness.

Today's deacons need a rich interior life of prayer. They are called to be icons of Christ the servant. Therefore, their primary and most fundamental relationship must be centered and lived in Christ. Only from a place of deep interiority will deacons be able to live out their vocation as servants and heralds of the Gospel.

This guideline addresses some of the challenges deacons face as they pursue the interior life of the spirit while integrating work, family, and ministry responsibilities.



## THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR AND THE DEACON

Spiritual direction is an essential element in helping deacons to focus on their spiritual lives and to grow into this interior spiritual maturity. This guideline also provides encouragement and guidance to the deacons and future deacons as they respond to this call to spiritual maturity. Just as there are many schools of spirituality within the Catholic Church, there are also many possible approaches to spiritual direction. Given the fact that other approaches are possible, it is nonetheless recommended that a contemplative approach be taken. With such an approach, the spiritual director is primarily concerned with helping to foster the deacon's personal relationship with God.

Since the conversation between God and the deacons is the focal point of contemplative spiritual direction, it is important that the deacon's bring to spiritual direction the content of his conversation with God.

The permanent deacon is somewhat unique from the perspective of his ordination and simultaneous connection with the secular world. He is a member of the clergy, but he typically has a wife and family. He has a job (unless he is retired), a mortgage, and the same day-to-day responsibilities of the lay faithful, but he is not a layman. He is called to a life of service, to the pursuit of holiness, and to be an example or icon of Christ the servant.

The spiritual director should consider that the deacon is called to integrate the responsibilities and dynamics of family life, secular employment, ministry needs, recreation, and parish relationships. To do this well, a deacon must have a spiritual life that permeates and informs these varied, and sometimes competing, facets of his life.

This understanding of the deacon will certainly be of utmost importance in the spiritual director's conversation with the deacon. A review of the deacon's prayer life is essential in helping him see the direction his life is taking. Is he regularly availing himself of the Sacrament of Penance? Is he faithful to the mandate to pray at least morning and evening prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours? Is he reading scripture regularly? Is he reading other good spiritual books? Is he keeping Christ at the center? Is he in relationship with Mary and the saints? Is his spiritual life a priority or is it getting lost in the multitude of other responsibilities?

The married deacon should recognize the importance of his responsibility to his sacramental union with his wife. In doing so, he needs to be open to the needs of his family, which consists of wife, children, and possibly grandchildren. Time spent with his family is important to maintaining a healthy family life. One of the most valuable services a deacon can offer the Church is a healthy, stable family.

It is extremely easy for a deacon to become too involved in his ministry and to accept the many invitations by

parishioners to lead various meetings or prayer activities. Saying “no” is not easy for a deacon, especially when he knows that there is a need to be of service in his community. The deacon should maintain an open and honest conversation with his wife about his time commitments. She can be invaluable in preventing him from over-committing himself. This relationship must never be compromised or neglected for the sake of ministry and should be fostered in a loving, prayerful home. From time to time the deacon may need the assistance of his spiritual director to remind him of this priority.

Parish life presents its own unique set of challenges. Is the deacon having any communication difficulties in his relationships with his pastor, other priests and deacons in the parish, and/or the parish staff? Spiritual guidance here is most valuable to help him assess the impact of his parish activities and relationships on his overall life balance.

Another area to consider for discussion might be focused on the deacon’s secular work schedule. Does he travel for work, and if so, how often? Does he work weekends and/or long hours? His job, of course, is important to the welfare of his family, but it must be considered in the overall integration of his life and the impact it has on him and his family. The spiritual director’s assistance to the deacon, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in frequently assessing his activities and priorities, will greatly aid the deacon as he attempts to integrate his busy life and give glory to God.

For a deacon to remain healthy and effective he must give priority to his spiritual life. For clerics, both priests and deacons, the public nature of their sacramental identity adds another layer to that call. Good spiritual direction will encourage the deacon to deepen his interior life, foster intimacy with the Lord, and learn to discern the movements of the spirit in his heart.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

On a practical level, the following elements will help guide the spiritual direction process:

- 1.) **Frequency and length of spiritual direction sessions:** It is recommended that a deacon receive spiritual direction about once per month, or every six weeks at the most. Spiritual direction sessions would normally be about one hour in length.
- 2.) **Scheduling appointments:** In order to ensure that spiritual direction is a real priority for the deacon, the deacon and his spiritual director should be intentional about scheduling appointments ahead of time. One way to do this would be to schedule the next appointment at the end of each session. Alternatively, the deacon and his spiritual director could, at one time, schedule several appointments to cover a period of several months.
- 3.) **Location of spiritual direction sessions:** To preserve the serious and confidential nature of the spiritual direction relationship, sessions should take place in a private setting such as the spiritual director's office or other suitable place rather than in a more public and social environment such as a restaurant or café.
- 4.) **Personal prayer:** In addition to praying the Liturgy of the Hours every day, as promised at ordination, it is strongly recommended that the deacon spend at least half an hour of personal prayer each day with the sacred Scriptures. There are various expressions of personal prayer as referenced in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer (paragraph 2700-2719). The deacon's prayer may gravitate toward any of these forms, but what is most important is that his prayer be focused on growing in his intimate, personal relationship with the Lord. This time of personal prayer is the basis for the conversation that the deacon will have with his spiritual director. If the deacon is not taking this time for daily personal prayer, there will not be much for him to talk about in spiritual direction.
- 5.) **Journaling:** It is recommended that the deacon keep a personal prayer journal. In this journal the deacon can regularly record key aspects of his ongoing conversation with the Lord. Some key data to include would be the scripture passage that was prayed with; the graces the deacon was asking for; the key movements of the deacon's heart (i.e., thoughts, feelings, desires, etc.); what the Lord did or did not seem to be doing in the deacon's heart, etc. The deacon can then review his journal entries from the past month and let this review be the basis for his conversation with his spiritual director.
- 6.) **Sacrament of Penance:** It is recommended that a deacon go to confession on a regular basis. The

church clearly calls us to “...hold in high esteem the frequent use of this sacrament. It is a practice which increases true knowledge of oneself, favors Christian humility, and offers the occasion for salutary spiritual direction and the increase of grace (Decree on Confession for Religious par. 3).”

Finally, *The National Directory on the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* (2nd edition #67-71) indicates that regular spiritual direction is truly of the greatest assistance to deacons. Experience clearly shows how much can be gained in sincere and humble dialogue with the wise spiritual director, not only in the resolution of doubts and problems which inevitably arise throughout life but also in employing the necessary discernment to arrive at better self-knowledge and to grow in faithful fellowship of Christ.

