GRACE OVERFLOWING:

A CONSIDERATION OF DIACONAL SPIRITUALITY

IN THE CONTEXTS OF MARRIAGE AND ORDAINED MINISTRY

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# GRACE OVERFLOWING: DIACONAL SPIRITUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF MARRIAGE AND ORDAINED MINISTRY

Abstract

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This study examines spirituality as understood and experienced by deacons and their wives. Christian spirituality is characterized by communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence which give expression to its Trinitarian and Incarnational nature. Diaconal spirituality is Christian spirituality lived out in the context of ordained ministry, which emphasizes the charism of service, and, for most deacons, the context of marriage.

A survey of deacons from the Dioceses of Erie, PA and Cleveland, OH was conducted regarding their perceptions of diaconal spirituality and its relationship to marriage and diaconal ministry. The wives of the Erie and Cleveland deacons were also included. The data was analysed using Grounded Theory methodology. Participation in the survey was extended also to members of an Internet email based discussion group for deacons.

The most frequent forms of spiritual discipline reported were Mass attendance and the liturgy of the hours. When speaking of the most meaningful disciplines in the

spiritual lives of deacons there is a shift, with forms of service ministry predominating. There is also a notable increase in the role of prayer/reflection and family related activities.

Reported spiritual practices often begin in childhood under the influence of parents. To a lesser extent, adult conversion or renewal experience influences their spiritual lives. Family prayer is common and the liturgy of the hours or Mass attendance is often undertaken as a couple.  Many deacons and their wives come into formation experiencing a well established and often well balanced Christian family spirituality

The study identifies five core areas characteristic of the spiritual lives of deacons and their spouses: relationship between the person and God, expression of that relationship in ministry, integrity of the person's spiritual life with marriage, a deepened self-awareness, and admission of the challenges faced in being faithful to spiritual practices.

The implications of theology and experience discussed in this study are considered as they apply to ministerial assignments, support for deacons and their families, as well as initial formation and continuing education of deacons and their wives.

**DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Richard Edgar and Josephine Virginia Shewman. Through the example of their lives, I learned the meaning of Christian *diakonia*.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

What is the relationship of my marriage and family life to diaconal ministry? What does it mean to grow in holiness as a deacon? What is diaconal spirituality? These questions were posed to me by my spiritual director several years ago. I struggled to answer these questions in terms of my experience. After reflecting on this topic between sessions with my spiritual director, I reported back that it seemed my family life was the most important influence on my spirituality, with my experience of diaconal ministry a close second.

I felt a bit odd, as there was little resonance for this experience in the diaconal literature.   There was a rightful emphasis on the place of service in diaconal spirituality but little sense of how the family related to my spirituality as a deacon. The frustration arising from that experience lead directly to this project.

One sign of hope for me is the statement of the Holy See in its *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*.

> The identity of the deacon, as it is for every ordained minister, is found "in being a specific participation in and representation of the ministry of Christ…" The model "par excellence" is Christ the servant, who lived totally at the service of God, for the good of men. ...The outlines of the specific spirituality of the deacon flow clearly from his theological identity; this spirituality is one of service.
>
> Obviously such spirituality must integrate itself harmoniously, in each case, with the spirituality related to the state of life. Accordingly, the same diaconal spirituality acquires diverse connotations according to whether it be lived by a married man, a widower, a single man, a religious, a consecrated person in the

world. Formation must take account of these variations and offer differentiated spiritual paths according to the types of candidates. [1]

It is the statement that "such spirituality must integrate itself harmoniously with the spirituality related to the state of life" which has given me hope. Diaconal spirituality, no matter how well defined theologically or canonically, only becomes real in the life of the deacon, who attempts to integrate the models suggested by theology and canon law within the context of his state in life.

How does the deacon integrate the sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders in his life? What is the shape of a spirituality that is diaconal and reflects a true integration of both the sacraments of commitment?[2]

My efforts to answer these questions began by focusing on the nature of Christian spirituality. A review of the literature produced an array of characteristics that was reduced to the categories of communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence. Communion (*koinonia*) refers to the Trinitarian "being-for" others that is rooted in our embodied nature, as beings made in the image and likeness of God.  Self-emptying (*kenosis*) refers to disciplined openness to God's action in our lives. Service (*diakonia*) refers to the concrete expression in action of our "being-for" the other in self-giving love. Self-transcendence refers to growth toward wholeness; an ever greater conformity to

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[1] Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum Permanentium* (Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons), (Vatican City: Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998) no. 11-12.

[2] *A National Study on the Permanent Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States: 1994-1995* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1966), 2. Married men comprise approximately 97% of the permanent deacons in the United States. While the diaconate is not limited to married men, the experience arising from the context of marriage is of significant importance to most deacons in the United States. While acknowledging that the context for celibate deacons is different than that for married deacons, this study focuses primarily on the experience of married permanent deacons.

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Christ. If all Christian spirituality shares these essential characteristics, diaconal spirituality is a particular expression of these characteristics.

The literature provides theological and normative descriptions of diaconal spirituality but does not speak to the deacon's perception of spirituality. Faced with our fundamental concern to discover the nature of a spirituality that is diaconal and reflects a true integration of the sacraments of marriage and orders, I have chosen to study spirituality as reported by deacons and their wives. A particular concern is to understand the interplay of marriage and the experience of diaconal ministry on that spirituality.

This research does not stand in isolation from the broader diaconal and ecclesial communities. The intention underlying this research is that the findings and their implications are of practical value for the formation, ministry and holiness of deacons and their wives.

The deacon must be understood as a whole human being. While he operates in a variety of role-sets, he is the same human being no matter what role he may be functioning within at any given moment. Van Kaam's model of the formational field illustrates this, showing how many different factors, including the variety of social roles one plays, impinge on the formation of the person and shift with new decisions and experience.[3]

Culture and society inform and shape the deacon's experience of spirituality; as well as provide a context in which diaconal spirituality finds expression in specific behavior. Significant experiences within the ministerial and the marital settings

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[3] Adrian Van Kaam, *Formative Spirituality: Fundamental Formation Vol. 1*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), 63.

contribute to the formation and on-going transformation of the deacon, just as his

ministerial activities affects his functioning in familial and other roles. The significance

of such behavior and experiences to the deacon is important for understanding the

deacon's perception of spirituality. Significance can be seen in both frequency of practice

and the relative value (meaning) of the practice to the deacon. The more significant

behavior will form the core of his perception of spiritual life and point to the

interrelationship of marriage and diaconal ministry. In addition to the deacon's perception

of such interaction, it might be apparent as well in the metaphors that underlie the

deacon's life script and his perception of significant religious activities.[4]

### *Research Question*

The thesis to be explored is that the spirituality of the deacon/diaconal couple is

significantly influenced by the contexts of marriage and ordained ministry. Given this

primary thesis, it is presumed that: (1) the deacon and his wife benefit from this mutual

influence, and (2) the mutual influence of marriage and ordained ministry provides

benefit to the greater Church community.  In order to explore these theses, it is necessary

to draw upon the relevant literature, as well as the reported spirituality of deacons and

their wives.     .

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[4] Andrew. Greeley, *Religion as Poetry* (Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick, NJ, 1995), 23-56. A root metaphor is the basic analogy a person uses to illustrate his understanding of the world. He undertakes to interpret all facts in terms of these categories. Another way to understand the concept is in terms of a conceptual archetype which defines a systematic repertoire of ideas by means of which a given thinker describes by analogical extension, some domain to which those ideas do not immediately and literally apply.

*Methodology*

Grounded Theory Methodology is an approach to qualitative research in the social sciences that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon. It begins with a research situation. Within that situation the researcher must come to understand what is happening and how the players manage their roles.[5] The research situation is explored through the lens of a particular question or set of questions. The questions are concerned with both how the players manage their roles and what factors influence the performance of their roles.[6] The raw data is coded into relevant concepts, which are then grouped into related categories. It is from the apparent interrelationships revealed by the interplay of categories that propositions, describing the underlying patterns in the data, emerge. These patterns give rise to theories about the phenomenon under study.

I believe that this methodology provides the most fruitful approach to a better understanding of diaconal spirituality, as perceived by deacons and their wives, within its marital and ministerial contexts. In addition to providing a method for the analysis of the experience of diaconal spirituality, it also lends itself to a consideration of the social meaning of diaconal spirituality.

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[5]Bob Dick, "Grounded Theory: A Thumbnail Sketch," http://http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html (accessed July 12, 2003).

[6] Naresh R. Pandit, "The Creation of theory: A Recent Application of the Grounded Theory Method," *The Qualitative Report* 2, no. 4 (December 1996). Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 24, 29, 58-59, 65.

*Study Population*

The study population includes the deacons and their wives of the Dioceses of Erie, Pennsylvania and Cleveland, Ohio. In addition, members of an on-line discussion group of deacons were invited to participate in the study as an additional source of data and a means of providing a wider experience of diaconal ministry. Consistent with Grounded Theory, interviews with persons involved in the formation of deacons and deacons from outside the formal study population are another source of insight for this study. However, data provided by such sources is used apart from the base population for this study.

*Research Procedures*

The initial stage of field research involved a questionnaire provided to members of the study population (see appendix "B"). This was done via the mail and the Internet.

The purpose of the instrument was to obtain the perception of the deacons and their spouses regarding their spiritual practices. The instrument used questions requiring a written response of a few sentences in length. Coding and analysis of the responses to the questionnaire was supported by the use of *Atlas.ti 5.0.*[7]

As the coding and analysis of the questionnaire responses reached the point where a model of diaconal spirituality emerged, focus groups were held with deacons and

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[7] *Atlas.ti 5.0* is a commercial database designed primarily for qualitative analysis using Grounded Theory.

deacon's wives.[8] The focus groups included face to face discussion, as well as discussion

held through the medium of an Internet email list service for deacons. The purpose of the

focus groups was to validate the emerging theoretical models.

*Research Product*

The above described research is not undertaken for its own sake. Rather, it is a

matter of practical theology directed to serving the spiritual formation of deacons and

their wives.[9]   The blending of research based both on a review of the literature and

qualitative research with deacons and their spouses provides a sufficiently detailed model

of diaconal spirituality to generate suggestions for the life, ministry and spiritual

formation of deacons consistent with the research findings.

The immediate product of the research is this Doctor of Ministry project paper.

This paper includes five chapters. This first chapter presents an overview of the research

and the concerns that motivated it. Chapter two is a review of the literature regarding

Christian spirituality in general and diaconal spirituality in particular. Specific reference

is made to the contexts of marriage and ministry. Chapter three describes procedures used

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[8]The model is build around a core concept that emerges from coding and analysis. Around this core concept are linked causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies and consequences which comprise a temporal story line for the phenomenon which is also described as its model. Also, "categorical saturation" refers to the point at which a particular conceptual category yields no further variation of significance.

[9]P. Ballard and J. Pritchard, "Practical Theology in Action," *SPCK* 1996 [journal on-line]; available from http://www.bangor.ac.uk/rs/pt/ptunit/definition#ref; Internet; accessed 10 February 2004. Practical theology is the branch of theology that brings together the rich variety of theological traditions (such as revelation, scripture, doctrine, and history) and with the practical realities of the contexts within which mission and ministry operates (such as social institutions, cultural heritages, and individual people). Broadly conceived practical theology finds itself concerned with issues like homiletics, preaching, communication, catechetics, religious education, liturgy, worship, pastoral care, prayer, and spiritual formation.

in the conduct of this research.  Results of the empirical research emerging from the data are presented in chapter four. Chapter five explores the theoretical and practical implications suggested by the findings in light of the broader literature. Three areas of practical application are considered; ministerial assignments, candidate formation, and continuing formation.

# CHAPTER TWO

## A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

*Introduction*

This chapter locates diaconal spirituality within the tradition of Christian spirituality. It is shown that Christian spirituality is our response of love, in the context in which we find ourselves, to the Divine Mystery. Love is characterized by communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence. It is the interrelationship of these four characteristics in a person that gives flesh to the Trinitarian and Incarnational nature of Christian Spirituality. Diaconal spirituality is a particular expression of Christian spirituality which is realized within contexts common to most deacons. These contexts are diaconal ministry and, for most deacons, marriage and family life.

*Focusing on Spirituality*

Over a decade ago I had a conversation with a well educated and successful Chamorro woman which began a journey of discovery for me that continues unabated.[10] She was frustrated. Many of the traditional devotional activities common in her most

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[10] Richard Shewman, "Roots of a Marianas Spirituality," *Pacific Journal of Theology, II*, no. 10 (1993). At the time I was living and ministering in the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). Chamorro is an indigenous ethnic group residing in the Mariana Islands. My reflections on this conversation lead to the article.

Catholic of cultures no longer spoke to her meaningfully. The liturgical activity of the Church was a familiar routine but rarely opened the "doors to the sacred" for her.[11]  She felt empty. Her situation was not unique. I had conversations with others who said much the same thing. Each person reports yearning for something more. Often the "something more" is expressed as seeking a deeper experience of the transcendent--a deeper spirituality.

"Spirituality" is a term familiar to most 21st century men and women but about whose exact meaning there is little agreement. Bookstore shelves marked "spirituality" include everything from psychic tarot readings, to reincarnation, to the writings of St. John of the Cross, as well as self-help books. Several recent reviews of the theological and social science literature resulted in the authors concluding that there is no consistent and generally accepted understanding of the terms "spirituality",  "spiritual development" or "spiritual growth."[12]

Part of the problem is that for many centuries spirituality implied living as a disciple attempting to interiorize and integrate a wisdom being handed on by an ecclesial community. While contemporary, post-modern society is open to the spiritual having value, often it is blind to value rooted in an institutional context. Rather, spirituality is perceived as a personal quest. In the post-modern context, the seeker becomes a

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[11] Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to the Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Tarrytown, NY: Triumph Books, 1991), 7.

[12] Daniel A. Helminiak, *Spiritual Development: An Interdisciplinary Study* (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1987), 29.  See also, Michele Dillon, Paul Wink, and Kristen Fay, "Is Spirituality Detrimental to Generativity," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 3 (2003): 428.

consumer, picking and choosing from various spiritual traditions in order to develop a spiritual practice that works for him or her.[13]

Deacons are ministers within a particular ecclesial community and organizational structure. Their identity is shaped by that community and its traditions. Thus, diaconal spirituality is necessarily the spirituality of a disciple, rather than the spirituality of a consumer. Diaconal spirituality is comprehensible in the context of Christian faith and draws its meaning from that tradition.

A unique characteristic of the Christian tradition is its nature as Trinitarian and Incarnational. Cardinal Stafford spoke about this in a Jubilee 2000 retreat conference for deacons explaining that the communion characteristic of the Trinity is not closed in on itself but reaches out to humanity; indeed, it reaches out to all creation.[14] This fundamental character of Christian spirituality informs every Christian identity within the Church, including the diaconate.

Contemporary understandings of Christian spirituality remain rooted in the tradition of discipleship, while encompassing the post-modern concern for the person. For example, Pope John Paul II defines spirituality as "a mode or form of life in keeping with Christian demands."[15] Joann Wolski Conn states, "For Christians, it (spirituality) means one's entire life as understood, felt, imagined, and decided upon in relationship to God, in Christ Jesus, empowered by the Spirit."[16] Richard Gaillardetz describes

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[13] Bruce H. Lescher, "Spiritual Direction: Stalking the Boundaries." In *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers: Perspectives for the 21st Century*, ed. Robert J. Wicks, *2* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 318.

[14] Cardinal Stafford, *The Ideal Family of the Permanent Deacon*, see http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_19022000_idf_en.html . 2000. A talk given by Cardinal Stafford at the Deacon retreat in Rome for Jubilee 2000.

[15] John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in America*, Vatican City, (1999) no.29.

[16] Joann Wolski Conn, *Spirituality and Personal Maturity* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 13.

spirituality as "the particular contour and texture of our encounter with God's saving grace in our daily lives. Any authentic spirituality by revealing to us God's action in our lives, also discloses our truest identity; we 'find' ourselves in our relationships with God and one another."[17]

Each of these descriptions is characterized by a view of spirituality that is Trinitarian and Incarnational. Christian spirituality's Incarnational character is apparent in its integration with the life and identity of a person as part of an ecclesial community. Spirituality does not refer to what one does for a few minutes every morning and evening, rather it encompasses every action and every moment of the day. The body and spirit are integral.

### *Spiritual Anthropology*

What are humans that the term "spiritual" is a meaningful concept? It is the answer to this question that sets the parameters of our consideration of diaconal spirituality. Psychologist and priest, Adrian Van Kaam, describes human life forming itself by its presence in the world, even as it gives form to the world.

> The world contains opportunities for human formation. These opportunities correspond with the unique structure of the human and his or her capacities. This interaction gives rise to a human formation field. When people give form to that field, deepening, expanding and enhancing it, they give and receive from it their own self-transcending life.
>
> Human life is dynamic and developing. Human life arises out of the constant formative interaction of spirit, mind and body, which in turn is in constant interaction with the dimensions of the formative field. Human life is not a static entity; rather, it is emerging. It is a dialogical process between functionality and

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[17] Richard Gaillardetz, *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002), 19.

vitality in steady interaction with formative events emerging in one's formation field.[18]

Our spiritual identity as human beings emerges from the experience of being self-aware. Our understanding of human nature is based upon direct self-knowledge, knowledge that springs from direct observation of us, from self-experience. Since what we see in ourselves is in common with much of humanity, direct self-knowledge contains knowledge of universally human phenomena as well. Thus, self-knowledge serves as the foundation for concepts of self and others.[19]

> Human consciousness goes beyond simple knowledge of its own existence and it goes beyond thinking about existence. Human consciousness is the capacity to perceive and appreciate not only various stimuli but the ongoing process of being, and the mystery of that process.[20]

Yet, how can we perceive and appreciate what is beyond knowledge? The primary way we do this is through symbols. We interact with the world and one another through the medium of symbols. Certain symbols bring us to the limits of our comprehension and point beyond to mystery; a reality that transcends our comprehension.[21]

These symbols do not stand in isolation. They are joined with other symbols into networks that are in turn joined together into metaphors and stories.[22] We are story-

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[18] Adrian Van Kaam, *Formative Spirituality: Fundamental Formation*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), 60-61.

[19] Han F. De Wit, *The Spiritual Path: An Introduction to the Psychology of the Spiritual Traditions*, trans. Henry Jansen & Lucia Hofland-Jansen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1994), 42-44.

[20] Gerald May, *Will & Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982), 43.

[21] Robert C. Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany, NY: The University of New York Press, 1996), 54-55. Neville describes this type of symbol as a finite/infinite contrast, in which the contrast signals that the finite symbol refers to a transcendent reality.

[22] Joseph M. Webb, *Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism* (St. Louis, MO: The Chalice Press, 1998), 20-24.

making creatures who organize our experience in narrative form.[23] Thus, if we are to come to some sense of the mystery toward which we are drawn, we must turn to story. Religion and philosophy tell stories in an attempt to speak of the ultimate in metaphors and images.

Yet, it is not enough to be well versed in religious symbol systems, with their many layers of meaning and possible interpretations, as well as the stories of our culture or religious tradition. The symbols systems must be internalised. Neville refers to the internalisation of important symbol systems as content meaning. This type of meaning is characterized by an affective engagement in which the person's heart and character is constituted by symbols of the divine. The process of turning the networks of meaning of important religious symbols (finite/infinite contrasts) into content meaning Neville describes as the substance of our traditional understanding of spiritual growth; that is, spirituality. Yet, it must be remembered that ultimately our symbol systems do not penetrate the mystery to which they point but stand broken, finite icons pointing toward the infinite.[24]

Having come to the limit of our comprehension, attempting to speak of the mystery encountered in images and metaphors, we find ourselves in relationship with mystery. It is here that we draw upon our Christian tradition, asking what or who is this mystery? It is through the mediation of Christian tradition that our encounter with the mystery at the limit of comprehension is given a face and we discover our own identity.

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23 Daniel P. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993), 13.; Terrence R. Tilley, *Story Theology*, (Wilmington, DL: Michael Glazier Books, 1985), 23.

[24] Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols*, 103.

Christian spirituality, rooted in the Trinity, speaks of this mystery as God. Further, Christian spirituality suggests that the question is better posed as: Whose am I? Since God is love, God's very being is to be in relation, that is, God's very life is the relationality and mutual self-gift that makes love what it is. Naming God "Father, Son, Spirit," three in one Love, Trinity, is, then, not an abstraction. It articulates not only who and how we understand God to be, but what I am called to be and become. Created in the image of God, personal identity is constituted by being in relationship. For human beings, personhood is a gift received in the relations of interpersonal love. Our being is toward and for others. We come to ourselves only through and with others.[25]

We possess no identity outside of God's claim on us. We are what we were created to be only when we are in relationship with God. God is no silent, passive upholder of things; he is an active agent—acting on our behalf. However, relationship involves action on our part as well. God initiates but we must respond.[26] That response is manifest in the relations of interpersonal love, which constitutes our personal identity.

Seen in this light Christian spirituality is a matter of responding in love to God, whose very life is relationality and mutual self-gift; that is, love. "The soul's love for God is God's love for the soul."[27] Self-gift is not emotion but a process of becoming an ever more perfect image of love. That process is characterized by communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence. These characteristics are inherent in any form of Christian spirituality, including the spirituality of deacons and their wives.

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[25] Michael Downey, *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality,* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 61-62.

[26] Joseph Allen, *Inner Way: Eastern Christian Spiritual Direction,* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 66-69.

[27] Gerald May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 49.

*Characteristics of Christian Spirituality*

Spirituality is oriented towards others. It is a mode of relationship that is "I-Thou". "The aim of relation is relation's own being, that is, contact with the *Thou*. For through contact with every *Thou* we are stirred with a breath of the *Thou*, that is, of eternal life."[28]  In the Christian tradition this aspect of spirituality is known as "communion" (*koinonia*).

Relationship requires engagement with the "other," whether that engagement is with God or our neighbor. Such engagement moves us from the abstract into the concrete reality of embodied existence. Engagement is a response to the "other." It requires action on our part which moves us beyond our inner world of thought and feeling to acknowledge the humanity of another, through acting as if the need of that person is our need. It is the movement from "loving our neighbor" as a sentiment to acting on that love. Within the Christian tradition this engagement with others in their physical and social reality often is referred to as "service" (*diakonia*).

Perception is shaped by the mental structures formed by our prior experience. Relationship requires a steady stripping away of expectations based on prior experience and the development of new understandings based on shared experience. Emptying ourselves of prior expectations frees us from the trap of self-absorption, making it possible for us to perceive the other and to respond to the other. We exchange vague and even false expectations for a clearer perception of reality and a greater openness to the "other" which allows true intimacy. Traditionally, such "self-emptying" is described as *kenosis*.

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[28]Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Schribner, 1958), 63.

Communion, service and self-emptying are interdependent. Orientation toward others (*communio*) is without substance if we are unable to engage the other (*diakonia*). We can be oriented toward and engage others only when we are sufficiently emptied of expectation (*kenosis*) to allow orientation and engagement. Self-emptying allows awareness of and engagement with others.

This interrelationship is not static. Action brings change, exposing the person to new conditions and challenges. As one transcends the challenges encountered, there is a greater capacity for communion, self-emptying and service. This dynamic character of spirituality can be understood as "self-transcendence" (*metanoia*).

> ...the drive for self-transcendence is the divine life within the human person, and its realization culminates in a personal relationship with God who is Truth and Goodness and Love. Self-transcendence occurs...in our effective response to the radical desire of the human spirit for meaning, truth, value and love--a radical desire that is, at bottom, always a desire for God.[29]

Communion

As we try to make sense of the mystery encountered at the limits of our comprehension, even before turning to Christian tradition, we reflect on our encounter. The closest that we can come to finding words adequate to the experience is to speak of love. Having given our experience symbolic expression, we turn to Christian tradition where we discover that our experience of the mystery is not isolated.

> Christians experience God as the divine source and superabundance of love being poured forth in Jesus of Nazareth, made effective by the Holy Spirit, and at every moment inviting the believer into transformative relationship…God's very being,

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[29] Walter Conn, *The Desiring Self: Rooting Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction in Self-Transcendence* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), 72-73.

what it is for God to be, is loving, life-giving relationship. God does not just have a love relationship with us, God is loving relationship.[30]

The opening chapters of Genesis describe humanity as being made in the image of God. Humanity is a unique locus of God's self-disclosure. If God is *agape* revealed in relationship, that is Trinity, then the self-disclosure of God in humanity is best found in the communion of self-giving, love relationships between persons. We are most human, the richest images of God we are capable of, when we participate fully in relationships of interpersonal love, both human and divine, thereby being in communion with the living God. As this God is God for us in the economy of salvation, so the human person exists by being ever more fully toward and for others through continually deepening participation in communion of persons, human and divine.[31]

> Within each of us there is an inner restlessness, an insufficiency that impels us to engage our world, to forge meaningful relationships with others, to exercise our imaginations…Human desire is the source of our spiritual energy. It is what impels us in our most creative labors and moves us to enter into relationship with others…We are made for communion, driven into relationship by a deep sense that by connecting with another we might find wholeness…The longing for the communion we experience with another wells up from our longing for God and offers us a real yet imperfect participation in the one divine communion that alone can completely fulfil us.[32]

Since an essential dimension of spirituality is *communion* of persons, it can not be disembodied. Indeed, spirituality finds its expression through the flesh. "The body, and it alone," John Paul II says," is capable of making visible what is invisible, the spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the invisible mystery hidden in God from time immemorial, and thus to be a sign of it."[33]

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[30] Gaillardetz, *A Daring Promise*, 36.

[31] Downey, *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality*, 65, 76-77.

[32] Gaillardetz, *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*, 24-25.

[33] John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston, MA: St. Paul Editions, 1981), 144.

The most fundamental element of Christian anthropology is our embodied nature. We come to know the world and act upon the world through our senses. It is through our flesh that we come to know God. God reveals himself to us in the language of the body. Historically, it was in Jesus of Nazareth that God became flesh. It was through the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ--all embodied experiences--that we have been given the grace of salvation.

Communion is the human immersion in the relational character of the Trinity. The self-disclosure of God in humanity is found in self-giving relationships between persons. As embodied creatures, communion is not separate from our physical nature but is shaped by and expressed through it.

The ministry of the deacon gives concrete expression to the Church's communion. It is in clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, counselling with the troubled, providing shelter to the homeless, visiting the sick and imprisoned that persons are able to experience the "being-for" of the Church. *Agape* is no longer an abstract concept but is experienced in relationship with a human being, who represents not just himself but the entire Christian community. While all are called to "be-for" one another, it is the deacon who is a sacramental icon of the divine "being-for." His ministry points to the communion to which all are called.

Self-emptying

Christian spiritual life means being animated by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. The life of holiness to which all believers in Christ are called is one of ever greater resonance to the Spirit of Christ. That Spirit reminds us that even though "His state was divine, He did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume

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the conditions of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross..." (Phil. 2:6-8).

> If God is understood as Father, Son, Spirit toward us, for us, with us, and in us, then our response to this communion must lie in setting aside, standing apart from or above self-absorption, moving beyond self-preoccupation, self-indulgence, self-fixation. Holiness rests in becoming persons conformed to the image of God in us, being toward and for another, for others and for God.[34]

Our fundamental desire and motivation is for God and the fullness of love, even if we are not consciously aware of it. Since we do not encounter God directly through our senses and concepts, we are drawn to what we can feel, see and grasp. We expect these things to satisfy us, without realizing that we are drawn to them only because they point to their Creator, the One for whom we truly long. We may even find our attraction to them becoming compulsive and destructive. This destroys our freedom. We allow these attachments to control our lives. Eventually, we discover that some attachments are obstacles to our deepest motivation and desire. We want to love God with all our heart and soul and mind, and love one another as ourselves. Yet, we find our hearts given elsewhere, our souls compelled by something else.[35]

Self-emptying is a deliberate attack on our illusions and attachments. It is a turning away from abstraction in favor of what is actually present to us. It is the realization of our human limits. It is immersion in an environment in which our capacities are reduced to nothing and we are at the mercy of God to shape his will in us. An acknowledgement of our humanity before God, that we will always be developing and in process, is the beginning of self-emptying.[36]

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[34] Downey, *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality*, 106.

[35] May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 58-62.

[36] Kevin M. Cronin, *Kenosis: Emptying Self and the Path of Christian Service* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 19-20.

Rahner describes self-emptying when he speaks of leading our life such that we forget ourselves for God, when we love him, praise him, and thank him. Spiritual life in grace means that we realize the inner divine life in ourselves; it means waiting for eternity in faith, hope, and love, bearing the darkness of human existence; it means not identifying oneself just with this world.[37]

Self-emptying finds concrete expression in our response to the experience of loss. This can be the loss of a loved one to death, the loss of a job or the loss of status among one's peers. This can also be experienced as change, such as in the loss of youthful vigor and the signs of advancing age as we approach the middle years of life.[38] Our children grow up and move out on their own. It is painful to let go of them and the parent-child relationship that is important to us. Yet, from the letting go, the loss of the parent-child relationship, there emerges something new. We discover a parent-adult child relationship that allows a greater depth and reciprocity than was ever possible in the more unidirectional parent-child relationship. The self-transcendence that ultimately enriches everyone involved is only possible by accepting the loss of what was. The Resurrection was only possible after the Crucifixion.

