

Brothers & Sisters to Us
Spiritual Formation of the Post-Ordination Path

The Post-Ordination Path of formation of the deacon and deacon couple involves a multi-dimensional approach to ongoing growth. These dimensions include the *human, spiritual, intellectual* and *pastoral* paths of continued formation¹. All of these dimensions form an integrated whole that allows the deacon and deacon couple to progress in each of the dimensions of diaconal life. The post-ordination path also should be a seamless continuation of the initial formation process.

The purpose of this section is to focus on the continued spiritual formation process for the post-ordination deacon and deacon couple. This section is derived directly from the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* (hereby referred to as the Directory) and provides the diaconate with a basic framework for programs focused on continual spiritual formation.

Section 247 of the Directory² gives recommended spiritual exercises specifically for the post-ordination path:

- 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 permit.
- 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.

In addition to the above related exercises, models for Post-Ordination Formation programs include the use of “ministry reflection groups” (Directory, 256f)³

Recognizing that deacons and deacon couples are limited as to the devotion of time to this formative process, **Brothers & Sisters to Us** has initiated an offering of continued spiritual formation in which the diaconal community may participate. This program is

¹ USCCB. National Directory of the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States. Washington, D.C. USCCB. 2005. pp. 113-117.

² Ibid. p. 116.

³ Ibid. p. 120.

called *Bridges to Contemplative Living* and is based on the writings and spirituality of Fr. Thomas Merton.

The *Bridges* program incorporates some of the above recommended practices for diaconal formation. The *Bridges* program involves small group meetings (up to 10 individuals) led by a facilitator where focus on contemplative spiritual formation occurs with reading of scripture (particularly a psalm), writings of Thomas Merton, and other authors on contemplative living. Active discussion within the group focuses on contemplative listening to other's life experiences and how this reveals God's presence in our everyday lives. The meeting durations are generally from 60 to 90 minutes and are held on a monthly basis which is a feasible timeframe to devote to ongoing diaconal spiritual formation.

For more information on the *Bridges* program please contact Deacon Tim and Mary Good. You may also view information on the program at the website:

<http://www.mertoninstitute.org/bridges.php>