

ARTICLE TEN: POST-ORDINATION PATH IN DIACONAL FORMATION

1. **RETREATS:** Deacons are obligated to make a yearly retreat of at least three full days. Private retreats are permitted on the fulfillment of certain conditions. First, they must be made in a monastery or recognized retreat facility. Secondly, notification of attendance must be sent from the retreat facility to the Director of the Permanent Deacon Program upon completion of the retreat. Lastly, private retreats can be made every other year. In alternate years, the deacon must attend one of the regularly scheduled diocesan deacon retreats. Nothing substitutes for the annual retreat – not the *Cursillo*, Marriage Encounter, the Emmaus Convocation, or other similar gatherings.
2. **STUDY DAYS AND DAYS OF RECOLLECTION** are important; therefore, attendance is considered a priority. Such events usually are planned and scheduled at times when most of the diaconal community is free to attend. Deacon spouses and Deacon widows are welcomed and strongly encouraged to attend.
3. **CONTINUING EDUCATION** as outlined in Appendix A.
4. **MENTORING PROGRAM FOR THE NEWLY ORDAINED** is included to ensure their diaconal ministry begins in a positive and supportive manner as outlined in Appendix B.

Appendix A

Continuing Education of Deacons

Introduction

As professionals in ministry, deacons must constantly form themselves through theological, spiritual and pastoral continuing education to insure a sense of self-confidence and adequacy in their ministry. They also need to demonstrate to the Church they serve that they are competent spiritual leaders and maintain a connection to their community of fellow ministers.

Accordingly, and in compliance with Paragraph 267, *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, August 2021. “Each diocesan Church is to establish a basic minimum of continuing education hours to be fulfilled on an annual basis by all diocesan deacons in active service. This would be in addition to time allocated for the annual diaconal community retreat.”

All deacons given faculties to minister within the Diocese of Erie should complete a minimum of 14 contact hours of continuing education every year. At least 2 hours shall be devoted to the study of Homiletics each year. A contact hour is the actual time spent on the continuing education topic, and does not include travel time, lunch, dinner, break times or other times not directly associated with the continuing education topic. These hours are to be divided between private and communal forms of education. Attendance at diocesan retreats does not satisfy the continuing education requirements for permanent deacons.

General Criteria

The following criteria have been established to assist each deacon in determining the number and type of contact hours achieved through various kinds of continuing education.

A.) The scope and nature of instruction should pertain to diaconal ministry and to the church in the areas of service, word, and sacrament. This would include background for updating of current ministry or preparing for future ministry.

B.) Credit may be recorded in whole or part using the following guidelines:

1. *Certification courses*: Many national, regional or diocesan courses issue a certificate at the end of an instructional seminar or conference. All credit hours shown on the certificates should be converted to contact hours as defined earlier in this document.
2. *Announced credit courses*: Any course or conference offered by the Deacon /Clergy Continuing Education and Formation Committee of the Diocese of Erie
3. *College courses*: Due to the wide variety of methods used in college credit systems, it is not possible to convert college credits to contact hours. Instead, count one contact hour for each classroom hour attended. Such courses must be related to diaconal ministry.
4. *Private study*: Utilization of on-line programs via the Internet (Podcasts, downloads, online educational sessions, as well as books, DVDs, and CDs related to diaconal ministry is encouraged. One contact hour is allotted for each hour of listening/participation.
5. *Other*: Courses, conferences, seminars, workshops, intensive weekends, study groups related to upgrade of ministerial skills are acceptable.

6. *Retreats*: Attendance at retreats over and above the diocesan requirement (as stated previously) is encouraged as part of continuing development. Participating in a weekend retreat or at the annual Diocesan Emmaus Convocation can be credited, with contact hours determined by the time spent in the actual number of scheduled sessions attended.

C.) The following activities are not normally considered contact hours:

1. Travel related to meetings of place of instruction
2. Informal meetings and prayers
3. Prayer services and liturgies
4. Spiritual direction sessions
5. Pastoral council, diocesan board, administration, business, or committee meetings
6. Deanery meetings
7. Support group functions
8. Courses not related to ministerial service

D.) Deacons are expected to submit a report of all their continuing education activities annually by June 1st, to the Office of the Permanent Diaconate to keep their personnel file current. A standard reporting form is available on the website and included here for illustrative purposes.

Funding Assistance

As part of the diocesan commitment to the continuing education and formation of permanent deacons, funds may be made available to assist those deacons who wish to engage in approved theological, pastoral or ministry related programs of formal study toward academic degrees or for ministry related professional certification or licensing.

The following restrictions apply:

1. Funding is not automatic and must be applied for annually by the deacon requesting the funding assistance. A standard application form is attached for illustrative purposes. The application should be submitted at least three months in advance of the beginning of the program for which funds are requested.
2. The deacon must demonstrate his ability to effectively complete the program and that the program for which funding is requested will have a direct and positive effect on the ability of the deacon to better carry out his ministry in the diocese, either the ministry to which he is assigned or toward which he has been told by authorized personnel (*Bishop, Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate*) he is moving.

3. The program for which funding assistance is requested must respond to genuine diocesan needs articulated by the Diocesan Bishop.
4. The program should not interfere with the normal and effective carrying out of the individual deacon's primary pastoral assignment.
5. Funds for this purpose are limited to those made available through the diocesan budget, as well as various endowments, grants and scholarships administered by the Diocese for this purpose.
6. The awarding of funding assistance is at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop, upon the recommendation of the Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate and the Vicar of Clergy Personnel.

Criteria for Dispersal of Funds for Continued Study

In order to bring more clarity to the process by which a decision to fund or not to fund a degree or certification or licensing program of any individual deacon is made, these criteria have been established:

1. The individual deacon must submit a completed application to the Director of the Permanent Diaconate at least three months before the program is to begin.
2. The applicant must give evidence that the program has a direct, positive effect on the manner in which the individual deacon is better able to carry out his ministry in the diocese and, more specifically, in the particular ministry to which he has been assigned or toward which he has been told he is moving.
3. The program must respond in a very direct way to the genuine diocesan needs that have been articulated by the Diocesan Bishop in consultation with the Presbyteral Council.

The program may not in any way interfere with the normal and effective carrying out of the individual deacon's assignment. A leave from the assignment may be considered