> A man cannot enter into the deepest center of himself and pass through that center into God, unless he is able to pass entirely out of himself and empty himself and give himself to other people in the purity of a selfless love.[39]

"Openness" is the result of self-emptying. If one is empty, then one is also open and willing to receive what the Lord has to give. It is acceptance of the transcendent, a

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[37] Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1956), 318.

[38] Mary Ann McPherson Oliver, *Conjugal Spirituality: The Primacy of Mutual Love in Christian Tradition* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 37.

[39] Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1949; reprint, New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1960), 41 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

willingness to go out beyond the present circumstances. Self-emptying is not fruitful

unless it is also open to other possibilities. Self-emptying/openness is generative.

The diaconate is a sacramental sign of the kenotic Christ, "who emptied himself

and took the form of a slave". The deacon is a reminder of the concrete ways in which

Christ poured himself out for all. The deacon is not only a sign of the kenotic Christ but

becomes a sacramental encounter of the kenotic Christ. Emptied of expectations, simply

responding in loving openness to those whom he encounters, the deacon embodies Christ.

Service

"In the widest sense of the word, *diakonia* (service) is not one, but the essential

dimension of the Church."[40]  Dietrich Bonhoffer claims "that the Church is the Church

only when it exists for others".[41] The Church exists not as some self-perpetuating

mechanism for the sake of those who are its members. It exists for those who are

unbelievers, sinners, outsiders and aliens. It exists to expand the opportunities of living

open to others and expanding the opportunities that improve the quality of their lives.

This mission of the Church becomes enfleshed in the real and specific places where these

"others" are suffering and we respond. Such suffering includes the experience of poverty,

oppression, being despised, enduring injustice or having one's life threatened. In its

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[40]Walter Cardinal Kasper, "The Ministry of the Deacon," *Deacon Digest* 15 (March/April 1998): 23.

[41]Dietrich Bonhoffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, rev. ed. (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1967), 203.

response to these ignition points, where ever they arise, the Church is authentically Church, as its identity comes into being through service.[42]

*Service* is a grace and responsibility inherent in baptism. The anointing with chrism during the baptismal rite signifies the strengthening grace given to the newly baptized to live out the diaconal *munera* of sanctifying, giving prophetic voice and serving.

Philosopher Emmanuel Levinas goes further, considering service to be a basic human characteristic. The meaning of human existence is found in service for others. Without others one is stuck with oneself alone. There is no change, no growth. Confrontation with another brings one to the realization that one is not alone and my understanding of the world may not be totally accurate. If I treat the other as an object, I remain locked in my solitude. However, I am faced with the neediness of the other and in my response to the need of the other I am moved from my solitude. This "response-ability" makes me more than I was. The more I care for and respond to the other, the more I become.[43]

*Service* begins in our awareness of the other and our mutual suffering. The awareness of suffering evokes compassion, for we are made in the image and likeness of *agape*. There is a desire to respond to the suffering, to give of oneself in order to lessen the suffering or to bring it to an end. It is in giving expression to this desire through our actions that we experience *service*. If we really believe that God exists and that God is *agape* (1 John 4:8), then we cannot experience God without loving those around us for

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[42]Ottmar Fuchs, "Church for Others." In *Concilium*, vol. 198, *Service--Church for the Others* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, LTD, 1988), 41-42.

[43] William T. Donovan, *The Sacrament of Service: Understanding Diaconal Spirituality* (Green Bay, WI: Alt Publishing Company, 2000), 24.

our experience of self-giving love is the experience of God. Service moves us beyond our internal thought processes and into an engagement with others.

*Service* is not mere servitude. It arises from *agape* and is enfleshed through the free choice of the believer. It is a human act. It is an act of the total self. It renders one powerless, for it places oneself at the service of another, committed to the alleviation of their need and suffering. "It is the capacity to look beyond ourselves to see the need of others. It is the empathy to want to help and the skill to know how to help."[44]

If God is *agape* and God has given us freedom in order that we might be capable of *agape*, then evil is the absence of *agape*. It is the denial of who we are. It is the refusal of *agape*.

Service brings us into confrontation with evil. Our mission is to be pure self-gift in the face of evil, suffering, pain and despair. It is in *agape* that our *service* makes God present. It is the presence of God that overcomes evil.[45]

Pope John Paul II summarized the character of service for the deacon in a general audience on October 20, 1993:

> Service is the essential characteristic of the diaconal vocation. It is the realization in human flesh of divine communion made possible through God's grace and by the self-emptying of the deacon. The diaconate commits one to following Jesus with this attitude of humble service, which is expressed not only in works of charity, but shapes and embraces one's whole way of thinking and acting."[46]

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[44] Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Waiting at Table." In *Concilium*, vol. 198, *Service--Church for the Others* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, LTD, 1988), 89.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Pope John Paul II, *Deacons Are Called to a Life of Holiness: General Audience, October 20, 1993* (Vatican City: Internet Office of the Holy See, http://www.vatican.va , 1999).

Self-transcendence

There is a tendency to focus on success and achievement and judge our worth in terms of our achievements. This can occur even with regard to spirituality. One might judge one's progress on the spiritual path by the consolations experienced or the presence of signs of the Dark Night of the Soul. Yet, consolations are no sure indicator of spiritual development and the Dark Night of the Soul is best understood not as a single event in one's life that is undergone and moved beyond. Rather, it is the ongoing spiritual process of our lives. We may have periodic conscious experiences of it, but it continues at all times, hidden within us.[47] Attempts to compete with one another for ever greater signs of spiritual achievement suggests a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of spirituality. Yet, self-transcendence, that is, spiritual growth, is an integral characteristic of Christian spirituality.

According to Bernard Lonergan, "Man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence."[48] He describes moral self-transcendence as the key to becoming a person in human society. Walter Conn expands on this by explaining that among all the possible realizations of human potential, the cognitive, moral, affective and religious self-transcendence described by Lonergan is the criterion of authentic self-realization, of the true self. "Every achievement of creative understanding, realistic judgment, responsible choice and generous love is an instance of self-transcendence."[49]

Robert Kegan describes self-transcendence as the basic mechanism of human development. He sees the human as process. Meaning is the motion inherent in this

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[47] May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 186.

[48] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972), 104.

[49] Conn, *The Desiring Self*, 73.

process. All physical, social and survival activity are the vehicles and expression of this drive for meaning. As a person develops physically and interacts with the environment, he or she slowly learns to differentiate self from the environment. A small child learns that the mother is not an extension of itself but another person. This insight results in the capacity for a new type of relationship with the mother. As this new type of relationship is realized the on-going relationship has taken on a new meaning. The child has transcended the "self" he or she had been. Thus, the dynamic of self-transcendence is differentiation eventually followed by integration but with new meaning. While self-transcendence is the basic mechanism of development, Kegan postulates six plateaus of development as one moves from infancy to adulthood each characterized by a particular developmental insight.[50]

Adrian Van Kaam describes a process of self-transcendence similar to that of Kegan. He also sees self-transcendence as a critical aspect in the formation of a person's humanity. Like Kegan he is unwilling to separate spiritual development from human development. Van Kaam describes the person as being-in-the-world. This description is similar to Rahner's spirit-in-the-world and similar as well in its understanding of human nature.[51] The thrust of Van Kaam's thought, as with Lonergan and Kegan, is that the human person is best understood as a process. Process implies change and the possibility of giving direction and form to the change. Such process allows the possibility of self-transcendence.

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[50] Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 18-19, 77, 86-87.

[51] Adrian Van Kaam, *Formative Spirituality: Human Formation Vol. 2*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), 8.

Van Kaam and Kegan are not alone among psychologists in viewing the human person from the perspective of a developmental process. A great deal of work has been done in psychology over the past half century to understand the human developmental process. Of particular interest to this study is the work of James Fowler.

Fowler focuses on the developmental process of faith apparent in the life cycle. He describes faith as the most fundamental category in the human quest for transcendence. It is a "generic, universal feature of human living…an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one's hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions."[52]

> Faith is imagination as it composes a felt image of an ultimate environment. We enter into, form and transform our relationships in reciprocity with the transcendent backdrop of meaning and power in relation to which we make sense of our lives. As this reciprocal relationship between imagined ultimate environment and everyday living suggests, faith's imaginal life is dynamic and continually changing.[53]

Like Van Kaam, Fowler views human development as movement toward wholeness. That development is the product of synergy between human potentials, given in creation, and the presence and activity of Spirit, as mediated through many channels. Faith is a relation of trust in and loyalty to one's neighbor, maintained through trust in and loyalty to a unifying image of an ultimate environment. The human calling is to undergo and participate in the widening inclusiveness of the circle of those who count as neighbor.[54]

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[52] James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981), 14.

[53] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, 33-34.

[54] Ibid., 48-72.

Spiritual growth can not be separated from other forms of human development, especially at the higher levels of maturity, as the human is an integrated reality--body, mind and spirit. Wholeness and holiness can not be separated without harm to the person. "When we accept human nature with all its conflicting desires and paradoxes, the soul seems to thrive and to develop in a unique, creative way. If, however, we ignore or reject a part of ourselves, the soul suffers and rebels in some form of psychological or physical-spiritual illness."[55] A correlate of this is that holiness is not an end product to be achieved but a process of development.

The *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* describe the spiritual life of deacons in terms that reflect a continual self-transcendence.

> Progress in the spiritual life is achieved primarily by faithful and tireless exercise of the ministry in integrity of life. Such ministry not only develops the spiritual life but promotes the theological virtues, a disposition to selflessness, service to the brethren and hierarchical communion. What has been said of priests, *mutatis mutandis*, also applies to deacons: "Through the sacred actions they perform every day....they are set on the right course to perfection of life. The very holiness of priests is of the greatest benefit for the fruitful fulfilment of their ministry".[56]

Communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence describe the Trinitarian and Incarnational dynamic that is given flesh in our actions. While every aspect of life is integral with and influenced by one's relationship with God, certain actions more readily give expression to the spiritual dynamic just described. These actions also may foster attitudes of openness to and discernment of God's action in our lives.

These practices can have special symbolic and practical value in deepening our

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[55] Noreen Cannon, "Becoming Holy & Whole," *Human Development* 3, no. 1 (1982): 33, 37.

[56] *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum Permantenium* (Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons), no. 51.

engagement with God and the faith tradition. Known as spiritual disciplines, these actions help the spiritual life move from the theoretical to the practical. These disciplines intensify our faith commitment, foster in us a greater openness to God and our neighbor, as well as encourage a more effective realization of the ethical consequences of our faith. Spiritual practices are of significant consequence to a vital diaconal spirituality. A deacon can not give what he does not have. "Remain in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains in the vine, so also with you unless you remain in me" (John 15:4). While the diaconate brings satisfaction and rewards, it can also be open to difficulties and trials. In order to live this ministry to the full, deacons must know Christ intimately so that He may shoulder the burdens of their ministry. It is in our spiritual disciplines that we nurture the intimacy with Christ that makes diaconal ministry possible.

### Spiritual Praxis

> The spiritual life can be viewed as learning certain competencies of soul. The specifics of spiritual perfection are the little details of spiritual accomplishment that people work on in spiritual discipline all their lives. The array of spiritual competencies that make for a religion's perfection is not merely competencies at relating to individual symbols but constitutes a way of being in the world. The believer enriches the interpretation of everything by placing it in the divine perspective. This includes the believers own identity and activities. Devotion, or spiritual discipline, is not about doing something but about finding something and being transformed by it.[57]

Spiritual discipline simply means systematic and ongoing practice, carried out with gentleness and flexibility. We can characterize such practice as spiritual skills for handling our mind, our speech and our actions. Practices can be grouped into mental and

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[57] Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols*, 177-179, 199.

practical disciplines. These disciplines are not practiced in isolation from one another but relate to every aspect of our lives.[58]

Our minds have tendency to be scattered and fragmented. In addition, mind has the tendency to lose itself in a self-created and self-centered mental world that obscures our vision. This mental world becomes a filter through which phenomena are perceived.[59] The mental disciplines assist us to see things as they are. These disciplines are mindfulness and insight (discernment). Within Christianity, contemplation is the term which refers to mindfulness. Contemplation begins when a person stops being totally preoccupied with his own concerns and lets another person, event, or object take his attention. Contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition simply means paying attention to and becoming at least slightly absorbed in the person of Jesus, in God or other elements of the tradition. A contemplative attitude can develop from such prayer and allows one to find some ease and spontaneity in paying attention to the Lord as he reveals himself in Scripture, creation, one's own life, and the life of the world. To contemplate is to let the other be the other and to allow one's responses to be elicited by the reality of the other. When we contemplate God, we let him be himself and not our projection of him, and to be real ourselves before God.[60]

The disciplines of insight (discernment) rest upon the openmindedness that is the fruit of mindfulness. The disciplines of insight offer the opportunity to study the stream of our experience without assuming a specific conceptual framework that limits our experience. These disciplines lead to "knowledge" of God that is intuitive and not

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[58] De Wit, *The Spiritual Path*, 174.

[59] Ibid., 200-201.

[60] William Barry and William Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), 48-51.

conceptual, it is an experiential awareness. We see our pettiness in the light of the Holy Spirit without self-created illusions to hide behind.[61]

The practical disciplines deal with the conduct of our lives. They are closely connected to the mental disciplines both as the fruit of the mental disciplines and in providing support for them. There are many challenges in life that present us with concrete situations in which we can move in the direction of compassion and insight. The practical disciplines help us meet these challenges and in so doing produce the seeds of inner life. The practical disciplines help us to surrender our inclination to protect our illusions and self-interest, as well as to keep the world at a distance.[62]

The Christian is called to be a contemplative in the world, with both the mental and practical disciplines contributing to an ever deepening holiness of life characterized by communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence. Thomas Merton explains,

> The discipline of the contemplative in the world is the discipline of fidelity to one's duty arising from state in life—as the head of a family, member of a profession, and as a citizen. … The contemplation of the married Christian is bound up with his married life. His marriage is a sacramental center from which grace radiates into every aspect of his life, and consequently it is his marriage that will enable his work, his leisure, his sacrifices, and even his distractions to become in some degree contemplative. For by his marriage all these things are ordered to Christ and centered in Christ.
>
> It is clear that for the married Christian, contemplation does not involve the disciplines and attitudes proper to a virgin. The married Christian should beware of allowing himself to be too influenced by a virginal or priestly spirituality that has nothing to do with his state and only blinds him to its essential dignity. What the married Christian needs most of all is a contemplative spirituality centered in the mystery of marriage.[63]

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[61] De Wit, *The Spiritual Path*, 230.

[62] Ibid., 252-256.

[63] Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*, edited by William H. Shannon (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), 139-141.

Merton's statement has particular relevance to the married deacon and his wife. While contemplation and the other spiritual disciplines are of great value to the practice of Christian spirituality in whatever context it finds expression, including that of the deacon, the context of the married deacon is significantly different from the monk and even the parish priest. The deacon's spiritual practice must be consistent with his life circumstances.

It is not just that one's spiritual practices must reflect his or her life circumstances but they also require a systematic and regular character. Eugene Peterson describes Christian spirituality as not simply a matter of

> …selecting from a potpourri of spiritual disciplines, nor is it willing oneself to be faithful to some spiritual practice. Rather, it is all of life, all worship, ministry and work experienced as prayer and set in a structure (*askesis*) adequate to the actual conditions in which it is lived out. If it is not seen as encompassing the whole of life then spirituality is reduced to a few spiritual disciplines and put into a cubby-hole for devotional narcissism. [64]

It is the systematic and regular character of the spiritual disciplines that provide structure for the spiritual life. This structure must reflect the actual conditions of one's life. The Church provides deacons the two foundational elements of such a structure in its liturgy: the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Eucharistic celebration anchors spirituality in Christ, revelation, community and service. The Eucharist is experienced in a particular location with a particular assembly. It takes spirituality from the abstract to the concrete.

> The source of this new capacity to love is the Eucharist, which, not by chance, characterises the ministry of the deacon. In fact, service of the poor is the logical consequence of service of the altar. Therefore the candidate will be invited to participate every day, or at least frequently, within the limits of his family and

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[64] Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdsmans Publishing Company, 1992), 89-91, 98-99.

professional commitments, in the celebration of the Eucharist and will be helped to penetrate ever deeper into its mystery.[65]

The Liturgy of the Hours is the other foundational element for deacons. It is a daily immersion in sacred Scripture. It gives voice to our deepest emotions. Its formality, while off-putting at times, ensures that the focus of our prayer is not dominated by our sense of self but by a sense of God.[66]

Within the basic structure of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, prayer, meditation, *lectio divina* and contemplation are all ways of giving mindful attention to the Lord, of spending time with the Lord and of careful listening. Reflection, journaling, and the examination of conscience are ways of being open and vulnerable before the divine Beloved; as a result, they are opportunities for discernment. Just how the deacon makes use of the various forms of spending time with the Lord, listening carefully and being open before the divine Beloved depends on the deacon's specific life circumstances. However he chooses to make use of these prayer forms and mental-spiritual disciplines, they must be integral with the practical disciplines inherent in ministry and family life.

## *Christian Spiritualities and their Contexts*

Contexts

As we have seen, Adrian Van Kaam views spirituality in terms of a fundamental dynamic, common to all persons, which is shaped by a person's biology, social context, life experience, and a drive to self-transcendence. This dynamic is played out within the life circumstances of a person. Life circumstances can be understood as a context within

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[65] Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio Fundamentalis…*, no. 73.

[66] Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*, 102-107.

which one functions. Culture, profession, beliefs, education, state of life, physical condition, economic status and geographical location are elements of one's context. Different circumstances exert different influences upon people. For example, the context of the monk is voluntary community life in relative isolation from society and lived under the guidance of a set of rules. The context for the married man is commitment to and responsibility for a wife and children, in relative engagement with society and seeking the good of the couple by means of the covenantal vows of permanence, fidelity, and openness to children.

The influence of context can be seen in a comparison of two different spiritual traditions. Franciscan spirituality was shaped during a time when the feudal political and economic structure of the Middle Ages was disintegrating. There was great disparity between the wealthy and the poor. Uprisings of the poor were relatively common and often had a religious veneer, as the church seemed to be associated with the wealthy and powerful. Arising in the midst of this historical, social, political and economic context, evangelical poverty became characteristic of Franciscan spirituality. It provided a means for the Church to align itself with the poor, while respecting the political and social reality of the era. When the Jesuits came into being several centuries later, it was the age of discovery and great missionary ventures. This social context stressed evangelisation, scholarship and practicality, which became characteristic of the Jesuits and their spirituality.

As noted earlier, at the Millennial Retreat in Rome for Deacons, Cardinal Stafford described the spirituality of the deacon as Trinitarian and Incarnational. Diaconal spirituality does not exist apart from this foundation. However, being an incarnated reality it is realized within a particular cultural, historical and ecclesiological context that

shapes its expression.[67] The diaconate requires the emergence of spirituality sensitive to its contexts.

The general norms for the Permanent Diaconate speak to this.

> The spirituality of service is a spirituality of the whole Church …The *leitmotiv* of his [Deacon's] spiritual life will therefore be service; his sanctification will consist in making himself a generous and faithful servant of God and men, especially the poorest and most suffering; his ascetic commitment will be directed towards acquiring those virtues necessary for the exercise of his ministry.

> Obviously such spirituality must integrate itself harmoniously, in each case, with the spirituality related to the state of life. Accordingly, the same diaconal spirituality acquires diverse connotations according to whether it be lived by a married man, a widower, a single man, a religious, or a consecrated person in the world. Formation must take account of these variations and offer differentiated spiritual paths according to the types of candidates.[68]

We have seen that the dimension of *service* is characteristic of diaconal spirituality. The deacon serves as an icon pointing to the concrete realization of *agape* in the world. While service finds particular and iconic expression in the deacon, this is not in isolation from the other characteristics of spirituality. Nor is this expression in isolation from the particular contexts in which the deacon is embedded. Diaconal spirituality within the Catholic Church is characterized by two significant contextual factors.

First, diaconal service is an act of ordained ministry. It is realized in the context of particular parishes, programs and organizations. It is directed toward unique individuals, with specific needs, who find themselves in particular circumstances. It is undertaken in cooperation with other ministers. All of these differences influence the character of the context in which diaconal spirituality is realized.

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[67] Cardinal Stafford, *The Ideal Family of the Permanent Deacon*, 2000.

[68] *Ratio Fundamentalis*, 1998, no. 11-12.

Second, the vast majority of permanent deacons are married men, many with families. This brings into play the deacon's spouse and children as elements of his particular context. Other elements of his context include external demands such as employment, school, financial obligations, relatives, neighbors and the life of the parish. Each of these factors shapes the life circumstances of the particular deacon and requires closer examination.

Marital context

A consequence of the long history of Christian spirituality being primarily a celibate pursuit is a dearth of material directed specifically to the needs and circumstances of married couples. Indeed, the Church even lacks saints who can stand as models of a normal conjugal spirituality.[69]

During the first half of the 20th century groundbreaking work in both marital theology and spirituality was done by Dietrich Von Hildebrand. His emphasis on the personalist elements of marriage and the importance of conjugal love opened new lines of reflection and influenced theological and canonical thought on the topic of marriage. The emphasis in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes* on marriage as a community of life and love is considered to be a result of his influence.

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[69] Oliver, *Conjugal Spirituality: The Primacy of Mutual Love in Christian Tradition*, 1. See also, Charles Gallagher, *Embodied in Love: Sacramental Spirituality: A New Guide to Catholic Marriage* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 1. See also, "Pope Canonizes Italian Mother as Pro-life Saint," *Lake Shore Visitor*, 21 May 2004, p. 2. This news item describes how the Pope canonized Gianna Beretta Molla on May 16, 2004. St. Gianna's act of heroic virtue was to refuse treatment for cancer in 1962 in order to save the life of her unborn child. She was a physician and fully knowledgeable of the repercussion of her decision. While a wife and mother of other children, these factors appear to be secondary to her self-sacrifice for the unborn in the decision to recognize her as a saint.

The intimate partnership of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws: it is rooted in the contract of its partners, which is in their irrevocable personal consent. It is an institution confirmed by the divine law and receiving its stability, even in the eyes of society, from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other; for the good of the partners, of the children, and of society...Thus the man and woman, who "are no longer two but one" (Mt. 19:6), help and serve each other by their marriage partnership; they become conscious of their unity and experience it more deeply from day to day. The intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable unity between them.[70]

While many people think only of the contraceptive debate when *Humanae Vitae* is mentioned, this encyclical of Pope Paul VI is influential in its consideration of conjugal love and spirituality.

This love [conjugal love] is first of all fully human, that is to say, of the senses and of the spirit at the same time. It is not, then, a simple transport of instinct and sentiment, but also, and principally, an act of the free will, intended to endure and to grow by means of the joys and sorrows of daily life, in such a way that the husband and wife become one only heart and one only soul, and together attain their human perfection.[71]

The body is capable of making visible what is invisible, according to Pope John Paul II.[72] God wanted to make the divine mystery visible to us, so God stamped it in our bodies by creating us as male and female in his own image. The function of this image is to reflect the Trinity, which the Pope speaks of in relational terms. He concludes that humanity became the image and likeness of God not only through becoming human in Christ, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning. He describes marital spirituality as participating in God's life and love and sharing it with the world. God's love is meant to be lived and felt in daily life as

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[70] "Gaudium et spes." In *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, trans. and comp. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 1:950.

[71] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life), trans. Janet E. Smith (Omaha, NB: Pope Paul VI Institute Press, 1993), no. 9.

[72] John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman*, 144.

a married couple and as a family. Authentic spirituality is necessarily an embodied

spirituality.[73]

> God is found in the "between" of the relationship of husband and wife…When a husband and wife attend to one another, not as objects for their own gratification but as the subjects of infinite dignity and worth, they enter into the life of love and their communion with one another is, at the same time, communion with God…This 'shared life of communion' is a kind of theological shorthand for the diverse ways in which married couples, in the authenticity of their daily life together, abide in God as they attend to one another in love.[74]

The Song of Songs gives us an image of human eroticism and passion as an echo

of God's passionate love for us. The implication is that our experience of passionate love

can itself be a participation in the love of God. Drawing upon Aquinas, Richard

Gaillardetz argues that *Eros* is not a lower form of love than *agape* but the way in which

humans experience desire as embodied spirits. Indeed, Aquinas didn't reject *Eros* but

called for its reintegration so that it shared fully in the meaning of human love.[75]

While *Eros* holds together "self-love" and "other-love" in a powerful, creative

tension, marriage is equally characterized by *agape*.[76]

> The clearest expression of Trinitarian *agape* is the self-emptying of Jesus Christ. We see this in his self-emptying of all divine glory and prerogatives to take on human flesh, the flesh of a servant who gave everything for our sake, even to suffering death on a cross ( Philippians 2:6-11). Marriage finds such mutual *self-emptying* in the willingness of the couple to enter into the Paschal Mystery of life-death-resurrection, as they sacrifice their own needs, hopes and expectations for the sake of the other. This is apparent in the undivided attention (mindfulness) that we give to our mate, as we attempt to enter into the world of our spouse. We put aside our preconceptions, preferences and preformed judgments, as Christ put aside his divinity. We enter into the other person's world to experience that world as he or

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[73]Christopher West, "Theology of the Body," Solidarity Institute, http://www.solidarityinstitute.org/family/spirituality.asp (accessed April 12, 2003).

[74] Gaillardetz, *A Daring Promise*, 43-44.

[75] Ibid. 93-95.

[76] Ibid. 96.

she does. To pay such attention is to follow the path of Jesus and to serve as he did to connect people more deeply with the presence of God. Marriage is experienced as a privilege in which two persons progressively learn to fall in love with each other and with God simultaneously.[77]

Through mutual self-giving spouses seek a communion of persons, which enables them to perfect each other and to share with God the task of procreating and educating new human beings.

> This love is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is not, then, merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drives. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfilment.[78]

Dietrich Von Hildebrand saw the mutual love of the couple as the meaning of conjugal union, just as openness to children was its end. He describes conjugal love as a matter of "not just the heart but the entire personality given up to the other."[79] Such love seeks not just normal reciprocity but "the unique love whereby the beloved belongs to the lover in an entirely exclusive manner, as he in turn wants to belong to the beloved. The regard of each of the parties is turned exclusively upon the other."[80]

Von Hildebrand notes that comparison is often made between friendship and conjugal love. While a good image, it falls short.

> This may be called a *we* relationship wherein the partners remain side by side…Conjugal love is the most pronounced form of an *I-thou* relationship. The beloved person is the object of our thoughts, sentiments, will, hope, and longing…He whose heart is filled with such conjugal love lives not only with his beloved but for his beloved.[81]

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[77] Gallagher, *Embodied in Love*, 15.

[78] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, No. 9.

[79] Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1984), 8.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid., 9-10.

It is here that we come across the same wording that characterizes Trinitarian love, living for the beloved, as God is *agape* for us in the economy of the Trinity. We see in the living out of the sacrament of marriage a unique expression of fundamental Trinitarian spirituality that can rightly be called marital spirituality.

> A spirituality of marriage…will be concerned with the distinct manner in which God's transforming presence and action are encountered in our marriages. A marital spirituality should help us discover the ways in which, through our fidelity to the spiritual discipline of faithful marital living, we discover our truest identity before God.[82]

There are significant differences between a predominately celibate spirituality and one appropriate to married couples. Popular ideas of spirituality in the West have been shaped by the monastic tradition. One who is serious about pursuing spirituality in this mode dedicates long hours to the mental disciplines of prayer, meditation, contemplation, and sacred reading. While a balanced Christian spirituality requires the mental disciplines, for one who is not a monastic it is the practical spiritual disciplines which must predominate. Married couples who attempt to follow a monastic mode of spirituality often find it difficult. It doesn't speak to the circumstances of their lives and can even create obstacles to their growth as a couple, as the details of married life may seem to become distractions to their spiritual practice.

> The problem here is, in part, one of translating the traditional language of formation into the family idiom. It does not seem to me that our inheritance— which so often was articulated from a celibate male context—makes much sense for those whose life experience is very different, without such reinterpretation and translation.[83]

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[82] Gaillardetz, *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*, 19.

[83] Wendy Wright, *Sacred Dwelling: A Spirituality of Family Life* (Leavenworth, KS: Forest of Peace Publishing, 1994).

The late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, in a talk on marital spirituality, explained that, "A marital spirituality would guide couples ever more deeply toward what Pope John Paul II calls 'nakedness without shame'.[84]  In the Hebrew Scriptures "nakedness" is frequently a metaphor for both innocence and vulnerability. The nakedness of the first humans suggests that, prior to sin, man and woman were able to be naturally vulnerable, that is, transparent and powerless with one another. Grounded in trust and fidelity, the first humans could be confident that the power of sexuality inherent in being vulnerable before another would not be abused. They could risk disclosing themselves to the other without reserve, without deception.[85]

> Love is the motive force for the union and acts to stretch the boundaries of the soul, enlarging it by affecting a radical openness to the other…The primary spiritual task of conjugal love is the creation, maintenance, and growth of the marital union, the necessary foundation for joint outward-looking service…Love is a spiritual discipline that tempts one toward self-forgetfulness and self-transcendence, so that two persons can meet as "living beings through which divine being may sound."[86]

Married life is not a distraction from union with God. It is a valid instrument of that union. Just as community life is an important element of the monk's spirituality, so also the practice of prayer is important to conjugal spirituality. Conjugal prayer is not limited to formal prayer but is experienced in all of the interactions of the couple throughout the day. It is this Incarnational type of prayer in which Christ is present in the midst of the couple.

This understanding is supported by the empirical research of Andrew Greeley, which demonstrates the perceived positive interrelationship and mutual importance of

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[84] Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, "Sexuality and Church Teaching," *Origins*, no. 10 (9 October 1980).

[85] Gaillardetz, *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*, 88-89.

[86] Oliver, *Conjugal Spirituality: The Primacy of Mutual Love in Christian Tradition*, 52-53.

marital intimacy and the blending of religious stories, evoking meaning and renewal of hope. Along with prayer, marital intimacy appears to be the key element in the emergence of a grace-full religious story that is the poetic infrastructure of the couple's religious experience, which is their marital spirituality.[87]

Marriage and family life is described in *Lumen Gentium* as the "Domestic Church".[88] William Roberts explains some of the implications of this:

> While the focus of conjugal spirituality and its spiritual disciplines are the building up of the relationship, marriage is not isolated but a dynamic and community building force that looks outward in service as well. As members of the Body of Christ, the couple gives witness to their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They sacramentalize Christ's compassion through their own empathy with the sufferings of others. Their actions give sign to the gospel values proclaimed by Jesus. Their fidelity gives testimony to their practical faith and hope in the death and resurrection of Christ.[89]

Christian spirituality in the context of marriage is not self-absorption, even a self-absorption that includes two people totally open to each other, but is a spirituality that is "being-for," generative, self-transcending and open to others. It is here that we find resonance with service that is the heart of diaconal ministry.

Ministerial Context

*Lumen Gentium* cites a number of early Church Fathers in describing the Church as "a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy

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[87] Greeley, *Religion as Poetry*, 260.

[88] "Lumen gentium." In *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, trans. and comp. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 11:362.

[89] William P. Roberts, "The Family as Domestic Church: Contemporary Implications." In *Christian Marriage and Family: Contemporary Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts (Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 83-90.

Spirit."[90]  The People of God, who constitute the Church, are caught up in the mutual

*agape* that is characteristic of the Trinity and Christian spirituality. The Council

document goes on to explain that, "…all Christians in any state or walk of life are called

to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love..."[91]

The epistles, especially Ephesians, depict the early Church carrying out the

mission given it by Christ in the form of proclamation, leadership and building up the

community in accordance with its apostolic foundation. Its ministers are required to be

disciples, living a spirituality which "discipleship of Jesus" implies in New Testament

terms.[92]

> The Church does not exist for itself. It is a Church for others, a Church for people
> and for the world and its unity, its reconciliation and its peace. It is a serving
> Church…
>
> While the Bishop is gifted with the fullness of pastoral ministry, and with it
> responsibility and authority, he shares these ministries with the different orders
> known as presbyter and deacon. The ministry of presbyter and deacon are different.
> The presbyter shares most especially in the priestly ministry of the bishop. The
> deacon shares most especially in the ministry of service. Christian *service* is
> entrusted to the deacon in a special way.[93]

Like Jesus, the Church and its various ministers serve by incarnating in the world

the presence of the Christ and of the God he incarnates. Such ministry can be understood

in terms of ecclesial and ordained priesthood.

> When speaking of priesthood, one speaks of sacrifice. Aquinas notes that sacrifice
> has both an internal and external dimension. The internal dimension, the
> acknowledgement of total dependence upon God, is the essence and it defines

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[90] "Lumen gentium." In *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 1:352.

[91] Ibid., 396.

[92] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 14, 31-32, 36.

[93] Kasper, "The Ministry of the Deacon," 22.

sacrifice. The external dimension, sacrificial action, signifies the internal, true sacrifice, which is the first and principal sacrifice

The interior self-giving of Jesus, self-giving not only to God but also to his fellow men and women, made his life the kind of life to which the elect were called. The death he died expressed that internal self-giving externally, and made it sacrificial. Sacrifice consists essentially in an interior will of total dependence upon God, ritualized in external action and attuned to that will. The sacrificial will of Jesus the priest was externalized in his actions of self-giving to God and to others, culminating in his self-giving on the cross. The sacrificial will of the priestly People is externalized in the self-giving actions of a Christ-like life in the world. The sacrificial will of the People's ordained priests is externalized specifically in their offering on behalf of the People the sacrificial meal which keeps memory of the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus.[94]

The deacon's "priestly sacrifice" is not presiding at the cultic meal. Rather, he shares in the sacrifice of all the baptized, who through their self-giving actions become more Christ-like. Being ordained, the deacon is called to servant-leadership through enabling the ecclesial-baptismal priesthood of all the people.

The deacon is ordained to ministry, not the priesthood. As noted by Pope John Paul II in his Detroit presentation to the diaconate community,

"The service of the deacon is the Church's service sacramentalized. Yours is not just one ministry among others, but it is truly meant to be, as Paul VI described it, 'a driving force' for the Church's *diakonia*."[95]

Further, "the *service* of the deacon is true ministry. That is, it is an action done in public, on behalf of the church, as a result of a charism of service, proclaimed, made explicit and celebrated in the church in sacrament, to incarnate in symbol the presence of Christ and of the God whose kingdom he reveals."[96]

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[94] Michael G. Lawler, *A Theology of Ministry* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 61-64, 75-76.

[95] John Paul II, "Allocution to the Permanent Deacons and their Wives Given at Detroit, MI (19 September 1987)," *Origins* 17 (1987).

[96] Michael G. Lawler, *A Theology of Ministry* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 28.

While service is a responsibility of all believers arising from baptism, as well as the human condition, the deacon is a sacramental sign of this responsibility. "By being a personal symbol of service, the deacon is a constant sacramental reminder and focus of what all believers have as their task."[97] "The deacon is the icon of service among us and reminds us that service is part and parcel of our baptismal commitment."[98]

Recent scholarship suggests that a finer distinction must be made between the *service* of all the believers and the ministry of the deacon. This is seen in the work of Herman Beyer, John Collins and Shawn McKnight.

The common understanding of *diakonia* in the past half century has been strongly influenced by the work of Herman Beyer. *Diakonia* is seen as humble service, active Christian love for one's neighbor. Diaconal service means a service of love personally rendered to another, by everyone within the Church, for the building up of the Church. According to Beyer, the diaconate then focuses on the ministry of humble service and serves as a sacramental sign of service and an enabler of greater service in the community. [99]

John Collins argues that Beyer's understanding of *service* is much too restrictive and does not reflect usage of the term in the New Testament era and the early Church. He argues that while *Diakonia* does refer to service to others in ancient documents, the deacon, or one rendering service, is seen as an intermediary representing another. In this sense, the deacon is an agent of the bishop to accomplish tasks that require immediate

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[97] Donovan, *The Sacrament of Service: Understanding Diaconal Spirituality*, 6.

[98] Joyce Ann Zimmerman, "Editor's Notes," *Liturgical Ministry* 13 (winter 2004): 40.

[99] Herman Beyer, "d?a????? , d?a????a, d???????," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2: 81-93.

attention, mobility and speed. The service rendered can be on behalf of an individual or a group.[100]

McKnight builds on Collins understanding and argues that a central aspect of the deacon's ministry is that of social intermediary, bridging the gap between the hierarchy and the laity.   He sees the intermediary role of the deacon as the basis for a theologically distinct diaconal ministry. As ordained, the deacon is distinct from the laity. As ordained but not sharing in the *sacerdotium*, the deacon is distinct from the *sacerdotium*. From this dual perspective, the nature of the diaconate allows the deacon to serve as a social intermediary, whether in dialogue between shepherd and flock, or generally among the people as a whole.[101]

The deacon is not to be an obstacle, another layer through which people must navigate to experience communion with one another. Rather, the deacon is meant to be a means of connectedness within the community.

> "The deacon serves at the margins of society, where people are most at risk, where senseless violence continues to rule, where religion is an alien reality. Deacons lead us all to the margins and then lead us back to the assembly so that the lament of the needy and marginal will be heard and responded to by all."[102]

McKnight argues that part of the deacon's role of intermediary is realized because the deacon functions as an expression of normative *communitas* within the Church. This relates to a distinction identified by anthropologist Victor Turner between structure and *communitas* within a society. Any social structure includes both its more stable aspect of

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[100] John Neil Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 41.

[101] Shawn McKnight, *The Latin Rite Deacon: Symbol of Communitas and Social Intermediary Among the People of God*, dissertation (Rome: Pontifico Athenaeo San Anselmi, 2001), 256-257.

[102] William Ditewig, "The Deacon as a Voice of Lament and Link to Thanksgiving and Justice," *Liturgical Ministry* 13 (winter 2004): 30.

interrelationship and its more undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, and non-rational character. It is this equalitarian and direct experience that is characteristic of *communitas* within a social system.

Victor Turner describes *communitas* as most evident in "liminality", which is any condition outside or on the peripheries of everyday life. The liminal state can be found during periods of transition in one's life from one status to another. The liminal is not limited to just experiences of social transition but can refer to any condition outside or on the peripheries of everyday life.

The literature often speaks of spirituality in terms of movement, transformation of the individual from a current state of being to one that is more Christlike. Many religious practices can be seen as part of a process of transformation characteristic of liminality. The change is not from one status to another but to deeper levels of religious participation, to a deeper experience of *communitas*.[103]

Symbols of *communitas* operate in ritual to restructure society according to more universal principles, not to negate structures altogether. Symbols of *communitas* share many of the attributes of *communitas* itself. The symbolic figure of *communitas* mediates between the high and low, the powerful and weak, the rich and the poor. It is a reminder of the basic human bond, and our fundamental commonness.

The symbolic form of *communitas* is itself institutional. Victor Turner terms it "normative *communitas*". This refers to structures that are at the service of *communitas*. They engender the possibility for other to relate more intimately.[104]

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[103] Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 14-15.

[104] Shawn McKnight, *The Latin Rite Deacon…,* 222-223.

Shawn McKnight argues that the diaconate is a form of normative *communitas*. It is an intermediate structure that functions within the day-to-day ecclesiastical structure to encourage the practice of *communitas* values among the People of God. Diaconal ministry is oriented toward *communitas* values, particularly in the deacon's role as intermediary.

The diaconate is a structure of normative *communitas* not only in its intermediary functions but in its symbolic orientation as well. In their ritual functions deacons unite the service of the table of the Word to the tables of Eucharist and charity. The deacon's life and charitable work in the community allows him to serve as a model of the compassion and service of Christ, as well as to voice the needs of the community to the assembly, and to call the assembly to full participation in the mission of the Church. As he does this, the deacon serves as a symbol of *communitas*, influencing thought and instigating social action in favor of *communitas*.[105]

The recently promulgated universal norms for permanent deacons state that all ordained ministry, including the diaconate, "consists in being a specific participation in and representation of the ministry of Christ. With sacred ordination, the deacon is constituted a living icon of Christ the servant."[106]

If the deacon is constituted a living icon of Christ the servant, then his spiritual life must bring substance to the deacon's role as icon. To borrow from St. Paul, the deacon must become "configured to Christ" (Rm. 8:11, 28). Such configuration is not just for the deacon but is to equip him to share in the Church's *diakonia*. "The spirituality of the diaconate is one that is a special 'being-for'. It is necessarily a self-emptying that is

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[105] Ibid., 256-257.

[106] Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no.4, 11-12.

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directed to the needs of others. It is a self-giving that nurtures relationship. It is a 'going out' that proclaims the faith that saves through ministering to those in need."[107]

*Conclusion*

Spirituality is a meaningful category because humans are self-aware. We are capable of perceiving and appreciating not only various stimuli but the ongoing process of being, and the mystery of that process. Mystery draws us and stimulates desire within us. While we can experience Mystery, we are unable to understand it. Rather, we must learn to simply be open to mystery. Our symbol systems provide a means of allowing us to relate our life experience and cultural contexts to the transcendent Mystery. These symbols assist us in finding value, meaning and a deeper engagement with the Mystery to which the symbols point. Yet, in the end they are broken before the Mystery, incapable of bridging the gap between the finite and the infinite.

It is here we turn to our Christian tradition, which reveals the Trinitarian nature of the Mystery before whom we stand. To be human is to be created in the image of God. Thus, as with the Trinity, our nature is toward and for others. Our participation in the mission of Word and Spirit is our response to love. As we participate in that mission, we become clearer expressions of who we are; God's image transforming the world. We become clearer expressions of love (*agape*). Our participation in the mission of Word and Spirit is characterized by communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence. These characteristics are interdependent. They take on flesh in our actions, particularly in what is described as spiritual disciplines.

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[107] Richard J. Huneger, "Diaconal Spirituality," *Deacon Digest*, May/June 2001, 23.

Spiritual disciplines can be grouped as mental and practical. The mental disciplines serve to develop our capacity for mindfulness and discernment. The practical disciplines bring the fruit of our practice of the mental disciplines to bear on daily life.

How the dynamics of the spiritual life and its disciplines are expressed, given the embodied character of humanity, is influenced by the context, physical and social, in which a person lives his or her Christian faith. Indeed, an essential component of the spiritual life is fidelity to one's duty of state in life. This means that deacons must be formed in a spirituality that adequately reflects their life context.

This chapter presented a working definition of the spirituality of deacons and their wives, as our response of love, in the contexts in which we find ourselves, to the Divine Mystery. Love is characterized by communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence. Diaconal spirituality is a particular expression of Christian spirituality which is realized within contexts common to most deacons. These contexts are diaconal ministry as well as marriage and family life.

While we have identified the basic characteristics of Christian spirituality, the function of spiritual practices, the contexts of ministry and marriage particular to most deacons, and formulated a working definition of diaconal spirituality, this is not enough. Van Kaam points out that there is a distinction between spiritual theology and spirituality. Spiritual theology deals primarily with a universal and comprehensive view of spiritual reality. Spirituality addresses the practical application of spiritual theology in a particular context.[108] Thus, to be able to speak of diaconal spirituality, beyond the generalities suggested by the literature, it is necessary to examine the *praxis* of diaconal communities.

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[108] Van Kaam, *Formative Spirituality Vol. 1*, 25-26.

# CHAPTER THREE

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

*Introduction*

We have considered the character of diaconal spirituality from a theological perspective. Now, we turn to a consideration of those perceptions and actions of deacons and their wives which they characterize as expressions of spirituality. Ultimately, we consider the relationship between the theological model of diaconal spirituality discussed in the last chapter and the praxis based model that emerges in this chapter. The first question then, is how does one parse the perceptions and actions of deacons in order to reveal their spiritual praxis?

Norman Denzin pulls together the ideas of several sociologists in describing human behavior as self-directed and observable at two distinct levels—the symbolic and the interactional. Self-direction means that humans can act toward themselves as they would toward any object. Thus, humans can perceive themselves, have conceptions of self, communicate with self and act toward self. This means that objects do not have intrinsic meaning. Rather, meanings attach to objects through consensus by means of shared symbols.

If human behavior is observable at the levels of symbol and interaction, then we can begin to parse the perceptions and actions of a person through the analysis of symbolic meanings that emerge over time in interaction. Both symbol and interaction are necessary elements of the process. Since symbols, meanings and definitions are forged into self-definitions and attitudes, the reflective nature of selfhood must be captured. That

is, human conduct must be viewed from the perspective of the subject. This is not to limit analysis to the perceptions and thought categories of the subject, as analysis requires abstraction of these perceptions and categories. However, further analysis is grounded in the perspective of the subject. Analysis links the subject's symbols and conceptions of self with the social circles and relationships that furnish him with those symbols and conceptions. The social context in which behavior occurs is important, as social norms can vary with different contexts. Duration is also an important consideration as behavioral forms can be both stable and processual.[109] Denzin's methodological principles can be applied to our study of diaconal spirituality.

First, the deacon must be understood as a whole person. Van Kaam's model of the formational field illustrates this, showing how many different factors, including the variety of social roles one plays, impinge on the formation of the person and shift with each new decision and experience. This is not just a vitalistic process of unfolding but involves an innate drive toward the transcendent.[110]

Second, culture and society inform and shape the deacon through its symbolic networks; as well as provide a context in which diaconal spirituality can find expression in specific behavior. It is important to identify what behavior among deacons is perceived by them as making their spirituality actual.

Third, the relative significance of such behavior, in terms of frequency and value attached to the behavior by the deacon, is important for understanding the deacon's

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[109] Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970; reprint, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1977), 6-18 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

[110] Adrian VanKaam, *The Transcendent Self: The Formative Spirituality of Middle, Early and Later Years of Life* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1979), 161-163.

perception of spirituality and related thought categories. Analysis of this data relates the subject's symbols, conceptions of spirituality and self with the community and life circumstances that furnishes him with those symbols and conceptions.

## *Research Question*

As noted in the introduction, the thesis to be explored is that the spirituality of the deacon/diaconal couple is significantly influenced by the contexts of marriage and ordained ministry. Given this primary thesis, it is presumed that: (1) the deacon and his wife benefit from this mutual influence, and (2) the mutual influence of marriage and ordained ministry provides benefit to the greater Church community. In order to explore these theses, it is necessary to draw upon the relevant literature, as well as the reported spirituality of deacons and their wives

## *Methodology*

Grounded Theory Methodology is an approach to qualitative research in the social sciences that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon. It is also a methodology that allows the researcher to address the theoretical concerns described by Denzin.

It begins with a research situation. Within that situation the researcher must come to understand what is happening and how the players manage their roles.[111] The research

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[111]Dick, "Grounded Theory: A Thumbnail Sketch," http://http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html.

situation is framed in terms of a research question and those constraints within which the object of study operates.[112]

The three basic elements of grounded theory are concepts, categories and propositions. Descriptions of incidents are given conceptual labels. These concepts are the basic units of analysis. Concepts are grouped into categories. Relationships among the categories are identified as propositions, which are used to develop a model of the phenomenon.

Analysis in grounded theory is composed of three major types of coding; open, axial and selective. Open coding examines a particular phenomenon dissecting it into a wide range of concepts, categories and sub-categories. Axial coding integrates the various categories in new combinations, exploring possible new relationships. Selective coding identifies the central phenomenon and explores its relationship with the other categories.[113]

Data analysis and collection are related processes, in which insights arising from initial data collection and analysis are used to shape the direction and content of later data collection. Analysis of data begins with the first collection of data and contributes to the process of refining and specifying further data collection.[114]

This qualitative research methodology was chosen as the most fruitful approach to understanding the complex phenomenon of diaconal spirituality, within its marital and

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[112] Naresh R. Pandit, "The Creation of theory: A Recent Application of the Grounded Theory Method," *The Qualitative Report* 2, no. 4 (December 1996).

[113] Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, 24, 29, 58-59, 65.

[114] Ibid., 40.

ministerial contexts. The primary methodological guide for the research is the Anselm
and Corbin book *Basics of Qualitative Research* (1990).

### *Study Population*

The study population included the deacons and their wives of the Dioceses of
Erie, Pennsylvania and Cleveland, Ohio. This is a group of approximately 140 deacons,
or approximately potential 280 subjects, when wives are included in the study population.
Actual participation was much less. Among the Diocese of Erie deacons, 21 of its 30
deacons agreed to receive the survey instrument and return it completed. In the end, only
12 deacons and 11 spouses responded. Combining the deacon and spouse data, this
resulted in a total of 23 instruments returned for analysis. Among the Diocese of
Cleveland deacons, a total of 33 instruments were submitted for analysis. Of these, 24
respondents were deacons and 8 were wives of deacons. Cleveland deacons had the
option of submitting their responses via email or using a survey web site; where as only
paper forms were available to the Erie deacons. When the Cleveland and Erie samples
were combined the result was 55 respondents.

To allow a larger study population and another perspective for comparison,
members of DEACON-L, an on-line discussion group for permanent deacons were
invited to participate in the study by completing the survey instrument via the web site.
The discussion group members include a cross section of deacons from the United States,
Australia, and Europe. There are approximately 350 deacons participating in this
discussion group. Twenty-seven (27) deacons from this group participated in this study.
This gives a total study sample of 82 respondents; 63 deacons and 19 spouses. The data

resulting from each group of respondents is considered separately in the analysis to allow

comparisons between the groups.

*Table 1. –Age Related Profile of Study Population*

| Erie | Present Age | Age at Ordination | Years as Deacon | Years Married | Years Married at Ordination | Age at Wedding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| deacons (N = 12) | | | | | | |
| mean | 54.50 | 50.08 | 4.42 | 27.36 | 21.08 | 24.33 |
| Standard deviation | 6.22 | 8.31 | 5.30 | 10.08 | 12.39 | 10.22 |
| spouses (N = 11) | | | | | | |
| mean | 50.91 | 47.82 | 3.09 | 25.80 | 22.90 | 24.50 |
| Standard deviation | 7.79 | 8.02 | 2.02 | 11.66 | 12.92 | 8.82 |
| **Cleveland** | | | | | | |
| deacons (N = 24) | | | | | | |
| mean | 63.13 | 50.09 | 13.29 | 39.14 | 25.73 | 23.55 |
| Standard deviation | 7.92 | 8.18 | 7.33 | 8.96 | 9.01 | 2.73 |
| spouses (N = 8) | | | | | | |
| mean | 63.50 | 54.63 | 8.88 | 39.50 | 30.63 | 24.00 |
| Standard deviation | 8.82 | 8.59 | 5.28 | 10.69 | 10.43 | 2.55 |
| **Deacon-L** | | | | | | |
| deacons (N = 27) | | | | | | |
| mean | 58.31 | 49.25 | 11.14 | 35.92 | 24.46 | 24.88 |
| Standard deviation | 7.99 | 7.99 | 8.30 | 11.09 | 11.80 | 6.01 |

Table 1 illustrates age related data of the study population. The mean age of the

Erie deacons is younger than both the Cleveland and the discussion group deacons. This

is explained by the relative newness of the Erie deacon formation program which began

only in 1992. This explanation is supported by the difference in number of years as

deacon, with the Erie deacons showing the fewest years since ordination. The mean age

at ordination is relatively consistent at 50 years across the participant groups, with

internal variation in the subject population being consistent as well, as shown by the

similar standard deviations. The relative youthfulness of the Erie deacons is illustrated as well in the number of years married and years married at ordination, though age at marriage is similar across the groups. Overall, the Cleveland group is the oldest. The discussion group participants tend to reflect the national averages.[115]

*Table 2.—Number of Years Education*

| Deacons | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | 16.67 | 16.30 | 16.46 |
| Standard deviation | 4.12 | 3.25 | 2.42 |
| Spouses | | | |
| Mean | 15.50 | 12.63 | |
| Standard deviation | 2.77 | 0.86 | |

The educational level of the respondents is consistent across the groups with graduation from college. The Erie group shows the widest variation around the mean. Among the spouses responding, the Erie wives show a level of education similar to their husbands, whereas the Cleveland wives report a high school education. Variation in the wives' responses is less than for the deacons.

*Table 3.—Employment Status*

| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L |
|---|---|---|---|
| Employed | 75% | 35% | 52% |
| Retired | 25% | 52% | 37% |
| Mix (E/R) | | 13% | 11% |

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[115] *A National Study on the Permanent Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States: 1994-1995* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1996), 96. The mean age of deacons in the national study was 58.6 years, which was only three-tenths of a percent from the discussion group mean age. It must be remembered as well that one can not be ordained to the permanent diaconate, even with a dispensation, prior to age 34. Thus, the general population of deacons is skewed toward more mature men.

A major difference between the Erie and Cleveland deacons is their employment status. A majority of the Cleveland deacons are retired; where as with both Erie and the Deacon-L a majority are still engaged in making a living. The Cleveland data comes closer to the discussion group data when you combine in those deacons who are technically retired but are currently employed in some income generating ministry.[116]

*Table 4.—Reported Number of Children*

| Deacons | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | 3.17 | 3.52 | 3.18 |
| Standard Deviation | 1.70 | 1.73 | 1.84 |
| Spouses | | | |
| Mean | 3.50 | 4.13 | |
| Standard Deviation | 1.60 | 1.69 | |

While the average number of children per family varies slightly among the groups, deacon households tend to be larger than the national average. As a point of comparison, the average household size, parents and children included, in the United States as of the 2000 census was 3.18.[117] While not shown in a table, both Erie (58%) and Deacon-L (64%) deacons report a majority of households with children still living at home. Among the Cleveland deacons, only 30% of the deacons report children still living at home.

Approximately ninety-five percent (95%) of the permanent deacons in the United States are married. Of the respondents in this study, all but one are married; and he is a

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[116] Such employment includes full time parish business manager or temporal administrator, seminary instructor and stewardship administrator. Spouse data is not included for this item.

[117] "Growth in Single Fathers Outpaces Growth in Single Mothers," *Census Bureau Reports*, CB98-228 (April 12, 2001). It is noted that the data in table 4 refers only to children, whereas the census data includes the entire household.

widower. Thus, in describing diaconal spirituality in relation to marriage and family life, the characteristics of the study sample must be kept in mind.

*Research Procedures*

A questionnaire was provided to the members of the study population during the initial stage of field research. The purpose of the instrument was to obtain the perception of the deacons and their spouses regarding their spiritual practices (See Appendix B).

Prior to sending the survey instrument, an initial mailing was provided to the deacons and their wives in the Dioceses of Erie and Cleveland. It consisted of an introductory cover letter, together with a letter from the person responsible for coordinating deacon formation and ministry in the particular diocese, informing the deacons that the survey was legitimate. A response post card was included to inform me if they were willing to participate. The deacons also were given the option of responding via email or through a website allowing electronic submission of the questionnaire.

The mailing was meant to limit further correspondence to those who desired to participate. As the post cards were returned, forms for both the deacon and his spouse were mailed out along with a self-addressed stamped envelope. If the forms were not returned with in three weeks, another post card was sent to the participants as a reminder.

The website was in place later than anticipated and not available to many of the respondents from Erie. The Erie deacons were the first respondents to be surveyed. The introductory material was distributed to all the Deacon-L members via email, with the same response options provided to the Cleveland deacons.

Coding and analysis of the responses to the questionnaire was supported by *Atlas.ti 5.0,* a commercial database for use in grounded theory based research. In addition

to support for coding and categorizing the codes, this software provides concept mapping

to assist with the development of propositions and theory. As a model of the experience

of diaconal spirituality emerged from the analysis process, a summary of the findings was

provided to members of the Deacon-L and deacons from Erie and Cleveland. Feedback

was sought and obtained. A formal focus group comprised of Erie deacons was also

conducted on the topic. This provided an additional check on the validity of the survey

responses and analysis as generally representative of the experience of deacons.

In addition to the use of feedback from deacons, key informants involved in the

spiritual formation process of deacons, deacon candidates and their spouses were also

interviewed. This data was not included in the primary analysis but is discussed at the end

of Chapter Four in its validating role and serves as background information for the

application oriented discussion in Chapter Five..

*Survey Instrument*

The instrument begins with bio-data to profile the particular context of the

respondent. The years of birth, marriage and ordination were asked to allow the

computation of age, years married, and years ordained. Level of education, number of

children, number of children still at home, and employment status were also included.

The first three questions focus on the respondent's perception of major life

developments in recent years. These questions draw upon the work of Daniel P.

McAdams with life scripts and their influence on how meaning is structured.[118] The

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[118] Daniel P. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993).

purpose of these questions is to obtain a sense of the symbolic network through which the respondent views his current life situation.

The fourth question asks for the respondent's understanding of spirituality. This provides a cognitive indication of the deacon's perception of spirituality that can be considered in relation to actual practices.

The fifth question asks for a metaphor or image that is symbolic of the respondent's spiritual life. The respondent is asked to interpret the symbol as well. This question attempts to get at the root metaphor underlying the respondent's perception of his or her spiritual life. This is another window related to spirituality that allows a look into the respondent's symbolic network.

Questions six and seven of the instrument move the respondent from a focus on the symbolic to a focus on action. Question six asks for the three most frequent spiritual practices of the respondent. Question seven asks for the three most meaningful.

Questions eight through eighteen deal with the character of the respondent's single most frequent spiritual practice. These questions ask about how the practice began, who is involved, where it is performed, what is done, what obstacles may prevent its performance, why it is done, and its perceived impact on marriage and ministry. The goal of these questions is to obtain a detailed picture of the practices reported with regard to behavior, context and self-perception. These themes are repeated again in questions nineteen through twenty-nine with regard to those practices that the respondent perceives as most meaningful.

The impact of marriage and diaconal ministry on the respondent's spiritual life are sought in questions 30 and 31. The goal here is to obtain the perceptions of the respondent regarding these primary contexts.

A final question about the respondent's use of spiritual direction was included in the instrument. A spiritual director can be a significant counter-cultural influence on one's perception of spirituality, interpretation of life events and spiritual practices. This question accounted for the presence of a spiritual director as an element of the respondent's context.

*Conclusion*

Any attempt to understand human experience and behavior must be done from a particular methodological perspective. Given the theological perspective developed in chapter two, the most congenial methodological perspective appears to be that of symbolic interaction. Grounded Theory is a specific methodology that allows for the analysis of the survey data in a manner consistent with a symbolic interactionist perspective and is useful for exploring the stated research questions. The next step is to proceed with the analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE RESPONSES OF DEACONS AND THEIR WIVES

*Introduction*

Several methodological points need to be discussed before proceeding with the

analysis. Clarifying these points will aid in understanding the analysis presented.

First, in Grounded Theory Methodology relationships among the categories and

sub-categories can be presented in text form or as diagrams.[119] The primary avenue of

analysis of the survey results is a consideration these categories and their

interrelationships.

Second, Grounded Theory Methodology is a qualitative approach to research.

Quantitative analysis has no necessary place in Grounded Theory Methodology, though it

can be used to illustrate, clarify or validate one's findings. In considering the experience

of diaconal spirituality from its various perspectives, the relative size of categories or

sub-categories is described quantitatively in some cases, either as part of the narrative or

in tables.

Third, the analysis presents the results of each group of deacons in the subject

populations, as described in the last chapter. Differences and similarities between the

groups are considered in developing the various propositions. Categories are permeable

and responses may be sufficiently ambiguous to allow coding and sorting into a variety of

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[119] Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, 198. The most common form of diagram used in *Atlas.ti 5.0* and in the analysis of the survey data is concept mapping. See figure 2 for an example of this type of diagram.

categories. Thus, the focus is on the broader patterns of relationship that emerge across many categories, rather than subtle distinctions between categories. It is from these broader patterns of relationship that a theoretical description of the phenomenon emerges.

Fourth, while *Atlas.ti 5.0* is a useful tool in the qualitative analysis of data, it does not easily allow for distinguishing among the finer details of the subject populations in its manipulation of the code categories. Thus, whether the source response for a particular code was a deacon or spouse is not readily clear. It is possible to retrieve this information but requires following the codes to their source quotes in the primary documents and tallying the information. In many cases this is unnecessary, as variation among the groups is minimal. However, where results are inconsistent across the respondent groups, deacon spouse response differences are examined.

### *View of Spirituality*

Five questions were included in the survey instrument seeking the respondent's description of spirituality, the theme of their current life chapter, perception of major transformations since deacon formation and the metaphor or image that best represents their spiritual life. While there is some variation in the categories arising from the different subject groups, there is a fundamental consistency. The most common category of response to the question by one group tends to be the most common category of response for the other groups. Variation in categories tends to appear among the less common categories of response.

Current Life Theme

       The respondents were asked to describe the basic themes of the current chapter of their lives. Their responses were grouped by the primary concern expressed in the response.  For example, responses expressing concern for succeeding generations or focused on child care, family life, or mentoring are listed under generativity. Dominant current life chapter themes for the Erie respondents are generativity, integrity of life, and ministry. Responses tend to cluster within these three categories.

### Table 5.- Current Life Themes

|                          | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L |
|--------------------------|------|-----------|----------|
| Transition               | .07  | .07       | .19      |
| Integrity of Life        | .26  | .15       | .07      |
| Retirement               | .07  | .22       | .11      |
| Personal spiritual growth| .07  | .17       | .22      |
| Generativity             | .30  | .12       | .11      |
| Ministry                 | .22  | .27       | .30      |

       Integrity of life refers to Erickson's stage of post-midlife adult development in which the person attempts to deal with loss and integrate it with other life experience as one prepares for the later stages of life. Integrity of life related responses to the current life theme questions focused on death, an empty nest, or poor health. Related adjustments were grouped under this category.

       Ministry is another category of responses. It refers to responses which focus on various forms of Church related service. For example, a deacon viewing his administration of a parish as the central theme of his current life chapter is included in this category.

       Dominant themes for the Cleveland respondents include ministry and retirement. The categories were not as tightly clustered here as they were with the Erie respondents.

Personal/spiritual growth and integrity of life were represented but still well below the dominant categories.

As a category, personal and spiritual growth includes those responses which focus on skill development, the experience of a richer prayer life, or a deeper theological appreciation for one's faith. For example, one deacon describes his growing comfort level as he develops skill competencies related to his particular ministries.

Dominant themes for the Deacon-L respondents include ministry, personal-spiritual growth, and transition. Clustering was apparent for these categories. A transition refers to major life changes apart from retirement or ordination. Changes of residence or ministerial assignment were most common for this category.

It is not surprising that ministry is among the dominant themes reported by all respondents. It is the most common theme for both the Cleveland and the Deacon-L respondents. While ministry was among the dominant themes for the Erie respondents also, both generativity and integrity of life were ahead of it. This appears to be a function of the larger proportion of spouses among the Erie respondents than the other groups. It is the spouses who provided the majority of responses for both the integrity and generativity categories. When the responses of only the deacons are considered, ministry is the largest category, followed by integrity and generativity tied for second place.

Transformation

The goal of this question and the previous questions is to obtain a sense of the symbolic network through which the respondent views his current life chapter. As might be expected, the most common response category for this question among all of the respondent groups is personal/spiritual growth. Approximately half of the responses to

this question for each group fall into the growth category. Responses in this category are growth in virtue, competency and understanding. Other categories follow at a distance.

| *Table 6.- Transformation* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L |
| Relationship with people | .23 | .16 | .14 |
| Relationship with God | .20 | .16 | .17 |
| Ministry | .00 | .25 | .14 |
| Personal spiritual growth | .48 | .44 | .54 |
| Knowledge | .09 | .00 | .00 |

Spirituality

The respondent's understanding of spirituality is sought with this question. Relationship with God is the most common response category across the respondent groups. The focus in these responses is on the vertical dimension of spirituality. One respondent describes spirituality in terms of experiencing the presence of God. Another describes spirituality as resting in God's grace. Both Erie and Cleveland respondents cluster within this category.

The nearest category follows at some distance. Both secondary categories deal with the horizontal dimension. These categories include faith in action and relationships with people. Faith in action focuses more on service or ministry than upon interpersonal relationship. Thus, spirituality is seen in terms of visiting the sick and elderly according to one respondent. The second category focuses upon the interpersonal relationship, rather than the service that arises from the relationship. For example, several respondents focus on spending time with one's family as a form of spirituality.

Erie respondents focus on faith in action relative to family and community, while the Cleveland respondents specifically address relationships with people. The difference

between the two relative to the characteristics of Christian spirituality identified in

Chapter Two is that faith in action has more of a service orientation, while the other

focuses more on communion.

| *Table 7.- Spirituality* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L |
| Affective | .09 | .07 | .00 |
| Devotional practices | .04 | .09 | .15 |
| Faith in action | .24 | .09 | .22 |
| Relationship with God | .62 | .44 | .24 |
| Being image of God | .00 | .00 | .10 |
| Inner life | .00 | .00 | .17 |
| Relationship with people | .00 | .31 | .12 |

The Deacon-L respondents show much less clustering. Relationship with God is

still the most common response. Responses representative of this category include

responding to God's call, perceiving God at work in life's journey, feeling connected

with God, trust in God and living a God/Christ centered life. Each of these category

headings come from specific responses to the question. The remaining responses are

spread among the categories and include devotional practices, inner life, and being an

image of God.

Root metaphors

A root metaphor is an image that symbolizes a person's basic principle for

interpreting life events. This can be seen in the personal myths we construct and in the

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images we use to express those myths.[120]  Insight is provided by the root metaphor into the person's understanding of spirituality and its relationship to the circumstances of one's life.

The survey asks the participants to describe the image/metaphor that best portrays the nature of their spiritual life. Most respondents offer a metaphoric image; some include a sentence or two providing an interpretation of the image to aid in coding. Where no interpretive key is offered, the context of the person's other responses to the survey is of assistance.

While a range of categories emerge from the responses, there is consistency across the respondent groups. The most common way of categorizing responses from all groups is the inner journey of relationship with God. The focus in these responses is on God and our perception of God's will, the quality of our relationship with God, and the forms that the relationship may take. These are offered in word pictures, references to scripture or a simple explanation of the metaphor. For example, one respondent offers the image of Martha from the Gospel story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). Another gives the image of a flame that is growing brighter and warmer. Yet, another offers the image of pilgrimage with one's spouse toward the heavenly Jerusalem. The clustering is particularly prominent with the Erie and Cleveland respondents, the only other major category being images relating to ministry.

As with spirituality, there is more variation among the responses for this question for the Deacon-L group. The number of responses for the category of nurturing images

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[120] Victor Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 248-249. A root metaphor (paradigm) is the model a person uses to illustrate his understanding of the world. He undertakes to interpret all facts in terms of this model. A discussion of this concept is found also in chapter three of Andrew Greeley's *Religion as Poetry* pp.23-56, as well as Dan P. McAdams, *Stories we live by*, pp.204-211.

from Scripture is identical to the inner journey of relationship with God category among the Deacon-L respondents. Nurturing images among the responses are exemplified by the image of a child in the arms of a loving parent. Other response categories include affective images[121], metaphors or images related to current life experience or conditions, relationships with people, and images of the respondent as a wounded healer.

| *Table 8.- Root Metaphors* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L |
| Wounded healer | .17 | .00 | .17 |
| Nurturance/Scripture | .17 | .08 | .21 |
| Relationship with people | .00 | .00 | .08 |
| Experience/life condition | .00 | .08 | .13 |
| Ministry | .13 | .29 | .13 |
| Affective | .17 | .08 | .08 |
| Inner journey/relationship with God | .35 | .46 | .21 |

Considering the root metaphors from a different analytic perspective, psychologists report that images common to adults often convey agency or communion. Thus, it is commonly found among early adult males that images tend to be agentic, whereas images reported by early adult females tend toward communion. Middle adulthood metaphoric images tend to be integrative and often personify both agency and communion at the same time. Thus the warrior or lover image of early adulthood becomes the teacher, healer, or counsellor of mid-life. Another common characteristic of this period are images that express generativity, the desire to leave a legacy and to support future generations.[122]

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[121] A vivid affective image offered by one deacon is a clenched fist slowly relaxing and turning into an open palm raised to God in prayer.

[122] McAdams, *The Stories We Live By*, 204-208, 228-230.

Applying these considerations to the survey data, it appears that when we combine the respondent groups, slightly less than half of the images reported suggest agency. This is not surprising from a group of people engaged in active ministry. These images relate to being God's servant, icon, or agent. Agency can be seen in other metaphors, such as walking on water, or Martha (of Luke 10:38-42). Struggling to overcome obstacles also suggests agency. Several natural images suggest agency, such as seeds growing, flowers in bloom, or light shedding its radiance.

A slightly smaller number of images relate to communion. Most common are images of the respondent's relationship with God, such as a support in difficulty, a sense of closeness, or an experience of being healed. Relationships with other people tend to be negative and run the range from those suggesting an experience of betrayal and anger, to the experience of children leaving the nest.

The remaining images are ambiguous. Some express attitudes, such as gratitude or peace. Others offer the image of living in the midst of miracles, a baseball game or the life of Jesus, which can be interpreted either as expressions of agency or communion. According to McAdams, these more ambiguous symbols suggest greater psychological integration.

A few images related to generativity are present. These images depict natural scenes, such as seeds developing and flowers blooming. A number of the agency related images also suggest generativity.

Another approach to the analysis of the root metaphors draws on archetypal images suggested by Carl Gustav Jung. The root metaphor responses are categorized according to the criteria for the archetypal images most common to persons in mid-life.

The results are mother (16%), companion (13%), solitary (9%), visionary (11%), eternal youth (8%), hero (22%), father (8%) and sage (14%).[123]

Each of the archetypes points to a different emphasis in ministry. Hero is the most common response and refers to the person who accomplishes goals and completes his journey. This image implies a high degree of agency and is task oriented. Mother is the next most common archetype and reflects concern for life and the willingness to give of self to the needy or undeveloped. Thus, ministry related images tend to cluster under this archetype. The sage archetype reflects an ability to put one in touch with one's deepest self. This archetype suggests a rich inner life, as well as a tendency toward ministering to the spiritual needs of others. The archetype of companion relates to an emphasis on intimacy and friendship. The visionary archetype reflects the ability to perceive possibilities and bring them to actualisation. The solitary archetype speaks to independence. The father archetype speaks to authority, challenging one to realize potential, and giving direction. The eternal youth (*puer*) archetype reflects enthusiasm and tireless energy devoted to a cause or project.

There is a common emphasis on agency when the root metaphors are compared from the perspective of Jungian archetypes and McAdams model. The archetypes however show a greater variety of emphasis than McAdams, when considering implications of the metaphors. For deacons communion has a strong nurturing component. This is reflected both in the mother archetype and in the spiritual nurturing suggested by the sage archetype.

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[123] Janice Brewi and Anne Brennan, *Celebrate Mid-life: Jungian Archeytpes and Mid-life Spirituality*, (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 46-53.

Conclusion

        While there is variation among the responses, a consistent pattern emerges across the respondent groups regarding their perception of diaconal spirituality. The focus is on the person's relationship with God. This is clear both in the descriptions of spirituality and root metaphors offered. While responses dealing with one's relationship with God were not as common in response to the transformation related question, the most common response (personal/spiritual growth) is not far removed. Personal spiritual growth presumes a deepening relationship with God, even if a particular response does not make that presumption explicit. The consistency of ministry as the current life theme across the respondent groups can be seen as the fruit of one's relationship with God as shaped by the spiritual growth of the respondent.

*Praxis*

        The greater part of the survey explores spiritual practices common to deacons and their wives. While anyone can have the best of intentions, it is only when those intentions move from the realm of thought to action that a person's spirituality takes on flesh.

        Spiritual practices are considered from the perspective of frequency and perceived meaningfulness. Grounded Theory is concerned with process. Origin, motivation, duration, change, and obstacles to practice are examined as aspects of process.

Frequent and Meaningful Practices

The survey asks participants to identify the three spiritual practices they perform most frequently. The presumption is that such practices are an integral part of the person's experience of spirituality, if only because of their regular practice. Certain spiritual practices may not be performed as frequently as others but engage the participant to a greater degree. Thus, the survey also asks participants to list their three most meaningful spiritual practices.

A wide range of practices were reported by each of the deacon groups surveyed. However, they were easily organized into five categories. This was consistent for all groups. The first category is comprised of Mass attendance and the Liturgy of the Hours. The second includes various forms of prayer and reflection that are done individually or have the individual and his relationship with God as their focus. This includes such practices as Centering Prayer, meditation or journaling. The third category includes forms of diaconal ministry that are perceived as spiritually enriching. The fourth category includes practices and activities that involve the deacon's family. The final category refers to traditional devotions, such as the rosary and Eucharistic adoration.

### Table 9- Frequent and Meaningful Spiritual Practices

|  | Frequent | | | | Meaningful | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Erie | Cleve. | D-L | Mean | Erie | Cleve. | D-L | Mean |
| Mass/Office | .34 | .34 | .39 | .36 | .16 | .20 | .18 | .18 |
| Pray/reflect | .23 | .16 | .16 | .18 | .28 | .26 | .31 | .28 |
| Ministry | .21 | .27 | .22 | .23 | .29 | .29 | .32 | .30 |
| Family | .11 | .10 | .16 | .12 | .18 | .20 | .17 | .18 |
| Devotions | .11 | .13 | .08 | .11 | .09 | .04 | .01 | .05 |

The responses for each category show little variation across the groups of respondents both for those practices reported as most frequent and those reported as most

meaningful. The most frequent categories reported are Mass/Office, Ministry, and Pray/Reflect. The most meaningful categories reported are Ministry and Pray/reflect, with Family and Mass/Office tied for a distant third place.

The Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours are the pillars of a deacon's spiritual life according to the Holy See[124] and other writers on the spirituality of ministry.[125] Further, reciting daily at least part of the Liturgy of the Hours is an obligation placed upon deacons in the United States. Thus, it is not surprising to see this category as the most frequent of the spiritual practices. However, its ratio drops by half when the most meaningful spiritual practices are discussed.

Various forms of ministerial service are identified as the most meaningful spiritual practices by all of the respondent groups. This category was in second place for most frequent but at a good distance from Mass/Office. The drop in Mass/Office seems to have been taken up by growth in the ministry category for most meaningful, as well as growth in Prayer/Reflection and Family. The shift in the categories from frequent to meaningful seems to reflect a move toward spiritual practices that involve a greater degree of full, conscious participation in the practice. While the deacons may attend Mass and recite the Office as they are obliged, they perceive greater engagement with the Lord while counselling a grieving child, being attentive to God in mental prayer, or joining with their families in prayer or service.

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[124] *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*, no. 54.

[125] Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*, 102-107.

How Practices began

The next series of questions in the survey asks respondents to provide additional information on their most frequent and most meaningful practices. The first question is how the spiritual practice first became a regular part of the respondent's life. The goal of this question is to identify those factors influencing the early development of their spiritual lives and what role the formation program exerts on their spiritual practice.

| Table 10- How Practices Began | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Childhood/youth | .52 | .47 | .58 | .52 |
| Marriage | .08 | .18 | .08 | .11 |
| Trauma/revitalization experience | .08 | .12 | .08 | .10 |
| Deacon formation | .15 | .02 | .13 | .10 |
| Ordination & After | .17 | .21 | .13 | .17 |

The responses for both the most frequent and the most meaningful practices were similar. A solid majority of participants brought a rich spiritual life into the deacon formation program. On average, seventy-three percent (73%) of the respondents report that their most frequent or meaningful spiritual practices were in place prior to deacon formation. The beginning of the most significant spiritual practices, as reported by just over half of the respondents, dates to their childhood or youth. These practices were strongly influenced by parental example. Such practices most often involve the Eucharist, the rosary, or various forms of service. One deacon describes how when he was a child his father volunteered at the local Catholic orphanage on Friday evenings and would often take him to help out.

Practices which developed as part of marriage and family life include family prayer, as well as conversation with spouse as a deliberate practice. Family prayer took

several forms. The most common was the rosary but there were also novenas and bedtime prayer, as well as morning or evening prayer done as a couple.

Such practices are about equal to practices resulting from a turning point in the respondent's life. The turning point represents either a revitalization experience or trauma resulting from the death of a loved one or a personal brush with death. Retreats, spiritual direction and special devotions are common to this category. However, Mass attendance is a current running throughout all of these categories.

Spiritual practices begun during deacon formation are relatively small in number. The Liturgy of the Hours and Centering Prayer are found here. It is also common to see these practices arising out of an earlier revitalization experience.

The percentage of practices begun with ordination or afterward is larger and reflects practices that incorporate some form of ministry. These percentages are relatively consistent across the three respondent groups. Type of practice does not appear to be a significant issue in determining whether the practice had its beginning during or prior to deacon formation. Nor does gender appear to be a significant issue here either, as the distribution of responses is almost identical for the deacons and their wives.

This is not surprising as one of the considerations in accepting a person for deacon formation is a well established foundation of faithful discipleship. This consideration is raised in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and is still an important consideration today. A person should not be admitted to deacon formation unless it is demonstrated that he is already living a life of Christian spirituality.[126]

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[126] Ann Healey, "The Role of the Family: Diaconate Formation and Ministry," *Deacon Digest*, July/August 1999, 29.

How Often

Across the board, almost all of the spiritual practices occur daily or weekly. This is influenced by the prominent role of Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours in the reported spiritual practices. However, most other practices are undertaken on the same schedule, except for those practices which by their nature are less frequent. This would include retreats, preaching and service ministries which are subject to schedules.

*Table 11- How Often Practice Is Undertaken*

|  | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daily | .66 | .64 | .62 | .64 |
| Weekly | .24 | .36 | .21 | .27 |
| Monthly | .02 | .00 | .06 | .04 |
| Every few months | .02 | .00 | .00 | .01 |
| Annually | .00 | .00 | .04 | .02 |
| As the opportunity arises | .05 | .00 | .06 | .06 |

Where

Location for the conduct of spiritual practices is less clustered than previous responses regarding origin and frequency of the practice. The variation in location tends to reflect the type of practice. The most common locations across the respondent groups were sacred places; such as churches, chapels and retreat houses. Spiritual practices involving sacramental liturgy or retreats account for most of these responses. Home is another frequently mentioned location. It is usually associated with Liturgy of the hours, various forms of reflection and personal prayer, and family related practices. Ministry setting refers to nursing homes, hospitals and other locations where the deacon is assigned as a minister. Anywhere refers to locations where opportunities for ministry arise spontaneously.

| Table 12- Where The Practice Is Undertaken | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Sacred place | .23 | .43 | .36 | .34 |
| Work | .07 | .00 | .05 | .04 |
| Home | .37 | .20 | .29 | .29 |
| Ministry setting | .19 | .23 | .11 | .17 |
| Anywhere | .14 | .14 | .18 | .15 |

With Whom

The familial character of diaconal spirituality is readily apparent in the responses to the question regarding with whom the spiritual practice is undertaken. Almost half of the respondents describe family members as the persons with whom they primarily undertake most frequent or meaningful spiritual practices. While some practices which inherently involve family members contribute to this, Mass attendance and Liturgy of the Hours are also contributors, with diaconal couples often taking part in these practices together. It is not uncommon for ministry also to involve the spouse or children.

| Table 13- With Whom The Practice Is Undertaken | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Self | .27 | .16 | .16 | .20 |
| Family | .44 | .58 | .32 | .44 |
| Co-ministers | .04 | .09 | .19 | .11 |
| People served | .29 | .07 | .18 | .18 |
| Confessor, spiritual director | .04 | .00 | .02 | .02 |
| Parish community | .04 | .09 | .14 | .09 |

Self and people-served are the next most common responses, though at less than half the frequency of family. These responses reflect more contemplative or reflective spiritual practices or practices involving ministry. While each of the groups of

respondents shows some variation, the responses are consistent overall. Other categories

include: co-ministers, confessor and parish community.

Why

The focus of the next question is the respondents' motivation for undertaking their

most frequent and meaningful spiritual practices. There is wide variation in the responses.

| Table 14- Why The Practice Is Undertaken | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Internal (who I am) | .30 | .18 | .23 | .24 |
| Closer to God | .16 | .16 | .11 | .14 |
| Family related | .13 | .11 | .09 | .11 |
| Ministry related | .20 | .21 | .15 | .19 |
| External (obligations, expectations) | .09 | .05 | .21 | .12 |
| Affective incentives | .13 | .29 | .21 | .21 |

On average, the most common response relates to the respondent's sense of self.

The practice is an integral part of his or her life, whether in the diaconate or not. This

response is most common for the Erie and Deacon-L respondents. Cleveland respondents

focus more on affective incentives for motivation. This refers to feeling states such as

joy, peace, comfort or love. On average, affective incentives is the second most common

motivation. Ministry related motivation is third most common and refers to motivation

arising from the perceived need of the people served. Other categories include: closer to

God, external obligations or expectations, and family.

What

The survey instrument asks for a detailed description of what is involved in the

performance of the most frequent and meaningful practices. The purpose of this question

is to obtain a description of the process of performing the practice. Few respondents provide such detail; rather, they offer a summary remark that amplifies their responses regarding motivation. This is apparent in the attempt to sort the responses into meaningful categories. The categories which emerge are similar to the categories that developed from the responses to why the respondents undertook the practices.

| *Table 15- What Is Involved In The Practice* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Family related | .10 | .33 | .06 | .17 |
| Close to God | .06 | .04 | .26 | .12 |
| Personal devotion | .20 | .22 | .42 | .28 |
| Ministry | .56 | .31 | .13 | .34 |
| Affective response | .08 | .09 | .13 | .10 |

The most common category of response includes descriptions of various forms of ministerial service or further explanation of its importance to the respondent. This is strongly influenced by the Erie respondents. More than half of this group provides descriptions of service ministries. The Cleveland respondents most frequently mention family related spiritual practices. Respondents from the Deacon-L place the greatest emphasis on personal devotion. Other categories reflect the desire to grow close to God, as well responses describing affective states.

Obstacles

So far our consideration of significant spiritual practices focuses on structural characteristics. It is important as well to identify what the respondents perceive as obstacles to the regular performance of these spiritual practices.

The most common response relates to a break in routine that either prevents the practice or serves as a distraction from its normal performance. Illness, emergencies, travel, bad weather, visitors and phone calls are common responses in this category. Schedule conflicts are common also and relate to the demands of employment or complying with the schedules of others, such as physicians. The third most common category overall relates to conflicts with other commitments. While a relatively minor issue for the Cleveland and Deacon-L respondents, it is tied for first place among the Erie respondents. The conflicting commitments reported here are family obligations, other spiritual practices or ministry related commitments, rather than simple scheduling conflicts. Personal failings are offered as obstacles in a few cases, though respondents claiming no obstacles are more common.

| Table 16- Reported Obstacles To Practice | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Break in routine | .28 | .31 | .42 | .34 |
| Schedule conflicts | .26 | .21 | .28 | .25 |
| None | .13 | .21 | .16 | .17 |
| Other commitments | .28 | .19 | .10 | .19 |
| Personal failings | .04 | .08 | .04 | .05 |

There does not appear to be any discernible relationship between the type of spiritual practice and obstacle interfering with it. Those who experience no problems with obstacles report a range of spiritual practices from meditation, to Mass attendance to service ministries.

That family interaction, ministry or other spiritual practices are perceived as obstacles raises a concern. Each of these obstacles can rightly be perceived as integral with the spiritual life of a Christian. In such cases, the disturbed spiritual practice tends to be Mass attendance, Liturgy of the Hours or a devotional prayer activity.

Conclusion

     Spiritual disciplines require regularity, which tends to give preference to the liturgical and mental disciplines when frequency of practice is the focus. However, when the emphasis shifts to degree of engagement (meaningfulness), the distribution of responses is more balanced between the mental and practical disciplines. Among the spiritual disciplines those dealing with ministry/service, relationship with God and family are consistently mentioned most often. Obstacles to the respondents' regular practice of favored spiritual disciplines tend to reflect the normal activity and distractions inherent in contemporary family life. A relatively small number of responses suggest fragmentation existing between the perceived value of the mental and practical spiritual disciplines.

### *Spiritual Dynamics*

     A deacon's spiritual disciplines are not isolated from other critical elements of his life, including his marriage and his diaconal ministry. If communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence are characteristic of Christian spirituality then they should be apparent in the life and spiritual practice of the deacon. Consideration of obstacles to spiritual practice has also raised the issue of fragmentation in one's spiritual life. We now turn to these considerations.

Fragmentation

     It is argued in Chapter Two that healthy spirituality is characterized by integration and wholeness; balance between the transcendent and immanent, the mental and practical, accurately reflecting one's state in life. Lack of integration makes conflicts

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possible between the deacon's loci of identity; ministry, family, employment, and community. The lack of integrity also opens the person to danger of a practice that is out of balance.

| Table 17- Indicators of Fragmentation | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Cares of life | .04 | .13 | .00 | .06 |
| None | .16 | .19 | .43 | .26 |
| Affectivity | .12 | .06 | .00 | .06 |
| Resistance | .04 | .10 | .08 | .08 |
| Distractions | .07 | .06 | .19 | .11 |
| Conflicting commitments | .43 | .38 | .22 | .34 |
| Role/expectation conflicts | .14 | .08 | .08 | .10 |

Table 17 presents those categories of responses suggesting fragmentation. The primary criterion for inclusion as an example of fragmentation is that the response indicates a failure to perceive linkages between the specific practice or condition and the rest of life. The leading indicators of fragmentation are the categories of "conflicting commitments" and "none". These two categories account for 60% of the fragmentation. While the other categories illustrate a range of behavior indicative of fragmentation, there is little indication that the other sources of fragmentation are significant.

Conflicting commitments refers to the apparent perception that family responsibilities, care-giving or forms of service ministry are obstacles to the spiritual life, or at least of lesser value than other activities. The survey instrument asks for those practices that support the spiritual life of the deacon or his spouse. Thus, when the respondent describes child care responsibilities or commitments, which are characteristic of family spirituality as obstacles to the performance of frequent or meaningful spiritual disciplines, a constricted understanding of the spiritual life is suggested. The person's

understanding of spirituality appears to be inconsistent with the demands of married life. This category is the largest for both the Erie and Cleveland deacons and the second largest for the Deacon-L respondents.

An even clearer indicator of fragmentation is in those responses to questions asking for observations about change, transformation, or the impact of practices on marriage and ministry where the response is "none". The literature argues that the spiritual life involves self-transcendence as an essential characteristic. Thus, no change in a person or no impact of a spiritual practice on marriage or ministry suggests a view of spirituality as unrelated to the rest of life.

How broad of a problem is fragmentation? An examination of the data shows that the Erie group reports 74 items coded under fragmentation. The Cleveland group reports 48, with the Deacon-L showing only 16. The greater number of responses for Erie may reflect the relative newness of the deacon community in orders, as well as the strong presence of wives among the respondents. The assumption is that the wives may be more subject to conflicting commitments being directly immersed in child care and family obligations. Their husbands may be somewhat protected from this by their wives.

Cares of life refers primarily to the experience of grief resulting from loss (of health, employment or a loved one) and the struggle to deal with the loss. While in the midst of deep grief, a degree of fragmentation is not extraordinary. It is a minor category and one that is most likely temporary as well.

Affectivity is a minor category as well. It refers to those responses which describe spirituality in terms of feeling states. The quality of one's spiritual life is judged by how spiritual practices make one feel or by struggles with feelings, such as pride or envy. This

also refers to feeling states compromising one's ability to deal with situations, such as feeling abandoned or frustrated.

One deacon spoke of a regular and enjoyable use of the Liturgy of the Hours during formation, only to experience dryness and difficulty with this spiritual discipline shortly after ordination. Other deacons spoke of the experience following ordination of having friends distance themselves. These developments indicate resistance experienced by the deacon. This resistance can be internal, as with difficulty observing the Liturgy of the Hours once it is obligatory. It can also be external, as reported by another deacon, when former friends were uncomfortable with his new ministerial role and distanced themselves from him. While such reactions do not necessarily indicate fragmentation within the deacon or his wife, the distancing of friends from the new deacon suggests fragmentation in the deacon's social network; as such, it will present a challenge to the deacon.

Another minor category relates to those interactions which are perceived by the respondent as a distraction from practices meant to be supports for the spiritual life. Many of these distractions are themselves supports for the spiritual life. Thus, a respondent would report feeling distracted from his spiritual discipline of attending daily Mass because the he visited the elderly in a nursing home or took communion to shut-ins. This category is similar to "conflicting commitments" above, except that its focus is on people as the obstacle, rather than on a more abstract concept of "commitments".

The last of the minor categories refers to conflicting roles and expectations. Struggles with finding a balance between ministry and family life are included here. Supervisors may be unrealistic in the volume of service they can expect from deacons assigned to them, given job and family obligations. On the other hand, they may fail to

perceive the spiritual maturity or ministerial gifts the deacon and spouse are making

available. The fragmentation here is no so much in the spiritual life of the deacon as it is

in the authority structure which fails to link its expectations with the experience of the

individual deacon. As noted above, this is a relatively minor category of response.


Impact of Practice on Marriage

Those practices which are a frequent and meaningful medium for engagement of

the individual with the Lord are not isolated from the rest of life but have an impact on

our symbol systems, understanding of self and others, as well as affectivity and

interactions with others.[127] It is reasonable to expect that the spiritual practices of the

respondents will have an impact on their marriages, as marriage is a significant context

for the deacon and his spouse. The survey instrument inquired about the perceived impact

of the spiritual practice on the respondent's marriage.

| Table 18- Perceived Impact of Practice on Marriage | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Communication | .19 | .19 | .27 | .22 |
| None | .10 | .08 | .10 | .09 |
| Difficulties | .02 | .00 | .04 | .02 |
| Togetherness | .24 | .22 | .19 | .21 |
| Positive | .19 | .51 | .31 | .34 |
| Personal/couple growth | .21 | .00 | .08 | .10 |
| Christ-centered | .05 | .00 | .00 | .02 |

The three most significant categories were communication, togetherness and

positive. These categories account for 77% of the responses to this question.

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[127] Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols*, 103.

The largest response category was "positive". This refers to those responses where the deacon or deacon's wife perceive a favourable impact of the spiritual practice upon their marriage but either fail to or are unable to explain the nature of the impact.

The next category relates to the quality of communication between the deacons and significant others; such as spouse, children or co-ministers. Spiritual practices characteristic of "life at the center", such as care-giving, listening, and conversation with spouse, are consistently seen as improving communication. One deacon describes such spiritual practices as "strengthening our marriage and giving me the patience to deal with the day-to-day pressures of married life." Team ministry activities contribute to this category, as well as ministry whose primary component is listening to the person served.

Similar in size is the category of togetherness. The unifying thread in the responses grouped under this heading is a perceived deepening of the relationship between the deacon and his wife. The most common spiritual practices related to this category were team ministry, praying together and conversation between spouses. The wife of a deacon offers an example of this category. She explains a spiritual practice of hers is listening to the troubled and those experiencing grief. She carries this out in her work setting but feels that it is a sharing in her husband's ministry. She explained that as a result of their engagement in various forms of service they both have grown more sensitive to the emotional pain of others. This has greatly enriched their marriage. This practice grew out of a time when they grieved the loss of a child and both felt a sense of abandonment by God and neighbors. No one reached out to them in their pain. Having felt the sting of its absence, they both appreciate the importance of being there for others. Their "togetherness" as a couple, moved them to compassion for those who felt abandoned.

The remaining categories are small. A number of responses can be group into the categories of personal/couple growth and a more Christ-centered marriage. A few responses are grouped into the negative categories of "difficulty" and "none". "Difficulty" refers to a perceived negative impact on the marriage, such as less time available for the wife and family. "None" points to a perception of the spiritual practice having no impact on marriage.

Impact of Practice on Ministry

Another major life context for the deacon is ministry. The survey instrument inquired about the perceived impact of the most frequent and most meaningful spiritual practice on the respondent's ministry.

| Table 19- Perceived Impact of Practice on Ministry | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| More skilful | .17 | .23 | .03 | .23 |
| Provides spiritual sustenance | .22 | .16 | .33 | .24 |
| Christ focused | .14 | .07 | .19 | .13 |
| Difficulties | .03 | .02 | .02 | .02 |
| Family related | .17 | .11 | .02 | .10 |
| Positive | .17 | .25 | .09 | .17 |
| Communion | .06 | .16 | .05 | .09 |
| None | .06 | .00 | .00 | .02 |

The largest category on average describes the respondent's spiritual practice as providing spiritual sustenance for his or her ministry. The spiritual practice is seen as a source of strength for the ministry or the grace that accomplishes any results working through the respondent.

Almost as large is the category of "more skilful". This category reflects a growing comfort level for the respondents. The spiritual practices related to this response tend to be forms of ministry such as preaching, presiding at baptisms, assisting at Mass, listening or counselling, teaching in the context of religious education or sacramental preparation. These categories account for almost half of the responses.

While the remaining categories do not approach the size of these first two categories, they illustrate the range of responses. The largest of these remaining categories is "positive" and refers to the perception of some benefit for ministry from one's spiritual practice but fails to describe the benefit. The next largest category describes the respondent's ministry as being more Christ-focused and tends to reflect prayer related spiritual practices.

Family related follows in size and reflects responses which see family related spiritual practices as a support or motivation for ministry. For example, both husband and wife may be engaged in different forms of ministry. The respondents find their marriages supportive of ministry because they share ministry related experiences and ideas with each other, as well as provide mutual moral support.

The remaining categories represent only a few of the responses. Communion relates to spiritual practices that help the person be more sensitive to the needs of others and aware of a broader network of relationships than just the family. Difficulties refer to apparent conflicts between the spiritual practice and the exercise of ministry. For example, family oriented spiritual practices are seen as limiting availability for ministry. This is most common with deacon's wives who felt their family responsibilities limited their ability to engage in ministry related forms of service. The final category is "none"

and refers to the situation in which no impact of the spiritual practice on the person's ministry is noted.

Characteristics of Spirituality

There are no questions in the survey that specifically address communion, self-emptying, service or self-transcendence. However, to gain a sense of the distribution of these characteristics, the three spiritual practices reported as most frequent and the three most meaningful were sorted by communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence, as well as by respondent group.

In the earlier consideration of most frequent and most meaningful spiritual practices a shift is reported away from the more formal and liturgical forms of prayer and toward service related spiritual practices, as we move from frequent to meaningful practices. This shift is reflected also in our consideration of the characteristics of communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence.

The following criteria are used to sort the reported spiritual practices. "Communion" applies when the practice focuses on human interaction and relationship as the immediate intended goal. This included conversation with spouse, activity with children, prayer with spouse, meal with friends, and family prayer, as well as listening to the troubled and lonely. "Self-emptying" applies when turning to God in prayer or reflection is the immediate intended goal. Responses in this category included meditation, Mass attendance, Centering prayer, journal keeping, spontaneous prayer, the Divine Office, and quiet walks. "Service" applies when meeting the needs of another is the immediate intended goal. Examples of this category include bringing the Eucharist to the sick, sacramental ministry, Bible study with prisoners, preparing couples for marriage,

preparing homilies, teaching religious education, and giving spiritual direction. "Self-transcendence" applies when growth in knowledge or skill is the immediate intended goal. Examples of this category include spiritual reading, reading theology, receiving spiritual direction, study and reflection on Scripture. Many of the practices have multiple characteristics and can be sorted under several categories. Assignment is made based upon the dominant characteristics of the practice.

| Table 20—Reported Practices by Dimensions and Respondent Groups | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Most Frequent | | | | Most Meaningful | | | |
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Ave. | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Ave. |
| Communion | .12 | .10 | .16 | .12 | .18 | .20 | .17 | .18 |
| Self-emptying | .56 | .61 | .61 | .59 | .31 | .39 | .49 | .40 |
| Service | .25 | .29 | .23 | .26 | .45 | .32 | .31 | .36 |
| Self-transcendence | .07 | .00 | .00 | .02 | .06 | .09 | .03 | .06 |

As we move from frequent to meaningful practices the gap between self-emptying and service decreases. Indeed, among the Erie deacons there is a reversal, with service becoming the dominant characteristic. A significant factor in the large proportion of responses grouped under self-emptying are the practices of Mass attendance and the Liturgy of the Hours, which comprise more than half of the self-emptying responses.

"Self-emptying" is the dominant category for both the single most frequent and the single most meaningful spiritual practices reported. However, there is a drop by almost half in the proportion of responses assigned to this category when the most meaningful practices are considered. As discussed in our earlier consideration of the difference between the most frequent and most meaningful spiritual practices, the decreased priority of Mass attendance and the Liturgy of the Hours is influential in this

shift. In fact, the Liturgy of the Hours disappears when the single most meaningful

spiritual practices are considered.

| Table 21—Single Most Frequent/ Meaningful Practices by How Practice Began | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequent | | | | | | |
| | Began | Communion | Self-emptying | Service | Self-Transcendence | Total |
| | Childhood | | .30 | | | .30 |
| | Youth | | .04 | | | .04 |
| | Marriage | .08 | .01 | | | .09 |
| | Children | .04 | | | | .04 |
| | Revitalization | .01 | .06 | | | .08 |
| | Formation | | .14 | .01 | | .15 |
| | Ordination | | .04 | .05 | | .09 |
| | Long term | | .13 | .09 | | .22 |
| | Total | .13 | .72 | .15 | | 1.00 |
| Meaningful | | | | | | |
| | Began | Communion | Self-emptying | Service | Self-Transcendence | Total |
| | Childhood | | .19 | | | .19 |
| | Youth | | .04 | | .01 | .06 |
| | Marriage | .13 | .01 | | | .14 |
| | Children | .06 | | | | .06 |
| | Revitalization | .01 | .03 | | .01 | .06 |
| | Formation | .01 | .03 | .08 | .01 | .14 |
| | Ordination | | .04 | .11 | | .15 |
| | Long term | .03 | .04 | .11 | .03 | .21 |
| | Total | .24 | .39 | .31 | .07 | 1.00 |

This may be the case because meaningfulness appears to reflect the degree of

engagement the person feels with this spiritual practice.  While it is common among most

frequent practices because of its obligatory character, under most meaningful practices it

must compete with other long established and engaging spiritual practices. The

distribution of practices among the characteristics is more balanced and varied among the

most meaningful practices.

Is the distribution by characteristics influenced by the context in which a spiritual practice arose? Spiritual practices directly related to the diaconate and arising during formation or following ordination account for twenty-four percent (24%) of the single most frequent practices reported. The greater proportion is found under "self-emptying" and relate to the Liturgy of the Hours. However, service ministry is also represented, especially after ordination.

Among the single most meaningful spiritual practices, twenty-nine percent (29%) began during formation or after ordination. The "self-emptying" category decreases with the most meaningful practices and there is wider distribution of practices among all of the characteristics, particularly service.

Another difference between the single most frequent and most meaningful practices is the importance of adult experience among the most meaningful practices. Marriage and family life becomes a greater influence, as well as the impact of revitalization experiences. Childhood formation is still a major factor for most meaningful practices but is much less influential than it is for most frequent practices.

An emphasis on particular spiritual characteristics is found at different stages of the life cycle. "Communion" related responses focus around "marriage" and "child rearing" under most frequent. A slightly broader range is found under most meaningful with a larger proportion of the responses, particularly with regard to marriage. The self-emptying responses focus on "childhood", "long term practice" and "deacon formation" under most frequent practices. This is understandable as self-emptying responses are most often prayer forms. We saw earlier that prayer related spiritual practices often began in childhood under the influence of parents. Deacon formation is where the Liturgy of the Hours becomes a regular practice for many respondents. A similar range of responses is

maintained for most meaningful but the proportion of responses for every category under this heading is much less.

The "service" responses for most frequent practices show the greatest emphasis on long term practices, followed by "ordination" and "formation". Under most meaningful practice the range of responses does not change but the distribution does. While "long term practices" are still important, the majority of responses in this category are related to deacon "formation" or "ordination". In addition, "service" represents a larger part of the most meaningful responses when compared to most frequent. This is understandable, as formation prepares the candidate for ministry and ordination opens the door. Formation and ordination bring a conscious awareness of service as an important element of both the spiritual life and one's diaconal identity.

None of the responses to the single most frequent practice were assigned to "self-transcendent". The most meaningful practice shows a few "self-transcendent" responses widely distributed among the categories. As noted earlier, responses are grouped under "self-transcendence" when growth in knowledge or skill is the immediate intended goal. Examples of this category include spiritual reading, reading theology, receive spiritual direction, study and reflect on Scripture. It is not surprising to see none of these practices listed as most frequent. Given well established history of various prayer forms in the lives of many respondents and the obligatory character of the Liturgy of the Hours, as well as the demands of family life and ministerial service, the more self-nurturing character of self-transcendent type practices may be perceived as a lower priority. That these types of spiritual practices show up under most meaningful is also understandable, as they are likely to be engaging practices precisely because of their nurturing qualities.

Overall, the results suggest that aspirants come into deacon formation programs with well established prayer lives and an appreciation of home and family as a context for spiritual growth. While family related spiritual practices may not be their most frequent disciplines, they are meaningful. The greatest impact of deacon formation and ordination appears to be the introduction of the Liturgy of the Hours as a regular spiritual practice and the development of service ministry as a spiritual practice. While service was already a long term practice for some, formation increases its meaningfulness as a spiritual practice for this group and introduces it as a spiritual practice to others.

*Contexts*

The impact of the spiritual practices reported on marriage and ministry are considered under the topic of spiritual dynamics above. While spiritual practices impact the context in which they occur, the context also influences the respondent's spiritual practices and perception of their lived spirituality.

Marriage

The survey instrument asks the respondents to describe the impact of marriage on their spiritual life. While there is a relatively broad range of response categories, two categories are the major foci for the responses; "spirituality and marriage as integral", as well as the "marriage as sacramental". These two categories account for slightly less than half of the responses (46%).

The largest category is "spirituality and marriage as integral". Responses focus on the mutual support that exists between marriage and the spiritual life of the respondents.

For example, the spouse is described as a spiritual companion or the deacon describes his first priority as ministering to his wife. Marriage is seen as helping the diaconal couple to be more attuned to each other's spiritual needs. Several responses simply describe the two categories as integral.

| Table 22- Perceived Impact of Marriage on Spiritual Life | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Spirituality & Marriage Integral | .34 | .19 | .48 | .34 |
| Marriage as "school of love" | .14 | | .11 | .13 |
| Marriage as foundation for ministry | .23 | | .07 | .15 |
| Spouse as means of accountability | | | .15 | .15 |
| Marriage as sacramental | .20 | .44 | .07 | .24 |
| Personal growth | .06 | .13 | | .09 |
| Positive | .03 | .19 | .11 | .11 |
| None | | .06 | | .06 |

The second largest category focuses on marriage as sacrament. "Sacrament" refers to marriage as a place of encounter with God, rather than as a liturgical rite or social role. The spirituality and goodness of one's mate is seen as an affirmation of the marriage and motivation for one's own efforts. The relationship with one's spouse is seen as an icon of one's relationship with God. The spouse is experienced as an embodiment of God's love.

These two categories are the most theological. That these two categories account for almost half of the responses appears to be a function of participation in the formation program. Deacons and their wives are better able to interpret their marital relationship in terms of theological concepts as a result of formation. Thus, when asked to reflect on the impact of marriage on their spiritual lives, they do so through the lens of their theological education.

The remaining categories tend to reflect psychological or practical considerations and are consistent in their positive appraisal of the impact of marriage on their spiritual

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life. Marriage is seen as a "foundation for ministry" by providing emotional and spiritual support, as well as through the team ministry of the diaconal couple. One's spouse is seen as a person who calls you to account in the spiritual life, encouraging the respondent to live his or her faith.

St. Benedict describes the monastery as a school of charity, as it provides a setting where the lessons of love are learned. The next category of responses views "marriage as a school of love". It describes how the give and take of married life teaches love. "Personal growth" focuses on marriage as helping the respondent to be a better person. "Positive" refers to positive but unexplained responses to the question. Respondents not answering the question were not included in the analysis. Thus, "none" refers to responses were no impact was reported.

Comparing the impact of spiritual practices on marriage with the impact of marriage on the spiritual life, marriage appears to exert a greater influence on the spiritual life than the specific spiritual practices reported exert on marriage. The largest category among those describing the impact of spiritual practices on marriage simply reports an unspecified positive influence. The other categories are broad as well. It seems that many respondents struggle to identify a specific impact upon their marriage from Mass attendance, the Liturgy of the Hours, or even taking the Eucharist to the sick. However, when considering the influence of marriage on the spiritual life, the responses are detailed and the impact clear.

Ministry

The other major context for diaconal spirituality is ministry. The survey inquires about the impact of their experience of ministry upon their spiritual life. There is a fairly

broad range of categories, with two much larger than the others. The categories include "ministry as deepening spirituality" and "ministry as an expression of faith".

Ministry is seen as deepening one's spirituality because it provides a focus for the spiritual life, as well as leading to wider opportunities to experience one's faith and to share it with others. Some describe it as a source of energy for one's spiritual life. Some report a perception of God's presence and guiding hand as they minister. Others see ministry as calling them to a higher standard or sacramentalizing their lives, as they have become the face of the Church for those to whom they minister.

| *Table 23- Perceived Impact of Ministry on Spiritual Life* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Erie | Cleveland | Deacon-L | Average |
| Deepens Spirituality | .22 | .44 | .36 | .34 |
| Integral | .13 | .13 | .04 | .10 |
| Affective | .17 | | | .17 |
| Expression of faith | .26 | .31 | .36 | .31 |
| Challenging | .22 | | | .22 |
| Personal growth | | | .11 | .11 |
| Positive | | .13 | .07 | .10 |
| None | | | .07 | .07 |

Only slightly less common are responses pointing to ministry as an expression of faith. These responses tend to focus on the service aspect of ministry; humbly meeting the needs of others. Reference is made to a spirituality of service, with one's focus on the community rather than oneself.

Another category describes the "challenges" that ministry presents to the respondents. These challenges are not seen as opposing spiritual growth but rather as motivators for further growth. The respondent is stretched in order to be open to the needs of others. The respondent is faced with good times and bad, even finding poor health a challenge to his ability to minister but also a spur to spiritual growth.

The remaining categories include "affective responses", "ministry and the spiritual life as integral" and the categories of "personal growth", "positive" and "none". Responses describing the impact of ministry in terms of the respondents' feelings are grouped under "affective responses". A few in each respondent group simply describe ministry and the spiritual as integral, with no explanation. These responses are grouped under the heading of "integral". The "none" category under ministry also includes a response which sees ministry as a distraction from the spiritual life, as well as a respondent who sees no impact from ministry on the spiritual life. While these "none" responses represent a very small portion of the respondents, they suggest either a poor understanding of the nature of diaconal ministry or a fragmented spiritual life.

Marriage and ministry are seen as integral with the experience of diaconal spirituality for the majority of respondents. There is a close and mutually supportive relationship between ministry and the spiritual life for most respondents. Whether they focus on the spiritual or service aspects of diaconal ministry, it is clear that for the deacon ministry can not be separated from his spiritual life. This same relationship is apparent regarding the impact of marriage on the spiritual life.

### *Resources*

Spiritual direction

Spiritual direction is a basic spiritual practice required of all deacons by the Holy See. Most of the deacons report having a spiritual director, except for a few who are in between spiritual directors due to moving or health problems with their spiritual directors. Most of the wives do not have spiritual directors. Those wives who have

spiritual directors tend to have been in spiritual direction long before deacon formation. One of the wives feels abandoned by her former spiritual director and reports the desire to be in spiritual direction again. She also perceives little help from the Diocesan Deacon Office in obtaining a new spiritual director. A key informant reports that the Deacon Office does provide assistance in identifying new spiritual directors for deacons and their wives. So, this may be an issue of poor communication or misunderstanding.

The survey responses suggest three broad categories for understanding the purpose of spiritual direction. The most common understanding deals with keeping the directee honest. In this role the spiritual director is perceived as a means of accountability. The director monitors the deacon's prayer life and provides challenge to keep the him growing. This category accounts for 52% of the responses.

The next most common category views the spiritual director as a guide who helps the deacon make sense of life. This is primarily a function of helping the deacon discern God's presence and influence in his life. It is opening the deacon's eyes to a spiritual perspective. This category accounts for 28% of the responses.

The last category (20%), views the spiritual director as a resource for growth and a provider of spiritual support. The spiritual director is seen as a confidence builder.

Deacon formation

While the survey instrument does not include a question dealing directly with deacon formation, many responses touch on the formation experience. Responses related to deacon formation are grouped into four distinct categories. These categories are: "contemplative prayer", "promoting spiritual development", "keeping formation

relevant", and the "structure of formation". These categories are echoed in the focus group discussion held after the survey phase of the research.

The most populated category is "keeping formation relevant". The focus is on providing deacons and their wives with a spiritual formation that can spill over into ministry. Relevancy is divided into two lesser categories; "promoting the marriage relationship" and addressing "family spirituality" as part of formation.

One category addresses the importance of communication and interpersonal skills. A deacon reports that formation helped to develop mutual appreciation between himself and his wife. The wife notes that this goal is served in part by attending classes with her husband. Another wife speaks of the time spent on the long drive into classes as an opportunity to communicate. The communication is perceived as beneficial to their marriage.

The family spirituality category expresses concern for the spiritual formation of their children as part of the process. It also speaks to the fact that formation encourages an appreciation of the need to communicate. However, in making use of this appreciation for open communication, a few wives expressed anger at being "dragged" into the formation program because of their husband's interest.

The next most common category deals with "promoting spiritual development". These responses break down into two sub-categories. The first sees the goal of spiritual formation as introductory. Expectations of what the deacon could contribute in the parish are minimal, primarily to be a witness to the faith. Practical instruction, as a result, focuses on teaching basic spiritual practices. The second sub-category focuses on deepening earlier insights. The related responses focus on developing participants who

are men of faith and prayer. Even more important is to inculcate a new vision of Church and prayer.

This is an important distinction, as the practical consequences of each sub-category are quite different for how spiritual formation is carried out. The first views formation as planting a new seed in the participants and helping it germinate. The second view of formation deals more with nurturing and helping to shape a plant that is already well established and fruitful.

The category dealing with contemplation was the smallest. It noted that exposure to contemplative skills is an important consideration in structuring the spiritual formation of deacons. The other entries refer to an attempt to provide a contemplative atmosphere at deacon retreats and the difficulty that some candidates and deacons have with this.

*Summary of findings*

Core Categories

Grounded Theory Methodology involves several levels of coding. Conceptual coding organizes the raw data into a wide range of categories. Axial coding occurs when conceptual codes are grouped at a higher level of abstraction. Selective coding occurs when the axial code categories are categorized at a higher level of abstraction for the purpose of identifying the central phenomenon around which all other categories are organized.

The analysis in this chapter focuses on identifying axial categories. In order to bring the analysis to conclusion, it is necessary to identify the central phenomenon and its immediately related categories. The axial codes emerging from our analysis are organized

into code networks (see Appendix A), which produce the core categories presented in Figure 1.
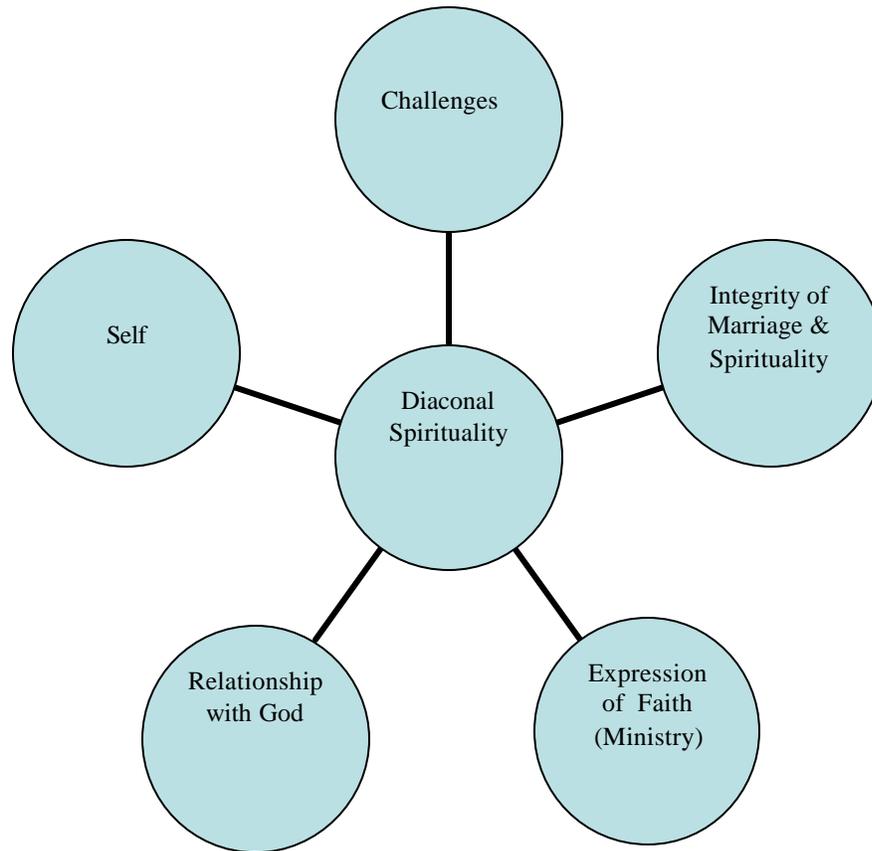


*Figure 2. Core Concepts: The Experience of Diaconal Spirituality*

The axial codes are organized into five core phenomena. Each of the core categories is dense, with many links among the core categories which integrate them into a conceptual profile of the lived experience of diaconal spirituality.

"Relationship with God" is identified with a deeper spiritual life, the basic components of which are the nurturance of the divine-human relationship and the nurturance of relationships with people. The major components of nurturing the divine-

human relationship are the traditional disciplines of prayer, reflection, Scripture, Liturgy, spiritual direction and various devotional practices. Affective experience is part of the process. Relationships with people also include an affective component in the experience of communion with others, with communication among everyone being an important means of maintaining relationship. Three groups of people are identified in this context: co-ministers, persons served and the parish community. These three contexts also have linkages to ministry.

"Ministry" is a primary category describing the expression of one's faith and inner life in action. The largest sub-category under ministry relates to ministerial settings, the largest of which is sacred places, followed by the home and workplace. A variety of other settings are also identified.

This core category has links to other core categories. The "relationship with God" category has already been mentioned. There are multiple links with the "marriage" category as well. Both home and work link the two core categories, as does the category of "marriage as a foundation for diaconal ministry". There is also a link to the core category of "self", through the image of the "wounded healer". This image links the person exercising ministry with "being an image of God" in the "self" core category.

The primary sub-category of the "marriage" core category is "sacramental character of marriage". The major related axial codes in this category are "marriage as a school of love" and "spouse as a means of accountability". "Togetherness", along with "family and home", is included in this grouping. As noted above, there are multiple links between "marriage" and "ministry".

"Challenge" is inherent in any form of spirituality. The data reflect this reality in reporting the difficulty respondent's have in being faithful to their spiritual practices, as

well as the struggle inherent in life. This core category has two major sub-categories: "difficulties" and "cares of life". "Difficulties" includes those obstacles which are external to the person, such as distractions, conflicting schedules and commitments, or breaks in the routine. "Cares of life" relates to more internal issues such as personal failings, one's life condition, transitions, role conflicts, and expectations. This sub-category is also linked to the "self" core category, reflecting the reciprocal relationship between one's self concept and one's cares in life.

"Growth" and "icon/image of God" are the two major sub-categories, under the core category of "self". As a sub-category, "growth" includes personal, spiritual and relational development. Relational development links both to "marriage" and "ministry". Under "growth", the axial codes of "integrity of life", "generativity", and "icon/image of God" are found. Under "generativity", knowledge and skill development are located. "Growth" and "icon/image of God" are linked, as personal growth for a Christian is greater realization of our nature as an icon or image of the divine. The sub-categories under "icon/image of God" include: "Christ focused", and "wounded healer". "Integrity of life" links "growth" and "icon/image of God".

Process

The discussion of core categories points to the dynamic character of diaconal spirituality as experienced by the respondents. Process is inherent in these categories and must also be considered in our analysis of the data.

The spiritual lives of the majority of respondents are rooted in childhood experience and the example of their parents. Most often this was expressed in daily Mass

attendance. The data shows that family rosary or even the service ministry of the parents also communicated the parents' vital faith to the young respondent.

While the example of parental faith is the critical factor in the spiritual lives of most of the respondents, adult experience is critical for many. Some report a revitalization experience arising from a religious activity, such as a retreat or Cursillo weekend, which moves the respondent from being a nominal to a committed Catholic. Another stimulus for a revitalization experience is tragedy, such as the death of a loved one. The experience causes the respondent to reassess the direction of his or her life, with a deeper and more committed spiritual practice resulting. For some marriage or the birth of a child is the critical life change which opens for them the doors to the sacred.

The marriages of the respondents reflect the normal ups and downs of married life. Yet, they are also marked by long term spiritual practices such as daily Mass, family or couple prayer, and involvement in the lay ministries and devotional life of the parish. Many respondent marriages are characterized by a spirituality which is sensitive to the spiritual richness of married life. Time spent with one's spouse or children is seen as grace filled. Family members are encouraged in group or personal ministries, such as giving gifts or raising funds to assist the needy, hospitality to those in need, and volunteering at local service organizations.

It is common for respondents to perceive their primary employment as a context for service which influences the way they interact with people. This is especially obvious where the type of employment is service related, such as in law enforcement, youth programs, social work, teaching or nursing, as well as the practice of law or medicine.

Thus, for most respondents, the spiritual life is not limited to prayer and the traditional ascetic disciplines but integrates within it family life, the work setting, civic

and social life, as well as an active participation in the parish community. This is done by seeing all of these contexts as opportunities for service, compassion and places of encounter with Christ.

By the time the respondents apply for acceptance as aspirants in a deacon formation program their lives manifest a well formed family spirituality that is fruitful for both themselves and their community. It has been tested also through the experience of grief and loss; as with the death of loved ones, the loss of employment, or health problems.

Deacon formation introduces several developments into the spiritual lives of the candidates. Theological education expands their symbolic networks and gives them new ways to interpret their experience. They are instructed in the Liturgy of the Hours and other prayer forms with which they may not be familiar. They are introduced to the diaconal community, which becomes a support for their spiritual lives and ministry. While already active in serving their parish, formation programs expand the range of perceived need and ministry to which they are exposed. Going through the formation experience together is also a marriage enrichment experience, as reported by several respondents.

The experience of diaconal ministry results in a further enrichment of the respondents' spiritual life. For the deacons, ministries usually restricted to church leadership are now open to them; such as preaching, leading study or prayer groups, as well as chaplain assignments in hospitals, nursing homes, colleges and prisons. The new level of responsibility and the need to pray, study and reflect in order to accomplish these ministries is a healthy challenge to the deacon and seen as an important aid to his spiritual life. While ministry has been perceived as a meaningful spiritual practice by many, even

prior to ordination, with ordination the proportion of respondents sharing this perception expands considerably.

The response of the wives is more complicated. The range of involvement in ministry is broad. The couple may share in team ministry, as with co-leading a Bible study group. Each person may have his or her own church based ministry, as with the deacon preaching and the wife serving as Eucharistic Minister. A deacon may serve as chaplain for a nursing home and the wife teach CCD or take the Eucharist to elderly parishioners in their homes. Wives may focus their efforts on raising the children or pursuing their own careers, though they often report seeing these activities as forms of ministry. A wife who stays home to raise the children sees this as part of her support for the husband's ministry. Several wives who pursue careers report that the understanding and attitudes they bring from deacon formation transforms job duties into ministry. There also appears to be variation in the wives' level of involvement over the years, often reflecting the outside commitments and health of the wife.

While level of involvement in ministry may vary, the wives show little difference in their commitment to meaningful spiritual practices.[128] Many respondents see the family spiritual practices established over the years of their marriage becoming an important support for their ministerial activities. Couples pray the Liturgy of the Hours or spend time in meditation together in the morning as a preparation for ministry or at night bringing before the Lord in prayer those to whom they ministered that day.

Intervening variables are of concern in describing the process of a phenomenon using Grounded Theory Methodology. These are factors which impact upon the

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[128] A caveat must be added to this conclusion, as the sample of deacon's wives is drawn primarily from the Erie respondents. Though overall the Erie respondents are fairly consistent with the other deacon groups and have been considered in drawing all of the general conclusions of this study.

respondents and cause variation in the process. This is a serious consideration given the prominence of "challenges" among the core categories. As noted in the previous section, the challenges faced by the respondents are both internal and external. There is the challenge of adjusting to new expectations, one's own and those of others, as well as maintaining a balance between ministry, employment, and family life. Developing a sense of confidence and competence in the accomplishment of one's diaconal ministry is a common challenge.

Some respondents experience resistance. This can be an internal difficulty in keeping up with the Liturgy of the Hours after ordination. One deacon explains that while praying the Liturgy of the Hours was relatively easy before ordination, once it became obligatory he found it difficult. The resistance can also be external resistance, with refusal by others to acknowledge the diaconal role. This may result in the loss of friends who can not adjust to the new role, or co-ministers who treat the new deacon as an outsider.

While these challenges may be frustrating they call forth the grace of the Holy Spirit in the respondent to persevere and to grow. In most cases such challenges are acknowledged as integral to the spiritual growth of the respondent. As already noted, in a few cases, the way challenges are perceived suggests potential for fragmentation.

Several sources appear to assist the respondents in dealing with the challenges that come onto their lives. Prayer and the performance of ministry are reported as sources of strength and encouragement in facing challenges. The spouse is also seen as a source of stability and encouragement in maintaining spiritual practices and facing problems. It is common for deacons to discuss their ministries and challenges with one another, as well as with their wives.  Many respondents speak positively of opportunities to develop

greater skill in the exercise of ministry. One potential source of support is the diaconal community, though the population of deacons appears sufficiently dispersed that maintaining a strong sense of community after ordination is a challenge in itself. While there are pockets of mutual peer support, it is more common to hear wistful comments about the close community experience enjoyed during formation.

### *A methodological consideration*

One of the potential dangers of grounded theory methodology is susceptibility to the logical fallacy of misplaced concreteness. This fallacy involves the expectations of the researcher being substituted for reality and then being treated is if it is the reality. The process of coding and organizing the codes into axial categories relies heavily upon the perceptions and interpretations of the researcher. Thus, they are susceptible to subjective bias. To correct for this susceptibility, the conclusions reached must be validated. Several points argue for the validity of the conclusions reached in this study.

One approach is to include several communities of deacons among the respondent population. Consistency in the survey responses across the subject groups is one measure of validity. This study includes three different deacon communities and monitors the consistency of responses throughout the analysis. The results show an overall consistency in responses across the groups, with variation in response to particular questions usually reflective of the dominant age and current family configuration of the respondent group.

Another approach taken in this study makes use of focus groups to provide feedback. Two focus group sessions were held with members of the Erie deacon community, in addition to interviews and written feedback from key informants and Deacon-L members. The feedback is in response to a summary of the findings. The

responses by deacons consistently reported that the conclusions reached resonated with their experience of formation, the diaconate and marriage. The core categories were perceived as particularly accurate.

Focus group feedback raised a concern about possible skewedness in the respondent sample, as those who responded would tend to be the most highly motivated deacons and wives of deacons. It was felt that this might be most influential with the deacon's wives' data, as the number of female respondents was small. They also felt that there might be more frustration among the wives than the results suggest.[129]

The importance of a family spirituality focus for at least part of the spiritual formation process, as discussed in the next chapter, was well received by formators, as well as deacons and their wives. The deacons and wives in the focus group were particularly interested in the mentoring process, also discussed in the next chapter, as an element of the spiritual formation of participants in deacon formation programs.

Formators report that candidates bring a wealth of experience in the practical spiritual disciplines into formation, however there is a deficit regarding the mental disciplines (contemplation and reflection). This perception is understandable as marital spirituality, with its focus on care-giving, tends toward the practical spiritual disciplines. However, effective public ministry requires substantial reliance upon the mental spiritual disciplines as well. Thus, the mental disciplines are an important component of the spiritual formation of deacons.

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[129] The focus group participants were working from a ten page overview of the research and an hour long presentation of the findings. While this paper touches on the issue of tension in the discussion of obstacles earlier in this chapter, the summary presentations may not have made this element of the survey results clear enough.

It appears that the study results strike a deep resonance with focus group members and key informants. While caveats are offered they are not inconsistent with the findings but rather contribute to a nuanced interpretation of the data.

*Conclusion*

The primary thesis explored in this study is that the spirituality of the deacon/diaconal couple is significantly influenced by both marriage and ordained ministry. The analysis describes a significant impact of marriage upon the spirituality of the diaconal couple. While somewhat less in its overall impact than marriage, ministry also exerts a powerful influence over the reported spiritual practices and the self-perception of the respondents' spirituality.

The survey results show a generally positive impact of spiritual practices upon the marriage and ministry of the respondents. This offers some affirmation for the first thesis related presumption that both marriage and ministry benefit from their mutual influence on the spirituality of the diaconal couple

Aspirants and their wives come into deacon formation with a well established and usually well balanced family spirituality. This is not surprising, as on average the deacons have more than twenty-four years of experience in developing a functional marital and family spirituality by the time they are ordained.

Among the respondents, all of whom have been through formation and have served in diaconal ministry for several years, spiritual practices show characteristics of communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence. These spiritual practices often have their beginning in childhood under the influence of their parents. To a lesser extent, some adult revitalization experience influence and nourish their spiritual lives.

This is a spirituality shaped by participation in the Eucharist and other sacraments. It is shaped as well by active involvement in the parish, a homelife that gives flesh to their beliefs, as well as attempting to provide a spiritually nourishing environment for themselves and their children. In essence, it is a balanced Christian family spirituality.

It is a spirituality that is appropriate to the lifestyle of the deacons and their wives. It is expansive; that is, its moves beyond the limits of the family and is of service to the broader community. Further, it is a spirituality that has been tested in the crucible of pain and suffering, grief and loss. It is open to ministry as a family or a diaconal couple but it also respects the different callings of the husband and wife, as well as their different approaches to ministry. It is a living spirituality that is subject to the roller coaster ride that life can be at times; able to adapt and change as needed, yet rooted firmly in faith.

It is a mid-life spirituality. As noted in the description of the study population, the average age of the respondents is fifty-five and their age at ordination is forty-six. This is similar to the national average for deacons which is fifty-nine; well into the mid-life transition documented by developmental psychologists.[130]

Mid-life spirituality is characterized by a fundamental spiritual reorientation, which is more inner-directed and concerned with the integration of the disparate elements of one's life.[131] Characteristic of this stage of development is a concern for generativity, which is amply demonstrated in the rich family life and abundant service characteristic of deacons and their wives. The mid-life years are a period of time when the drive for

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[130] Committee on the Permanent Diaconate, *A National Study on the Permanent Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States: 1994-1995*, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, DC, 1996, p.2.

[131] Janice Brewi and Anne Brennan, *Celebrate Mid-life..*, 57-59.

integrity and authenticity becomes more urgent, which is reflected in the choice of ministry as a means of generativity.

Formation for diaconal ministry is not the task of grafting a new branch into the spiritual life of the deacon candidate; but rather nurturing and guiding their natural spiritual development as the aspirants/candidates and their wives are exposed to a broader context of service and gain experience in the use of contemplation and reflection. The implication is that formation works best when the candidates are helped to recognize the treasure they already have and are given the skills to effectively use their gifts in a broader and more formal context of service.

This chapter affirms the thesis that the spirituality of the deacon/diaconal couple is significantly influenced by the contexts of Christian marriage and ordained ministry. Similarly, a positive impact for spiritual practices upon the marriage and ministry of the respondents is noted. Thus, the primary thesis and the related first presumption are addressed through the survey data. The second presumption is considered in Chapter Five.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# PASTORAL REFLECTION

*Introduction*

In this chapter we consider some of the theological and practical implications of the survey results. These implications speak to the presumption that the mutual influence of marriage and ministry on diaconal spirituality offers a unique contribution to the greater Church community. Finally, a brief evaluation of the research and its ramifications for those in ministry is offered.

*Theological Implications*

What is diaconal spirituality?

Chapter Two considers a working definition of diaconal spirituality. That definition describes Christian spirituality as our response of love to the Divine Mystery in the context in which we find ourselves. Love is characterized by communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence. It is the interrelationship in a person of these four characteristics that gives flesh to the Trinitarian and Incarnational nature of Christian Spirituality. Diaconal spirituality is a particular expression of Christian spirituality which is realized within the contexts of a deacon's life. These contexts are diaconal ministry and, for most deacons, marriage and family life.

There are several presumptions upon which this definition is built. The first is that

Christian spirituality is characterized by communion, self-emptying, service and self-

transcendence. This is considered at length in Chapter Two. Analysis of the survey data

in Chapter Four is consistent with this understanding. The second presumption is that

Christian spirituality necessarily has a vertical and horizontal dimension. We will

consider this next. The third presumption is that one can speak meaningfully of diaconal

spirituality only as a variation within Christian spirituality due to the contexts in which it

is realized. This holds for any school, movement and or type of Christian spirituality.

Thus, diaconal spirituality is Christian spirituality lived by deacons and their wives. This

was discussed in Chapter Two but will also be considered here relative to ministry.

In most published works on spirituality, and diaconal spirituality in particular, the

emphasis is on the vertical dimension; that is, one's encounter with God. The spiritual

practices suggested are almost always traditional forms of prayer. Reference is made to

the horizontal dimension but as a setting for the expression of the fruits of one's prayer

life. The presumption is that an abundant prayer life results in a good deacon. [132] While

not denying the importance of a rich prayer life, is this the only critical element of a vital

spirituality?

Jesus gives us, as an example of virtue, a Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Since the

Jews of Jesus' time perceived Samaritans as particularly loathsome because of their

heretical forms of worship, it is clear that the Samaritan is not considered "good" because

of his rich prayer life. The description of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 makes

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[132] Edward Yarnold, "The Theology of Christian Spirituality." In *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Chesylin Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 9-16. Phylis Zagano, *Called to Serve: A Spirituality for Deacons* (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 2004). Owen Cummings, *Deacons and the Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 83-93.

no distinction between the saved and the lost based on their prayer lives. Rather, the only distinction that determines the saved from the lost is whether they care for those in need through their actions. Many other Scriptural references can be offered. The point is, without creating a long a list of proof texts, for the New Testament writers the horizontal dimension, consideration of one's neighbor, is critical to Christian spirituality. Even the contemporary authors cited in Chapter Two argue that spirituality is as much concerned with the horizontal as it is with the vertical. "Any authentic spirituality by revealing to us God's action in our lives, also discloses our truest identity; we 'find' ourselves in our relationships with God and one another."[133] This is a logical implication of the Trinitarian and Incarnational character of Christian spirituality, as described in the *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*.

The blending of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of spirituality is apparent in the survey responses. Respondents view ministry as the fruit of their relationship with God. When they describe those spiritual practices which are most meaningful to them, the result is a relatively balanced list, including not only the disciplines of contemplation and reflection, as well as traditional prayer forms, but also involvement with their families and a broad range of diaconal ministries.

The *munera* of service is a grace that comes with baptismal anointing. Diaconal ordination is not empowerment for new forms of service but is the sacramental acknowledgement of the flowering of the baptismal *munera* of service. Further, it establishes persons as icons of Christian service for which all the faithful are empowered because of their baptism.

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[133] Gaillardetz, *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*, 19.

Since service is an essential component of Christian spirituality, is it legitimate then to speak of diaconal spirituality as something distinct from the spirituality of any Christian? For example, is it legitimate to speak of ministerial spirituality *per se*? One can speak of a particular diaconal or priestly context for the realization of one's Christian spirituality, as these offices have a specific character that gives shape to the expression one's spirituality. If nothing else, each is characterized by particular forms of service and specific roles within the Christian community. Ministry, on the other hand, has no unique referent that provides a context for shaping and influencing a person's spirituality. A person is not a minister in some generic sense but is a priest, deacon, minister of the Eucharist, lector or some other specific type of minister. It is possible to speak of a priestly or diaconal spirituality, as well as lector's or cantor's spirituality, to the extent that the specific form of ministry serves as a significant context for the spiritual life of the person.

The survey results suggest that one's spirituality is influenced by the circumstances of one's lifestyle. A broader setting and range of service is seen as the natural flowering of a Christian spirituality that has been nurtured and shaped in the context of family life. Diaconal ministry becomes a setting for the further development and expression of that spirituality.

Integration of Marriage and Ordained Ministry

A common theme throughout the survey responses is the integration of marriage and ministry. In describing the arch of their life story, both deacons and their wives view diaconal ministry as a development within the larger story of their married life. Diaconal formation, ordination and ministry are important developments but not a radical break

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from the past. What tends to be identified as triggering major transformations in life are family related developments; birth, death of loved ones, marriage of children and change of jobs. The deacon may be in full-time ministry and speak highly of the importance of diaconal ministry to his sense of self, yet his overarching identity and commitment is that of father and husband.

The perception that diaconal ministry is a development within the larger story of one's marriage is corroborated by the understanding of diaconal spirituality that emerges from analysis of the survey responses. As we have seen, ministry is integral to the life of a deacon and his wife long before deacon ordination. It finds expression in their nurturance and care for each other, their children, their parish and their community. Ordination does not bring into existence a deacon, as much as sacramentalize and set before the community baptismal diaconal service that has flowered in the context of marriage and family life.

The role of formation is to help the baptismal family based service of the aspirant take root in the context of ordained ministry. This is done through the development of competencies appropriate to the new context. This includes not only practical skills but the nurturing of the contemplative and reflective spiritual disciplines critical to effective diaconal ministry but often not well developed in the more practical demands of family life.

Diaconal ministry takes a wide variety of forms. In most cases formal ministry is undertaken by the deacon alone. Though, even when the deacon is serving as chaplain for a nursing home or prison, it is common for the wives to report that they now perceive their professional or child care duties as a form of ministry. While they may not be acting as a public agent of the Church, their child care duties supports their husband's formal

ministry and their professional duties are approached with an attitude of compassionate service. In smaller communities the fact that she and her husband are a diaconal couple is public knowledge; *de facto,* if not *de jure,* this makes her a representative of the Church.

It is common for wives to have their own formal ministries, exercising gifts which may be different from those of their husbands. Wives teach CCD, visit the sick, lead prayer groups and serve on parish and diocesan committees.

While the exception, it is not uncommon for the deacon and his wife to serve as a ministerial team. Some deacons have even involved their children in ministry along with their wives. Examples include bringing the family along when visiting parishioners in assigned nursing homes or assisting at a homeless shelter as a family. The active participation of the deacon's wife and children in a Eucharist at which he is ministering is also a relatively common experience of the deacon's family.

There is an obvious benefit for the Church arising from diaconal marriages. The Church gains not only the ministerial witness of the husband but often that of the wife as well: in some cases, the witness extends to the entire family. It is not only that a Christian family is performing some kindness but that through the diaconal couple the Church is reaching out in a concrete way to those helped, visited or cared for.

The survey data suggest that diaconal ministry has a positive effect on marriage. The deacon is seen as more sensitive to others' feelings as a result of diaconal service. Participation in the formation program is seen as providing a greater range of resources to support the couple's spiritual development. Greater spiritual development appears to support growth in marriage satisfaction as well.

Iconic Deacon and Normative *Communitas*

In Chapter Two normative *communitas* was described as those aspects of an organization which provide the possibility for people to experience an "I-Thou" relationship within an organizational structure. Normative *communitas* brings opposites together, facilitating solidarity.

The marital/familial context in which most deacons find themselves provides ways in which the deacon can be viewed as an intermediary. The deacon is a natural intermediary between the married laity and the celibate hierarchy. Further, the deacon offers the possibility of symbolic normative *communitas* relative to Christian marriage and family life; pointing to the *communitas* values of Christian marriage and calling people to conversion by living those values. This is supported by the strong role that family plays in the spirituality of deacons, as indicated by the survey data.

This finds expression in the range of family oriented ministry, from marriage preparation to mentoring young couples. Properly trained deacons and deacon couples bring insight to pastoral counselling and spiritual direction. Marriage enrichment and family life programs, such as Marriage Encounter or the Family Life Movement, benefit from the ministry of deacon couples.

Ultimately, however, the most valuable ministry a deacon couple can provide is the ministry of presence. The deacon couple is a witness to the grace and challenges of marital commitment. Their marital commitment becomes a call to conversion for others in the community. Their loving concern for their children becomes a witness to the community for generativity, both moral and physical. This is suggested in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8-13), where the witness of one's marriage and children is a consideration in choosing deacons.

It is not so much what they can do, as what they are and what they symbolize. Ideally, any husband and wife is a sacramental sign by their love for each other of God's love for us in Christ. The deacon is a sacramental sign of the servant love of Christ and his Church. Both marriage and orders are sacramental signs, and involve a life of sacred visibility before others. As a married man, the deacon is part of a publicly witnessing couple; as an ordained minister, he is a public witness in communion with others. Both ministry and marriage are calls to love. It is the same deep mystery at the heart of both sacraments that binds them together: the mystery of Christ and his divine love.[134]

The survey data reveals that deacon couples do provide a public witness to the sanctity of sacramental marriage. The couples are aware of this public witness and it influences their lives.

One of the insights that come with marriage is that there is no perfect marriage; an insight acknowledged in the survey data. It is a graced covenant that challenges the couple from the beginning. Further, grace is not a spiritual vitamin that turns the recipient into a "super Christian". Karl Rahner spoke of grace as "equipping a person to direct his or her gaze away from self, to serve one's neighbor."[135] Whether speaking of marriage or orders, grace does not ensure perfection.

A danger is that in attempting to live up to some model of familial perfection, the normal, less than perfect family may feel unacceptable to the Church. This leads to covering their pain and brokenness in order to present the appearance of an ideal Christian family. It is at this point that real spiritual growth is paralysed.[136] Several studies of Protestant married clergy report that unrealistic expectations of the clergy

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[134] Michael Evans, "To Foster Closeness," *Deacon Digest*, January/February, 1996.

[135] Susan Wood, *Sacramental Orders* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 182.

[136] Marjorie Thompson, *Family, the Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1989), 26.

family, by either the congregation or the couple themselves, add stress to their marriage.[137]

The deacon couple offers an example of real people attempting to live out the sacrament of marriage with all of its ups and downs. Their witness is not of perfection but of believers committed to their marital vows and willing to undergo the self-transcending paschal mystery of life-death-resurrection that is inherent in marriage. The witness of their struggles frees those around them to admit their own imperfection, then to seek healing from God in the nurturing community of the Church. The deacon couple is not only an example of two people committed to their marital vows but, through the iconic character of ordination that marks the husband and the marriage, their finite marital union points to the infinite.[138]

A common theme among those writing on marital theology and the spirituality of marriage is that the preoccupation of the hierarchical Church with celibacy makes it difficult to credibly proclaim the fullness of the Good News in regard to marriage.[139] The diaconate offers a unique opportunity for the Church to proclaim the Good News as it applies to marriage in a credible manner through the living witness of diaconal families.

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[137]Michael Lane Morris and Priscilla White Blanton, "Denominational Perceptions of Stress and the Provision of Support Services for Clergy Families," *Pastoral Psychology* 42, no. 5 (1994).

[138] Jay Kesler, *Being Holy Being Human: Dealing with the Incredible Expectations and Pressures of Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers for Christianity Today, Inc., 1988), 21-22. Jay Kessler makes a similar point with regard to pastors and others in Christian leadership roles. There is danger that self-expectation and congregation expectations make Christian leaders into plaster statue saints. The leader avoids this by being honest with himself and the congregation. The sign value is in the willingness to keep up the struggle.

[139] William P. Roberts, "Toward a Post-Vatican II Spirituality of Marriage." In *Christian Marriage and Family: Contemporary Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts (Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 132.

Between Worlds

I have spoken of the fundamental congruence of family life and ministry. The "being-for" of family life naturally overflows into a "being-for" in the broader contexts of parish and community. Yet, ministry can be in contention with marriage and family life, especially around the issue of the minister's presence to his wife and children.

Respondents acknowledge this as a potential problem but do not report it as a significant issue. Focus group discussion suggests that this may be one area where there is more a problem than the survey data suggests. The highly motivated survey respondents may have worked out this issue during formation, while others still struggle with the problem.

Rather than stressing the danger of being caught "between worlds", the survey respondents described spiritual practices that engaged spouses and other family members in joint activity. Deacons and their wives often celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours together or engage in other forms of family prayer. There is the perception in many deacons that time spent with children or spouse is a legitimate living out of their spirituality. Also reported were formal ministerial activities, such as leading Bible Study or visiting the sick in which family members actively shared in the ministry. A relatively high level of communication between the diaconal couple was common and reinforced by formation and ministry, so disagreements over schedules and ministry activities were likely to be aired early and not allowed to fester and grow. One deacon describes the role of shared prayer and communication in their marriage.

> Conversing and praying with… (name of wife) is an opportunity to deepen our love relationship with one another. Our conversations have gone from the mundane to the spiritual. They are a means of support, correction, reflection, and appreciation for the love God allows us to share with one another. Our praying together gives us an opportunity to recognize the importance of our third partner, Jesus, in our marriage.

In validation of these results, another survey of a similar subject population reports that while over commitment to ministerial activities and unclear family boundaries can be a problem, most deacon wives report a relatively high level of satisfaction with their husband's ministry, the level of parish support, family quality after ordination, and clergy staff support. This study suggests that high marital satisfaction is maintained through the deacon's personal spirituality and the influence of his training and ministry as it relates to his relationship with his wife.[140]

A Spirituality of Service

Service is the essential characteristic of the diaconal vocation according to many authors, including the Pope. Yet, many other factors play significant roles in the spiritual lives of the respondents. How does service fit into our understanding of diaconal spirituality?

We have seen that service is an essential characteristic of any form of Christian spirituality. It is Christian spirituality made concrete. It is the fruit for our communion and self-emptying, as well as a means of our self-transcendence. As such it is integral with the spirituality of deacons.

Service is the charism of the diaconate, as evangelical poverty is a charism of the Franciscans. It defines our particular witness as Christians and ordained ministers. It is not simply something we do but it is who we are; as persons configured to Christ the Servant through the grace of ordination.

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[140] Mark Latcovich, *The Effects of Ministerial Environment on Roman Catholic Permanent Deacons and their Spouses*, dissertation ed. (Case Western Reserve University, 1996), 118-119, 161-162.

Service/ministry is one of the core categories emerging from the study (see Figure 1) and is integrally linked to all of the other categories, more so than any other category. Service is a characteristic of the spiritual lives of deacons and their wives long before they enter deacon formation. It finds expression and nourishment in their marital and family relationships. It finds expression in their parish and community activities, all of which is graced through ordination.

Service is the substance of diaconal spirituality. Yet, it does not arise fully formed with ordination, like Venus on the half shell. It is integral with a dynamic process and nurtured within the life contexts that contribute to the formation of a deacon from birth to death.

### Practical Implications

We now turn to some practical implications of this study. Our focus is on the application of these findings to (1) ministry assignments (2) support for diaconal couples, and (3) the spiritual formation of deacons. Under spiritual formation we examine initial deacon formation as aspirants/candidates, on-going formation for deacons, and spiritual direction.

Ministerial Assignments

In considering the ministerial assignments of a deacon the focus must be on (1) what ministry is characteristic of the sacramental charism of the diaconate and (2) what ministry is best fulfilled by the particular deacon. For example, presiding over a communion service in the absence of a priest is within the competence of diaconal

ministry but is not characteristic of the sacramental charism of the diaconate. On the other hand, overseeing the operation of a parish "care and concern" ministry is characteristic of the sacramental charism of the diaconate. Assignments most characteristic of the sacramental charism of the diaconate are not only theologically most appropriate but make actual distinctions among the types of ordained ministry clearer to everyone's benefit.

It is not just the professional competence a man can bring to the diaconate which is important. The symbolic value of the deacon's ministry is significant, even if the actual service provided is simple and routine. It is not just the individual deacon providing a service but the Church ministering to human need through the person of the deacon. The deacon becomes an icon pointing beyond his simple ministry to the mystery of God's love and compassion.

Based on the insights offered by this study, it is argued that, while assignments of ministry to the needy and marginal in society are appropriate to the diaconal charism, ministry to couples and families also is particularly appropriate. While the deacon and his family can function as icons pointing to the mystery of God's Trinitarian love in almost any diaconal assignment, this function has greater clarity in ministries that draw upon the marital experience of the deacon or facilitate joint ministry by the deacon and his wife or other family members. Almost any ministerial setting that involves the deacon and his wife or other family member as a ministerial team is of special iconic value.

The effectiveness of the deacon's ministry is enhanced if he is aware of his iconic role and that of his family. A diaconal family unaware of the character and dynamics of the grace inherent in the sacrament of matrimony and realized in the give and take of family life may not be as effective an icon pointing to the Trinity, as a family that is

sensitive to this function. Thus, the diaconal family must be formed in spiritual practices and traditions appropriate to family life. They need to be experts in the spirituality of marriage and family life. Given the careful selection process for most deacon candidates and their families, as well as the nature of the Deacon Perceiver instrument that is commonly used as a screening device, most deacon candidates and their families are *de facto* experts at family spirituality. The spiritual formation process needs to bring the candidates to a conscious awareness and understanding of what they have experienced.

Love between the deacon and his wife is palpable in the survey responses. Many clearly felt their experience was particularly graced and wanted to share it with others. One deacon boasted, "…no marriage is like ours. So I long to help others have what we have." Such love must have a positive impact on those who encounter it.

The idea that clergy couples have an iconic role is not new or limited to Catholic theology. Studies of various Christian denominations and Catholic Churches *sui iuris* show that well intentioned and theologically sophisticated couples can still experience marital difficulties and family problems. The studies show that clergy couples and their children need access to marriage enrichment resources and counselling.[141] These findings appear equally applicable to Catholic Latin Rite deacon couples.

The Spiritual Formation of Deacons

Spiritual formation is an integral part of the total formation of deacon couples. Indeed, the *National Directory for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* makes it clear that spiritual formation is a priority in the integral formation of the deacon.

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[141] Sandra Reed Brown, "Clergy Divorce and Remarriage," *Pastoral Psychology* 30, no. 3 (spring 1982).

Deacons are obligated to give priority to the spiritual life and to live their *diakonia* with generosity. They should integrate their family obligations, professional life, and ministerial responsibilities so as to grow in their commitment to the person and mission of Christ, the Servant. Clerics have a special obligation to seek holiness in their lives "because they are consecrated to God by a new title in the reception of orders as dispensers of God's mysteries in the service of His people."[142]

In light of the findings of this study, how do we translate this vision into the practical reality of a formation program? The Bishop's Conference goes part of the way with an approved a set of standards for the various elements of the formation process, including spiritual formation.[143] The standards identify criteria reflecting a range of competencies that include: human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, and vocational. The human dimension relates to emotional, intellectual, physical and personal limitations, as well as the quality of family life. The spiritual dimension refers to a sense of God's presence in his life and the quality of his prayer life, both personal and communal. The intellectual dimension relates to his ability to understand the theological dimension of his faith. The pastoral dimension relates to his ability to connect the Gospel to the circumstances of daily life. The vocational dimension relates to the person's openness to God's call, particularly through attraction to ministry characteristic of the diaconal vocation. The standards are consistent with the *Basic Norms of Formation for the Permanent Diaconate* published by the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Congregation for Clergy in 1998. Taken together the competencies describe a rich and well balanced diaconal spirituality consistent with the findings of this study. How to apply these standards to the actual formation of deacons is a task the USCCB leaves to individual dioceses.

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[142] *National Directory for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops Publications, 2003), no. 63.

[143] Committee on the Permanent Diaconate, *Model Standards for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Deacons in the United States* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2003).

Spiritual formation is not a matter of teaching spiritual practices or even of inculcating an appreciation for the spiritual. It is a matter of transformation.

> Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, "Abba, as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?" Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands toward heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, "If you will, you can become all flame."[144]

Like Abba Joseph, we seek to be turned to fire. "To be turned to fire, you must act on what you pray; your life must be consistent with the word of God…Being turned into fire, being melted into pure gold, then, has something to do with seeing God in every man and woman, in all created things and being transformed into a person so transparent that others see the flame of God shining through you."[145] Whether assisting in the spiritual formation of aspirants, candidates, deacons or their wives, the most practical application of the results of this research is the awareness that the most a formator can do is be a mid-wife for the transformation that God is working in a person. Yet, being a mid-wife is no small task.

The metaphor of a transformative journey is commonly applied to spiritual formation. The classic literary example of this is the Divine Comedy, in which Dante, having reached a time of unquiet in his life, is taken on a journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. In the process Dante is transformed, ultimately experiencing the Beatific Vision and being returned home a new man.

Spiritual formation is not simply the transfer of instrumental knowledge. It is knowledge for the journey gained by making the journey. It is not just a process of

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[144]*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975; reprint, 1984), 103 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

[145]Mary Lou Kownacki, *The Fire of Peace* (Erie, PA: Pax Christi USA, 2000), 2.

formation in some school of spirituality but is transformation. Spiritual formation is fostered through the help, encouragement and advice of others. It is the development of skills that will enable the person to continue along the way long after any formal program of formation is over.

Integrating the theological reflection offered in Chapter Two and the data analysis offered in Chapter Four, it is possible to identify criteria dealing with spiritual formation that are appropriate to any deacon formation program.

First, the spiritual formation component of any deacon formation program must seek the transformation of the person in formation, as well as enable the person to continue that process throughout his or her life. *Metanoia* is the heart of the Gospel and the means by which a person is capable of experiencing union with Christ. It is a profound change of heart, a transformation of life. It is our initial and continuing response to God's call. Spiritual formation supports this process.

Second, spiritual formation must intentionally build upon the foundation of the aspirant/candidates' spiritual development to date. The spiritual formation of deacon candidates and their wives is not so much a matter of planting seeds, as it is cultivating and nurturing mature plants. Strengths already present should be identified and encouraged; weaknesses should be addressed.

Third, spiritual formation must ensure exposure to and a working familiarity with the basic mental and practical spiritual disciplines. This includes mindfulness (contemplation, *lectio divina*) and discernment (spiritual/theological reflection), as well as exposure to the practical disciplines (a range of prayer forms as well as an appreciation of care-giving and the sacred ordinary). These disciplines are important elements of the

overall spiritual life of a deacon, as well as serving as a foundation for later stages in the formation process.

Fourth, spiritual formation must facilitate an integration of marriage and ministry within the spiritual life of the candidate. This is critical to the spiritual formation of deacons and their wives. If deacon families are to be icons of service for the Christian community, it is helpful if they have a conscious appreciation of the opportunities for spirituality inherent in their marital vocation. St. Francis de Sales said as much four hundred years ago. He argued that "…true devotion is consistent with one's vocation in life and does not run contrary to it but enhances it."[146] This study shows that most deacons and their wives are skilled practitioners of marital and familial spirituality. Helping them to achieve greater cognitive awareness of this allows them to assist other families, as well as to enrich their own spiritual lives. It will also reduce the likelihood of fragmentation by encouraging the use of spiritual disciplines appropriate to their familial context. The family's way of being church must be recognized and honored, especially in the formation of deacons and their wives, the vast majority of whom are married and parents.

Fifth, the spiritual formation of deacons and their wives prepares them for public ministry in the Church. The Church has the right to expect reasonable levels of competency in its ministers. This includes knowledge of the rich spiritual tradition of the Church and more than a passing acquaintance with various spiritual disciplines that are part of that tradition.

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[146] Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. John K. Ryan (Garden City, NY: Doubleday for Image Books, 1966), 44.

Sixth, spiritual formation must address the competencies established by the US Bishop's Conference. These competencies are important not only because they are normative but because their implementation promises a solid and well balanced formation.

Seventh, formation must enable the deacon candidate to support the spiritual formation of others. Deacons, as ordained ministers, share in the pastoral care of the faithful. While the deacon's share is predominately oriented to the ministry of service, that service includes opportunities for the assisting in the spiritual formation of others. Many deacons will have the opportunity through their leadership of prayer groups, through pastoral counselling, RCIA programs and similar ministries to contribute to the spiritual formation of others. Some may even be asked to serve as spiritual directors. Their awareness of the process that has contributed to their own spiritual development is an important foundation for their efforts to assist others.

Elements of Candidate formation

It is not my purpose to evaluate or criticise any existing formation programs. However, given the necessarily transformative character of any spiritual formation program for deacon aspirants or candidates, several elements appropriate to such a program are suggested.

As already stated, spiritual formation is an opportunity for personal transformation and growth into the diaconate. This not only helps the deacon and his wife to become more perfectly configured to Christ, it helps to prepare them for continued spiritual growth following ordination, as well as give them the ability to assist others on their spiritual journeys.

The goal of spiritual formation is not dissimilar from the goal of adult education, and particularly transformative learning theory. Mezirow defines learning as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action.[147] Transformative learning theory assumes that the student brings a great deal of life experience into the learning context. It is the revision or reinterpretation of the meaning of this experience that is the foundation for subsequent learning. The primary elements in this approach to learning are practice, cognition and reflection. Transformative learning happens through the integration of new content with prior experience by means of critical reflection. This appears to be the most appropriate learning model for structuring the spiritual formation of deacons and their wives.

The purpose of the practice component of spiritual formation is to have the candidates participate in the spiritual disciplines which are part of the Catholic tradition. The purpose of the cognitive component is to provide a conceptual knowledge base to help the aspirants reflect on their participation and to provide models that may be helpful to the process of reflection. The role of reflection is to provide the participants with skills and opportunities for a careful examination of their lives, perceptions and assumptions. This is a skill used in the formation and certification of hospital chaplains and in many other pastoral care ministries. It can be a valuable component in the formation of deacons, particularly with regard to the integration of ministry and marriage.

A key focus of spiritual formation must be the development and nurturing of reflective skills in deacon candidates and their wives. If theology is faith seeking

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[147]Jack Mezirow and associates, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990), 1-15.

understanding, then theological reflection has an important place in the spiritual formation of deacons and their wives. The goal of theological reflection is a deeper understanding of our faith, not so much in terms of theological propositions but rather in terms of the circumstances of our lives and ministry.[148]

*Formators*. Throughout history when a person sought spiritual formation the first thing he did was to find a mentor. The mentor did not sit the neophyte down and begin lecturing. Rather, the mentor immersed the neophyte in the spiritual disciplines. Not only was the mentor a guide to the spiritual disciplines but the mentor was an example of what the neophyte wanted to become. Through advice, teaching, shared experience, and conversation the mentor supported the neophyte on the spiritual journey. Eventually the neophyte became capable of continuing the spiritual journey on his or her own, even becoming a mentor to others. This model is reflected in the tales of the Desert Fathers, in the Rule of St. Benedict, in the classic works of St. Francis de Sales, St. Theresa of Avila and St. Ignatius Loyola. Even the RCIA process incorporates this model of spiritual formation.

Mentoring involves a number of tasks. Summarizing a description by Laurent Daloz, these tasks include the following. First, the mentor provides encouragement and support to the protégé, especially in the earlier stages of the journey. Second, the mentor is experienced and knows the territory. Thus, the mentor can guide the protégé on the journey, as well as serve as a concrete manifestation of what the protégé wishes to become. Third, the mentor engenders trust, issues a challenge, and offers a vision for the journey. Making the journey is not a matter of covering ground but transformation; which

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[148] Robert Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 1.

is a necessary element of spiritual formation. The mentor challenges existing perspectives and calls comfortable or simple meanings into question. Fourth, the mentor shares his or her passion for the journey with the protégé. Fifth, the mentor departs as the protégé is able to continue the journey alone.[149]

Mentors function in two worlds, that of the one who is guide for the journey and also the world of the protégés. Mentors are concrete links with a rich tradition in which both the mentor and protégés are grounded. Mentor's are guides offering a developmental map that may be of use to the protégé. New language to describe a recently perceived reality can be provided by the mentor. Finally, the mentor offers a mirror in the form of feedback to expand the protégé's self-awareness.[150]

Mentors can play an important role in the spiritual formation of deacon candidates and their wives. Ordained and experienced deacons and their wives who truly know the territory are natural mentors to groups of aspirants and candidates providing concrete models for the neophytes. Further, they provide a means for an early introduction to and integration with the greater diaconal community. Mentoring groups spread throughout the diocese and meeting during the month between formation weekends also provide a setting for the nurturing of theological reflection and the practice of the experiential component of formation.

The mentor couples do not work in isolation from the deacon formation program, as they are an integral part of it. As part of the regular formation of the deacon candidates, there should continue to be regular classes to provide the cognitive elements

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[149] Laurent A. Daloz, *Effective Teaching and Mentoring: Realizing the Transformational Power of Adult Learning Experiences* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1986), 20-33.

[150] Ibid., 212-235.

of the spiritual formation of deacon candidates. The director for the spiritual formation

component of the formation program should be responsible both for the cognitive

element of spiritual formation, as well as preparing the mentors to work with their

protégés, providing resources and structure for the mentors, and providing on going

supervision/mentoring to the mentors.

The idea of mentoring deacons is not new. Some dioceses provide mentoring for

newly ordained deacons, as they begin to learn their way around ordained ministry.[151] It

is suggested here that mentoring be extended to include the entire formation process.

Focus group members showed enthusiasm for the idea of mentors as an element

of diaconal spiritual formation. Feedback included positive comments about the use of

mentors.

> …there is a need for mentor related formation. Formation leaders who are diaconal couples, speaking the language of the married couple, would greatly enhance the formative experience.

*Content*. The cognitive component of transformational learning is integral with

experience and reflection. Its purpose is to help the participants understand and make use

of the spiritual formation process, as well as apply what they learn to their lives in the

contexts of marriage and ministry.

Since theological reflection is an integral component of the spiritual formation

process, it is important that candidates develop experience and skill in methods of

theological reflection early. These skills can then be used as resources for the work of the

mentoring groups. Mentors can provide the opportunity for their protégés to reflect upon

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[151]Raymond J. Webb, "Mentoring Newly Ordained Permanent Deacons," *Seminary Journal* (spring 1999).

a wide variety of experiences; both prior to entering formation and as part of the formation process.

The *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, the *National Directory*, and canon law all stress that the deacon candidate should acquire a thorough knowledge of the prayer forms and common devotions that are part of the Catholic tradition. While practice in this area is probably best left to the mentoring groups, the cognitive component of the spiritual formation program should ensure that all candidates are familiar with a broad range of prayer forms and devotions and be knowledgeable about their history and appropriate use.

As potential ministers of the Gospel and spiritual mentors to others, deacon candidates need to be aware of the theological foundation of their lived spirituality. Thus, an important component of the cognitive aspect of the spiritual formation of deacon candidates and their wives must be a foundation in spiritual theology.

The spiritual formation of deacon candidates and their wives must address the primary contexts in which they will make the diaconate a concrete reality: family life and diaconal ministry. These contexts also provide a great deal of material for reflection and discussion in the mentoring groups.[152] Indeed, consideration of diaconal spirituality in the context of marriage and ministry should comprise a significant part of the spiritual formation program, as it is here where diaconal spirituality takes on flesh.

*Mystagogy*. The renewed Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) has brought the concept of mystagogy back into the awareness of pastoral leaders. Formally,

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[152] Thomas Merton once argued that, "There is only one problem on which all my existence, my peace, and my happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God. If I find him I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find Him." In David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, (Downers Grove, In.: InterVarsity Press, 2004) 1.

it is the last stage in the RCIA program. However, in recent years authors have stressed the on-going character of mystagogy in the life of the believer.

Mystagogy is not simply a form of catechetical instruction but goes much deeper appealing to the religious imagination. A critical element for successful mystagogy is well-celebrated rites. Mystagogy can be understood as a form of transformational learning in that a process is discernable. It requires awareness, in which we open our whole being to the sights and sounds of the liturgical celebration as it unfolds. There is reflection as we allow the many symbolic languages of the liturgy to speak to us, probing our experience, finding resonance. Reception is the appreciation of what comes to us, not so much the insight *per se* as the One who inspired it. Gradually our consciousness of what we are doing -- and before whom -- begins to work a transformation in us.[153]

"Mystagogy includes not only the neophytes' experience but also the life of the community and the teaching of the Church—aspects which are part of this reflection process for the assembly."[154] Such reflection is part of the believer's on going entry into the mysteries of our faith. It draws upon the spiritual disciplines of contemplative awareness (mindfulness) and reflection (discernment), allowing us to enter more deeply into our experience of worship. It is a task that is never completed, as the circumstances of our lives change and the symbolic languages of sacrament and liturgy are able to speak to us anew.

The deacon is immersed in liturgical experience both as minister and as a member of the assembled faithful. According to the survey data, liturgical participation is a

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[153] Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999), 13-28.

[154] Sheila Marie O'Dea, *A Mystagogical Reflection Process for a Liturgical Assembly* (D.Min. paper: Catholic Theological Union at Chicago, 1995), 116-117.

significant spiritual practice for many deacons and their wives. The spirituality of the deacon is deepened and enriched not only by his participation in well-celebrated rites but also by mystagogical reflection on those liturgical experiences. Such mystagogy should better equip the deacon to fulfil his leadership roles in the public worship of the Church and to assist the rest of the community in a richer sacramental mystagogy.

The spiritual formation program must regularly involve the deacon candidates in a range of well-celebrated liturgies. While the liturgy can speak for itself, the deacon candidate should become practiced in mystagogical reflection on the liturgy. This requires initial class time spent on the topic. The ideal setting for actual reflection on the liturgical experience is in the mentoring groups, with the mentor serving as mystagogue.

Building upon the structure of the deacon formation program operated by the Diocese of Erie, an overview of a possible model for the spiritual formation component incorporating these elements is offered. The Diocese of Erie uses a five year formation program with diaconal ordination at the end of the fourth year. The newly ordained deacon completes his basic formation as a deacon during the first year of active ministry. Formation is provided during weekend sessions once each month during the normal school year. Both the deacon aspirants/candidates and their wives participate in the formation program. The weekend is broken up into class sessions, as well as various devotional and formational activities. The class periods run for an hour and a half each. There are also annual retreats during the summer months. Aspirants to the program participate in an orientation that runs for four weekends prior to entering the normal formation cycle. Spiritual formation is part of the formation program throughout the five years and one of the class sessions each weekend is provided for this purpose. Deacon

candidates and their wives are expected to take part in spiritual direction while in formation.

This structure provides an opportunity for the presentation of the cognitive component. A significant change to this structure is suggested with the addition of mentoring groups. These groups of aspirants/candidates would meet with assigned mentors at least once per month between class weekends for approximately an hour and a half. The mentoring groups could be distributed throughout the diocese and organized in terms of geographic proximity for the convenience of the participants.

The group sessions provide an opportunity to share reflections among the members on the cognitive content as it applies to their life experience. This allows for a critical understanding of the cognitive content, as well as a more layered appreciation of life experience and its meaningfulness to the student. Occurring in a less formal setting than regular classes, the mentoring sessions also provide an opportunity for socializing and community building. Mentors should also meet individually with their assigned protégées at least once every semester to discuss individual progress and assess the needs of the students.

In addition, homework is assigned regularly. However, the assignments normally involve practice of spiritual disciplines taught in class. Critical to this is the practice of skills in reflection, which allow the participants to appreciate and discern the value of the various disciplines to which they are exposed.

Conceptual content and spiritual disciplines to which the students are exposed must reflect an integrated and transformative approach to spiritual formation. Between the use of class time, mentoring groups, and homework assignments, the students are exposed to the transformative learning components of conceptual content, reflection and

practice. There is a cumulative aspect to formation as well, with one year building upon the other and the skills learned through the practice of one spiritual discipline serving as a foundation for other disciplines. A brief summary follows. A more detailed outline of the model spiritual formation component of deacon formation, as suggested by this study, is found in Appendix C.

Year One. The primary conceptual content for this year revolves around the question of "What is diaconal spirituality?" Thus, the material presented in Chapter Two of this paper serves as the core content for this introductory year. Journaling and theological reflection are the primary reflective skills. In terms of practice, the Liturgy of the Hours is taught, as well as exercises directed toward encouraging mindfulness/contemplation. [155]

Second year. The focus for the conceptual content is on marriage and family life as a context for Christian spirituality. Topics include theology of the body/embodied spirituality, theology of marriage, parenting as a spiritual discipline, and challenges to marriage. Reflection skills in second year include autobiographical reflection as a way of discerning patterns of grace in one's life, as well as additional practice with

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[155]Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Image Books-Doubleday, 1996), 46-53. Merton notes that traditionally there are two understandings of the nature of contemplation. One is an active idea of prayer: it accompanies work and sanctifies work. The other a more passive concept of prayer which, in order to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of God, must rest from exterior action. The first is derived from Cassian and views contemplation as flowering in the liturgy and the active life. St. Basil also expresses this view of contemplative prayer, stating that private prayer is carried on while the ascetic is at work or going about his normal duties. "Thus we acquire a recollected spirit, when in every action we beg from God the success of our labors…and when we keep before our minds the aim of pleasing him." Contemplative prayer is seen as a quality of mindfulness and openness to God that is brought to every aspect of our lives. This approach to contemplative prayer is also found in a more recent classic of spirituality, *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection. Pope St. Gregory the Great provides the classic description of the other, more apophatic understanding of contemplative prayer. "The contemplative life is to retain with all one's mind the love of God and neighbor but to rest from exterior motion and cleave only to the desire of the Maker, that the mind may now take no pleasure in doing anything." It is the more active, Basilian understanding of contemplation that is referred to when the terms "mindfulness/contemplation" is mentioned to in this paper.

critical/theological reflection. The practice component includes communication skills based on Marriage Encounter, mindfulness/contemplation in the context of care-giving and the routine as part of family life, as well as various forms of family devotion and prayer.

Third year. The focus for the conceptual content is on ordained ministry as a context for Christian spirituality. Topics include theology of ministry, diaconal ministry as the sacramentalization of Christian *diakonia*, the iconic character of ministry, teaching/charity/and liturgical service as spiritual disciplines, being a wounded healer, and the challenges of integrating marriage, ministry and employment. The primary practice component during the third year is the student's participation in a variety of pastoral assignments. Theological reflection on their experience in the pastoral assignments is the primary reflective activity. This includes reflection on the impact of the pastoral experience on their marriage and their personal spiritual disciplines. This will be supported by journaling and discussion in the mentoring groups, as well as mindfulness/contemplation in the context of care-giving and the routine as part of pastoral ministry.

Fourth year. The conceptual focus is on the deacon as icon of Christ. Topics include an introduction to Christian discernment and spiritual direction, sacramental spirituality from the minister's perspective (with an emphasis on Baptism and Eucharist), Reconciliation and Christian spirituality, and public worship (liturgy) as a component of Christian spirituality. The emphasis on the sacraments and liturgy as part of Christian spirituality provides a conceptual context for mystagogical reflection on the experience of participation in the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments as the primary form of reflection during fourth year. The practice component involves participation in a range

of well celebrated liturgical activities both as a participant/observer and as a minister. This is supported by journaling and discussion in the mentoring groups, as well as mindfulness/contemplation in the context of liturgical celebration.

Post/ordination (Fifth year). The primary focus is on reflection relative to the experiences of the students now that they are ministering as deacons or the wives of deacons. Particular emphasis is placed on communion, self-emptying, service and self-transcendence as they are experienced by the student in prayer, ministry, family life and job. An opportunity for mystagogical reflection on the rite of ordination is included. As time permits, the conceptual material includes an overview of the history of Christian spirituality, with attention to the major schools, and respective insights applicable to diaconal spirituality.

Spiritual Direction

> It is a particular task of the spiritual director to assist the candidate to discern the signs of his vocation, to place himself in an attitude of ongoing conversion, to bring to maturity the traits proper to the spirituality of the deacon, drawing on the writings of classical spirituality and the example of the saints, and to bring about a balanced synthesis of his state of life, his profession and the ministry.[156]

While the goals of the mentoring groups and spiritual direction are similar in many cases, they are not identical. The mentoring groups are meant to provide relatively intense learning in theological reflection skills, as well as the application of those skills to reflection on the academic content, pastoral practice, and liturgies they encounter during formation. They are meant as the setting for specific learning opportunities in support of

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[156] *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum Permantenium* (Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons), no. 77.

the spiritual formation of deacon candidates. This is a particular journey with a set beginning and end.

Spiritual direction is a long term spiritual relationship that is meant to provide companionship, accountability and guidance on one's life journey to the Kingdom. Its focus is on the on-going conversion of the directees, rather than the more limited formational goals of the mentoring groups.

The mentoring groups are best understood as an additional resource. Ideally, each aspirant/candidate and his wife will also have an on-going relationship with a spiritual director. If the ideal has not been met during the aspirancy period, then by acceptance as a candidate it is essential that both the deacon and his wife have on-going spiritual direction.

The availability of spiritual direction for wives varies from diocese to diocese. The data from this study suggests that the availability of spiritual direction for the wives during the deacon formation program and afterward is important. It is helpful in understanding the changes that result when the husband becomes a deacon and has new ministerial responsibilities. It supports the spiritual development of the couple. It also provides support for the diaconal family to function more effectively as an icon of Christian marriage.

Continuing Formation of Deacons and Spouses

The spiritual formation of deacons does not stop with their ordination or even the completion of their post-ordination year. Further, many elements of the formation process described here may not have been part of the formation program. There are many deacons who are long out of their initial formation program but who would benefit by

additional spiritual formation, appropriate to the diaconal contexts of family and ministry. For this group, other formational options are necessary.

Based on the data described earlier most deacons are men of prayer and fairly well formed in the traditions of Christian spirituality. Where gaps exist, they reflect difficulty in relating their grounding in the spiritual traditions of the Church to the specific contexts of family life and diaconal ministry. Thus, continuing formation activities should focus primarily on living out one's vocation to the diaconate in the context of marriage and diaconal service ministry.

The elements of spiritual formation described above for initial deacon formation can be applied to continuing education. The components of experience, cognition and theological reflection should be incorporated in whatever continuing formation format is used.

One approach is to devote a two year period to the integrated spiritual formation of already ordained deacons. This approach would require four deacon study days during the two year program, one study day every six months. Mentoring groups would be established among the deacons, matching more experienced deacons as mentors with the more recently ordained. These groups would meet monthly. Two books would be assigned between each study day, with the contents serving as material for the mentoring group discussions.

The semi-annual study days provide opportunities for the cognitive material to be presented to the deacons, as well as an opportunity for a well-celebrated, shared liturgical experience. The first study day focuses on the theological foundation of Christian spirituality. The second study day focuses on family life as a primary context for diaconal spirituality. The third study day focuses on ministry as the other major context for

diaconal spirituality. The fourth study day begins with an overview of the three previous study days, showing their interrelationship. However, the greater part of the study day is devoted to reflection and discussion among the deacons as to how the material presented and the experience of the previous two years actually relates to their lives. This is an opportunity for the fruit of the mentoring group reflections to be shared with the broader diaconal community.

This two year approach has the benefit of providing for consistency in deacon study days, each study day building upon the results of earlier study days. In addition to their educational value, the mentoring groups encourage a greater degree of collegiality and mutual support among the deacons. Finally, there is a beginning and end to the process against which the deacons can pace themselves. This lessens the likelihood of the study days and mentoring groups being perceived as an interminable burden being placed on the deacons' limited time.

Additional Resources

While not an obvious problem among the respondents to the survey, the literature shows that married clergy face the same challenges as other married couples. The public character of ordination makes married clergy particularly subject to pressures, internal and external, that are not common to other couples. Other denominations with married clergy have made counselling and marriage enrichment programs available to their clergy couples as needed. This is a resource that should be available to deacons and their spouses, even if it is rarely used.

The literature also notes that the children of clergy experience special pressures growing up due to the public identity of their father. This is experienced in less

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availability of the father due to ministerial commitments and unrealistic expectations regarding the child's behavior. There may also be pressure from peers because of his or her father's role in the community. The most common approach is to provide opportunities for children in this situation to get together in a supportive environment where they can share their frustrations and be heard.[157]

So What and Where Now?

This project began as grist for reflection during a session with my spiritual director several years ago. The process of responding to the questions set before me has turned out to be transformative, adding both depth and texture to my encounter with God both in my marriage and my ministry. My understanding and appreciation of the diaconate is enriched as a result of this research. It also answers the questions that prompted this research. As a result, I offer it to the broader Church community in the hope that it will be of value to other deacons and their wives, as well as those who supervise, form and co-minister with them.

The pastoral implications of this study are numerous, as described in this chapter. The findings of this research can be applied to the formation, support, continuing education, and ministerial assignment of deacons. It points to the need for spiritual and formational support of the wives and children of deacons as well. Beyond the diaconate, it underscores the importance of a functional alignment between one's spirituality and the

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[157]Kimberly Sparrow Strange and Lori . Sheppard, "Evaluations of Clergy Children Versus Non-Clergy Children: Does a Negative Stereotype Exist?," *Pastoral Psychology* 50, no. 1 (September 2001). Also, Morris, "Denominational Perceptions of Stress and the Provision of Support Services for Clergy Families."

contexts within which one must live out an on-going encounter with grace. This is applicable to all persons in ministry, as well as to laity.

A topic for further research suggested by this study is the actual impact of deacon formation programs on the spiritual lives of deacons and their families. This study helps document the influence of childhood, family life and even the performance of ministry on the spirituality of deacons and their wives. Yet, the specific influence on the spirituality of deacon candidates and their wives as a result of participation in a deacon formation program is not clear.

While the study finds a positive relationship between marriage, ministry and the spirituality of deacons and their wives, focus group discussion suggests that achieving integration of marriage and ministry may be more of a struggle than implied by the highly motivated respondents to this survey. Further research focused on the mechanics of achieving the integration of marriage and ministry among deacon couples is suggested.

Feedback from key informants and the focus group suggest that tension arises from the ambiguity of the role of the deacon's wife, both during formation and after ordination. This is apparent in the feeling of abandonment by the deacon program voiced by one wife following her husband's ordination. Other voices point to a sense of only auditing the theology courses, with no accountability for their studies. These and other comments suggest the need for research focused specifically on the experience of being the wife of a deacon. Such research could result in greater engagement and satisfaction of the wives during the formation program and following ordination. While the more balanced integration of marital and diaconal spirituality called for in this paper can address many issues related to the reported tension, some issues may remain. Research specifically focused on deacons' wives may be able to address these concerns.

While not directly related to this topic, the survey data reveals retirement from ministry due to age or poor health, and involuntary unemployment, as serious crises for a number of deacons. While these experiences can be opportunities for further spiritual growth, they also represent the need of pastoral care for the deacons involved. The extent and character of that need, as well as the identification of appropriate responses, offers another avenue for research.

Earlier in this Chapter we described Christian spirituality as "as our response of love to the Divine Mystery in the context in which we find ourselves. …Diaconal spirituality is a particular expression of Christian spirituality which is realized within the contexts the deacon is found. These contexts are diaconal ministry and, for most deacons, marriage and family life." Our response of love to the Divine Mystery takes place in the midst of our families, parishes, communities, and in serving those whom God brings into our lives. We find the face of God in those whom we serve.

Thomas Merton describes an experience of *metanoia* which occurred in 1958.

> In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream…This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud. And I suppose my happiness could have taken form in the words: "Thank God, thank God that I am like other men, that I am only a man among others."[158]

Merton's insight speaks to the character of diaconal spirituality. We are only men among other men and women. Even as ordained ministers, our service is rooted in the

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[158]Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image Books-Doubleday, 1968), 156-157.

baptismal *munera* that we share with all the believers. We have seen that among the disciplines which characterize our spirituality a special place is accorded to care-giving and the ordinary routine of life. Such an understanding of diaconal spirituality is liberating, freeing us from an illusory spirituality that sets us apart or requires us to walk a path and undertake disciplines that are discordant with marriage and family life to which most of us have been called. Diaconal spirituality, well lived, is a witness to all that holiness is not alien to the human condition or the province of a few specialists. Holiness is the vocation of every human being.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Allen, Joseph. *Inner Way: Eastern Christian Spiritual Direction*. Grand Rapids, MI:
    William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

The author writes about the spiritual journey and the character of spiritual direction from the perspective of the Eastern Churches. He covers much of the same ground as most authors on spirituality and spiritual direction. He strongly believes that while the tradition must be respected, it is also necessary to integrate what we have learned from the social sciences into the performance of spiritual direction. This must be done with respect for the theoretical differences between Christian spiritual direction and the psychological models underlying popular therapeutic methods. He emphasizes that spiritual direction takes place within a moral and theological framework that is absent from psychotherapy. His understanding of the Eastern spiritual tradition presents it as much broader in scope than the common understanding in the West  (Barry & Connolly, May, Dougherty). Allen sees all one's experience as valid material for spiritual direction, rather than just the experience of prayer. One's perception of self, relationship with God, relationship with others and all of one's behavior comes under the proper light of spiritual direction.

Barry, William, and William Connolly. *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. New York:
    The Seabury Press, 1983.

This work draws heavily upon the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in light of contemporary knowledge and culture. They argue that the purpose of spiritual direction is for one Christian to help another to pay attention to God's personal communication and to respond to God's communication; thus growing in intimacy with God. As a result, the person is better able to live out the consequences of that relationship. The focus is upon experience. The spiritual director is interested in what happens when a person consciously puts himself into the presence of God. He is interested in the whole person but the focus is upon the prayer experience of the directee. Turning to God in prayer involves the whole person and as it develops it tends in this direction, including more and more dimensions of our lives. Spiritual direction must help people to recognize and focus their lives as response to God's loving, creative, and saving action.

Benner, David G. *The Gift of Being Yourself: The sacred Call to Self-Discovery*.
    Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

An important element in the spiritual journey is a deeper understanding of one's self. Spiritual growth is often described as becoming configured to Christ. While this suggests a loss of individuality, paradoxically as we become more like Christ we become more uniquely our own true self. Our true identity is a gift from God. The discovery of our true self is the discovery of God in us and has implications for living our vocation. This book draws on many of the insights of Bernard Lonergan, Thomas Merton, and Teilhard de Chardin.

Beyer, Herman. "d?a?????, d?a????a, d???????."  Theological Dictionary of the New
    Testament 2.

This article is from a classical German word study of the New Testament. It presents the meanings of the terms *diakoneo*, *diakonia*, and *diakonos* as relating to humble service. This was done under the influence of contemporary theologians within German Lutheranism who were committed to a vision of Christ as a humble servant. Within the Christian context these common Greek words took on the connotation not just of service but a "service of love" that is given for the building up of the Church. This included not only service to the poor and otherwise marginal but also forms of service that benefited the community in general, such as preaching, teaching, leading worship, or organizing projects.

Bonhoffer, Dietrich. *Letters and Papers from Prison*, rev. ed. New York: MacMillian
    Publishing Company, 1967.

Bonhoffer, an Evangelical Lutheran pastor and seminary professor, in Germany during the time of Hitler was scandalized by the failure of the Church in that nation to live the Christian principles of justice and compassion. He became involved in the resistance and got caught up in a crackdown following an attempt on the life of Hitler. He spent the rest of the war in prison where he wrote and gave hope and courage to his fellow prisoners. He was executed shortly before the end of the war. This collection of letters and papers from that period focuses on the duty of the Christian and the Church in the face of evil and injustice. As with an earlier work, the emphasis is upon the demands of discipleship.

Boyer, Ernest. *A Way in the World: Family Life as Spiritual Discipline*. Harper & Row:
    San Francisco. 1984.

Boyer develops the image of life at the edge and life at the center, with life at the center characteristic of family spirituality. He offers a variety of spiritual disciplines representative of life at the center. While his presentation has a practical appeal, it lacks the theological glue that LaCugna and Downey provide with Trinitarian spirituality a few years later. This book is not as theologically dense as the Gaillardetz or Wright books but the stories he uses as illustrations give an intensity and clarity that helps to make his argument. It is a good early attempt as describing family/marital spirituality.

Brewi, Janice and Anne Brennan. *Celebrate Mid-life: Jungian Archeytpes and Mid-life Spirituality.* New York: Crossroad. 1988.

The authors consider mid-life spirituality as part of the psychosocial developmental process described by Erick Erickson and his intellectual descendents. It is described as a fundamental spiritual reorientation that is predominately inner-directed and focused on greater integration of the self. The authors draw upon Jungian archetypes as a means to interpret this developmental process. The primary archetype considered is the shadow, with the psychological goal of mid-life being greater movement toward individuation; the integration of the shadow with other elements of one's psyche. The spiritual dynamics of this process are considered. This book does a good job of drawing upon Jung's psychological insights for their resonance with Christian experience and concepts without compromising the integrity of Christian faith.

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. New York: Charles Schribner, 1958.

The fundamental question this classic work attempts to answer is "How may I understand my experience of a relationship with God?" Humans are relational creatures. They can not be understood as an "I" alone but only in relationship. They enter into two types of relationships: I-Thou and I-It. An I-It relationship is a relationship between a person and an object. This type of relationship can be described in terms of the person experiencing or using the object. An I-Thou relationship is a relationship between persons. One does not use another person but encounters another person. I-Thou relationships are possible at three levels: with nature, with men and women, and with spiritual beings. We can have relationships with nature (e.g. a pet dog or cat), yet true mutuality is lacking. We are unable to give voice to the Thou. With other human beings we can give and accept the Thou, meaningfully speaking the word, Thou. With spiritual beings, we perceive no Thou, but we feel we are addressed and we answer, forming, thinking, acting. We speak Thou with our being, even if we do not say Thou with our lips.

Collins, John Neil. *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

The author takes exception with the standard understanding of *diakonia* based on the earlier work of Herman Beyer. He argues that the office of the deacon was distinct from the beginning from the general *diakonia* of the Church as expressed in other ministries. He argued that from studying non-Christian sources it is apparent that the term *diakonos* referred to a "go-between," one who acts at his master's bidding to convey messages and perform tasks that require immediate attention, mobility and speed. This understanding of *diakonos* emphasizes the role of social mediator or emissary between persons.

Conn, Joann Wolski. *Spirituality and Personal Maturity*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989.

Christian spirituality and human maturity are integrated in a way that is mutual and reciprocal. Spirituality refers to the relationship between the individual and God pursued in the life of faith, hope and love. There is a common dynamic at the basis of both

psychological and spiritual growth. This dynamic is self-transcendence. Maturity is the outcome of a process of balancing the lifelong tension between the yearnings for inclusion and distinctness. Maturity is the deep personal openness which comes from having an independent automony as the goal of development. Valuing the intimacy of mutual interdependence, the mature person is one who can freely surrender herself or himself, who can risk a genuinely mutual relationship with others and with God.

Conn, Walter. *The Desiring Self: Rooting Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction in Self-Transcendence*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998.

This book focuses on the dynamics of self-transcendence as the essence of Christian spirituality. This is a process of conversion. Conn draws equally on psychology and theology to present his case. There is a strong influence of Lonergan in his view of the process. The radical desire for self-transcendence is at the source of everything that is specifically human, according to Conn, and is realized in every genuine instance of creative understanding, critical judging, responsible deciding and generous loving. From a theological perspective, the drive for self-transcendence is the divine life within the human person, and its realization culimnates in a personal relationship with God.

Cronin, Kevin M. *Kenosis: Emptying Self and the Path of Christian Service*. New York: Continuum, 1999.

This is a group of theological reflections on *kenosis* that draws both from standard theological works on the topic and the author's experience in the 1970's as a Franciscan novice in New York City. His basic theme is that Christian service is impossible without *kenosis*. It is only when we empty ourselves of self-seeking that we are able to engage the other person as "other", honoring both their dignity and need.

Cummings, Owen. *Deacons and the Church*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004.

This is a consideration of the diaconate from a theologian-deacon. It is written in a popular style and might be used as a reading for a deacon formation program. He perceives diaconal spirituality as basic Christian spirituality and identifies koinonia, kenosis, and diakonia as essential characteristics of diaconal/baptismal spirituality. Though, he fails to deal with self-transcendence to any significant degree. The chapter on spirituality discusses it only in terms of spiritual disciplines. The marriage discussion is excellent, if a bit theoretical. His discussion of the diaconate as ordained ministry focuses on the iconic character of the order. However, he never integrates these elements to give a holistic view of the diaconate. Thus, for all its good points, I find the book frustrating.

Daloz, Laurent A.. *Effective Teaching and Mentoring: Realizing the Transformational Power of Adult Learning Experiences*. SanFrancisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1986.

Transformational learning is based on the premises that the primary motive for education, at least for adults, is the search for meaning. The key question for educators of adults therefore is how they influence their students? Where are students going and who are

educators for their students on this journey toward meaning? The author offers the role of mentor as the appropriate role for educators of adults. After discussing the tasks appropriate to this role, he illustrates his theoretical discussion with several case studies.

Denzin, Norman K. *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970; Reprint, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1977.

The book is a consideration of sociological methodology from the symbolic interactionist perspective. He tends to emphasize qualitative approaches to methodology. The material used in the paper is based on the first chapter of the book, where he identifies the basic principles that underlay sociological research from the interactionist perspective. The basic assumption of the interactionist perspective is that human behavior is self-directed and observable at both the symbolic and interactional (behavioral) levels. The researcher must indicate how shifting definitions of self are reflected in ongoing patterns of behavior, taking the role of the persons he is studying. He stresses the use of multiple approaches to the study of a phenomenon (triangulation) to overcome the weaknesses of individual methods. The author notes that his work draws heavily upon the work of Glaser and Strauss (Grounded Theory Methodology).

De Sales, St. Francis. *Introduction to the Devout Life.* trans. John K. Ryan (Doubleday-Image Books; New York; 1966.

The quote used in the paper is taken from the third section of the first part of the book. Written in the form of a guide to Philothea on how to live a life of true devotion, St. Francis states that true devotion does not conflict or injure one's vocation but enhances and beautifies it. He points out that the forms of devotion found in the monastery or convent are not appropriate to those living a secular life as shopkeepers, married couples, soldiers or politicians. However, forms of devotion more consistent with those living in a secular context are available. Where ever we may be, we can and should aspire to a perfect life.

De Wit, Han F. *The Spiritual Path: An Introduction to the Psychology of the Spiritual Traditions*. Translated by Henry Jansen & Lucia Hofland-Jansen. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1994.

This work is written under the influence of Adrian Van Kaam and the Formative Spirituality that he developed in the 1980's. The primary focus is upon the role and function of spiritual disciplines in the spiritual formation of a person. He does this by means of comparing the spiritual disciplines found in Christianity and Buddhism. He divides the spiritual disciplines into mental and practical disciplines. The mental disciplines are further divided into mindfulness and insight/discernment. The practical disciplines include the ethical and devotional.

Donovan, William T. *The Sacrament of Service: Understanding Diaconal Spirituality.* Green Bay, WI: Alt Publishing Company, 2000.

The author begins with the understanding of the diaconate as the sacrament of service. He observes that diaconal spirituality is not simply to follow spiritual forms. It is rather to look into the depths of diaconal service and to find in there treasures of the presence of God. The content and context of diaconal reflection and prayer can and must be the life of service itself. The spiritual experience of the deacon is two-fold: the transcendence of his spirit that occurs in the act of service and the prayerful recollection of that service in light of the mystery of Christ.

Downey, Michael. *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.

All Christian spirituality is Trinitarian. Such spirituality is not concerned with just one dimension of life, such as prayer or the pursuit of holiness. Rather, the Christian spiritual life is the Christian life. To live a Trinitarian spirituality is to be seized and saturated by the gift of Love. We become continuing expressions of the gift as we live from it, knowing ourselves to be in constant relation to its source. God's love is made visible in the self-emptying of God in Christ. Our destiny as a Christian people is to live human life in all its dimensions in the presence of the divine. At the heart of the Christian spiritual life is the spiritual practice of receptivity, through which we learn how to receive and celebrate the gift of God's giving. A spirituality which is Trinitarian enables us to see that we participate even now in the mystery of self-giving Love at the heart of the divine life. Prayer is not yet another activity relegated to a specific time and place. Prayer disposes us to participate in the contemplative dimension of everyday living, recognizing the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is that which enables the Christian people to see the ordinary and everyday earthly reality as the very arena of God's presence and action.

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. "Waiting at Table." In *Concilium.* Vol. 198, Service-- Church for the Others. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, LTD, 1988.

*Diakonia* service is differentiated from servility. Servanthood without choice is not *diakonia* but becomes slavery. However, servanthood through choice is an act of total self. The powerlessness of servanthood can be redemptive only when it results from free and conscious choice. Such freely chosen servanthood is not self-denial, self-elimination, self-ignorance or self-immolation. Rather it is the capacity to look beyond ourselves and see the needs of others. It is the empathy to want to help and the skill to know how to help. This model can only have a liberating function only if the mutuality of the parties is focused upon and not the division into the servers and those being served.

Fowler, James. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco; 1981.

Fowler sees faith as an active mode of knowing, of composing a felt sense or image of the condition of our lives takes as a whole. Faith is inherently relational. He sees it rooted in the first attachments a child makes in its early days and months of life. He uses a triadic image. If the base line of the triad is the subject (s) and object (o), the other corner of the triad is the "shared center(s) of value and power" (scvp). This includes the family's

story and formative myths. These shared centers provide a focus for faith and identity. These relationships shape our identities. We become part of what we love and trust. In each context we share stories, celebrate and renew common hopes. Our identity and faith attempt to bring these diverse roles, contexts and meanings into an integrated and workable unity. Faith is imagination as it composes a felt image of an ultimate environment. We image from our experiences of relatedness in the covenantal contexts of our lives. Faith's imaginal life is dynamic and continually changing. Fowler sees a structural developmental path for faith similar to the models offered by the developmental psychologists. To this basic structure, he relates faith development in six broad stages: Intuitive-projective faith, Mythic-Literal, Synthetic-Conventional, Individuative-Reflective, Conjunctive Faith, and Universalizing Faith.
Much of the book is spend discussing how these stages play out in the life of an individual. A key method in determining a person's stage of faith development is the taking of a narrative life history.

Fuchs, Ottmar. "Church for Others." In *Concilium*. Vol. 198, Service--Church for the Others. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, LTD, 1988.

*Diakonia* occurs where there is need. These ignition points are not a matter of choice but of need. The identity of the church only comes into being through service. Thus in *diakonia* the church is authentically church. Service for other is the decisive criterion for distinquishing in the Church's praxis between self maintenance as institution and its solidarity with others; between faith and ideology. There is a difference between *koinonia* (fellowship) and *diakonia* (service to the suffering). While *koinonia* tends to have us look inward, *diakonia* forces us to look outward to the place of need. Diakonia is inherently mutual, in that the suffering have something to say to us. They are preachers of the word to the doers. *Diakonia* is the historical and specific situational expression of the Church's character as universal sacrament for the world. Further, it is not the responsibility of the needy to force themselves on the Church but rather the Christian must discover the neighbor in need. Talk about God is not talk about God at all without the praxis of active ministry (*diakonia*) and the praxis of ministry is always the point at which we can and must talk about God.

Gaillardetz, Richard. *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002.

He uses the word "spirituality" to refer to the particular contour and texture of our encounter with God's saving grace in our daily lives. A spirituality of marriage therefore will be concerned with the distinct manner in which God's transforming presence and action are encountered in our marriages. A marital spirituality should help us discover the ways in which, through our fidelity to the spiritual discipline of faithful marital living, we discover our truest identity. His basic premises is that at the core of our humanity is the experience of desire, an inner drive for communion with God and one another; the incarnation reveals to us the fulfilment of that desire and of our humanity in the person of Jesus Christ; the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, often called the "paschal Mystery: offers us the way of salvation and the paradoxical logic of authentic human fulfillment; the true wisdom of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is that God is

communion and therefore is discovered whenever and wherever we give ourselves over to the life of communion. He argues that belief in the incarnation is belief in the intrinsic sacredness of the most basic of human activities and relationships; work, leisure and family. A spirituality of marriage will need to find God not only in church or in prayer, but in shared labor, in shared leisure and in the characteristic practices and commitments necessary for nurturing a shared household.

Gallagher, Charles. *Embodied in Love: Sacramental Spirituality: A New Guide to Catholic Marriage*. New York: Crossroad, 1983.

An excellent presentation of marital theology/spirituality as of 1983. The strong influence of Pope John Paul II theology of the body is present in the argument and serves as the basis for the book's emphasis on intimacy as the key to marital spirituality. The importance of sex in marriage as related to other types of intimacy and openness is stressed. Sex is archetypal for intimacy but as the book develops other expressions of intimacy are developed. Married life, far from being a distration to union with God, is an instrument of that union--an outward sign of inward grace, a symbolic cause and casual symbol of the love of God poured forth in our hearts by the Spirit.

Greeley, Andrew. *Religion as Poetry*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995.

Religion begins in experiences that renew hope, is encoded in the preconscious in symbols, shared with others in stories, which are told to and constitute a story-telling community, which enacts the stories in community rituals. He makes the distinction between the popular tradition and the high tradition in religion. These traditions draw upon two different thinking processes. A analogical/metaphoric thought processes are characteristic of the popular tradition, with a dialectic thought process characteristic of the high tradition. Greeley's model focuses on the popular tradition. The author then takes this basic model of religion and illustrates how it is lived out. He does this by drawing upon a broad range of sociological research on the topic of religious experience, much of which he had a hand in conducting.

Helminiak, Daniel A.. *Spiritual Development: An Interdisciplinary Study*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987.

The author notes that "there is no consistent and generally accepted understanding of the term 'spiritual development' or 'spiritual growth'". He then reviews contemporary authors and argues that a transcendent principle is a key factor for any understanding of spiritual development. He draws heavily upon Lonergan in his consideration of transcendence. He identifies four elements essential to spiritual development: (1) an inrinsic principle of authentic self-transcendence. (2) the subject's openness to that principle---that is we must desire wholeness and be willing to let go of everything else in order that we may gain it. (3) it involves the whole person---the development of the whole person is at stake in spiritual development. Spiritual development concerns this ongoing process whose result is the whole human being as he or she is. (4) spiritual development is an adult phenomenon--Spiritual development *per se* entails self-critical and self-responsible growth. Since this requires the attainment of levels of development necessary to reach

this point that are largely the function of organic development or social context it is only with the attainment of the capacity of self-critical and self-responsible growth that the process begins properly speaking. The author defines spiritual development as the ongoing integration that results in the self-reponsible subject from openness to an intrinsic principle of authentic self-transcendence.

Himes, Michael. *Doing the Truth in Love: Conversations about God, Relationships and Service*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995.

*Diakonia* is ultimately realized in compassionate service. The issue is not so much our motivations but our actions. If we believe in God our actions must inherently be a concrete expression of love, for God is self-gifting love. When seeking the will of God we are not seeking some will that is external to us but attempting to discern the will that is beneath my will. The will of God is always moving in the direction of agape. Self-gift is the blue print from which we are built. There is no absolute route to perfect holiness, no simple universal rule. There is no absolute pattern except agape, and what agape requires in each circumstance, in each life is very, very different… That is why no one should simply follow another person's pattern for holiness. What one can and should do is take encouragement from others to find one's own pattern. The point of self-denial is to get oneself sufficiently out of the way so that one can see what the case is. Our decisions have to be made in the light of truth. The only way others will be drawn to live agapically is if they see agape as a reality, not simply a lovely ideal. They will see agape if we embody it. To make it a real possibility for others, we must live it.

Hughes, Kathleen. *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999.

The author presents mystagogical reflection as a key element in the formation of the Catholic community as participants in the sacramental life of the Church—particularly the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The experience of public worship is not profoundly improved by tinkering with the details of the rubrics but by deepening the appreciation of the faithful for the liturgical experience in which they participate. To do this the person needs to approach the Eucharist with a contemplative attitude (open and attentive openness to the experience) and with reflection on what was experienced. In this book the author lays out a model of mystagogical reflection and applies it to the Sacraments. This is an excellent book and a good resource for any spiritual formation program in the Catholic Church.

John Paul II. *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*. Boston, MA: St. Paul Editions, 1981.

This is the first section of a series of catechetical talks given as part of the Pope's public audience each Wednesday. This collection of talks began on September 5, 1979 and ended on April 2, 1980. The complete series was compiled and later published as Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. The basic premise of this collection is that human spirituality is necessarily embodied spirituality. Humanity realizes its character as the

image of God in the communion of persons that is most fully realized in the sacrament of matrimony.

Kegan, Robert. *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

The author views psychological development as an evolutionary process involving dialectic between self-preservation and self-transformation. The process involves differentiating what is taken as self and what is taken as other. In the process of differentiation the person creates/recognizes an object (differentiation) and then attempts to develop relationship with the object (integration). It is in this process of differentiation and integration that the person constitutes self and meaning. Kegan takes the concepts of Piaget and develops them in the context of meaning making, in a manner similar to Fowler's model of faith development. Kegan's model resonates as well with Lonergan's ideas of self-transcendence.

Kessler, Jay, *Being Holy, Being Human*, Word Books: Carol Stream, IL, 1988.

This is a self-help book on how to keep your sanity for clergy and other pastoral care professionals. The pressure of ministry can be daunting, as you and your family become "public figures". Expectations are unrealistic on the part of everyone, including yourself. The end result of this constant pressure is that you are dragged down, spiritually, psychologically and physically exhausted. This book confronts the issues and helps the minister to find the healthy balance. In part, the pressure and expectations come with the territory. However, these pressures can be dealt with in a positive manner. Kessler offers his experience as the context from which he makes suggestions on everything from how open you should be with people--usually quite open, to how to ease someone out the door, to finding friends with whom you can be yourself and not the role of minister. This wasn't any deep theological work but it was rich in practical value.

Kinast, Robert L. *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection*. The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN. 1996.

Theological reflection is learning from one's own experience. This work is a handbook for applying theological reflection to the experience of ministry. It is not reflection on experience for its own sake but reflection on experience that leads to action. The purpose of theological reflection is to find the meaning of the experience of ministry. This meaning arises both from the body of one's experiences as well as the faith tradition which is the context for the experience of ministry. The result should be some change in the minister's self-awareness, outlook, motivation and decisions. The book is practical and an excellent resource for teaching theological reflection as a ministerial skill.

Kownacki, Mary Lou. *The Fire of Peace*. Erie, PA: Pax Christi USA, 2000.

The quote referenced in this paper is from the introduction of The Fire of Peace, which is a prayer book edited by the author. This is not an ordinary prayer book. It is a very dangerous prayer book. The prayers are deceptively simple. They are the fruit of hearts attuned to a contemplative perception of the world and lives deeply engaged in the work of justice and compassion. The two can not be separated. These prayers can not be read.

Saying each word draws one into prayer. Each prayer brings one to the brink. Each prayer is frightening in what it demands. Every prayer that has caused me to stop and back away, unsure if I have the courage to go further is contained in this book. Aside from Scripture, it is the most dangerous and frightening book I have encountered.

LaCugna, Catherine M. *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life.* New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

The book considers the nature of the Trinity. The author argues that God, as described in Trinity, is essentially relational, ecstatic, fecund, and alive as passionate love. The heart of the Christian life is to be united with the God of Jesus Christ by means of communion with one another. The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately therefore a teaching neither about the abstract nature of God, nor about God in isolation from everything other than God, but a teaching about God's life with us and our life with each other.

Latcovich, Mark. *The Effects of the Ministerial Environment on Roman Catholic Permanent Deacons and their Spouses*. Dissertation. Case Western Reserve University. January 1996.

The primary aim of this study is to identity the specific features of the ministerial environment which has a direct impact on the marital satisfaction of the deacons and their wives, and also the deacons' secular job and ministry satisfaction. Findings suggest that deacons and their wives identify themselves in traditional family roles, with strong feelings about their own impact in the church. The complex nature of their environment demands great flexibility, communication, and time management, since undefined family boundaries and parish expectations may affect both the deacon's ministry and marriage. Working deacons may experience role conflict between their secular jobs and ministry. The diaconate may impact younger children in the household with higher expectations and standards causing family problems. Nevertheless, high marital satisfaction is maintained through the deacon's personal spirituality and the influence that his training and ministry have on his relationship with his wife. Wives have noted improved family quality after their husband's ordination.

Lawler, Michael G. *A Theology of Ministry*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1990.

Lawler, drawing on a range of sources, characterizes the Church as essentially ministerial and servant Church. Thus, ministry is a servant activity. Like Jesus, the church and its various ministers serve by incarnating in the world the presence of the Christ and of the God he incarnates. When he turns to priesthood, he turns to the theme of sacrifice. This book focuses primarily on priestly ministry, which is a weakness for a book that is supposed to be a theology of ministry. However, the contour lines he gives for the priesthood also help to define the diaconate (as being on the other side of the contour line). Since the deacon's "priestly sacrifice" is not presiding at the cultic meal, he clearly shares in the sacrifice of all the baptized who through their self-giving actions become more Christ-like. Being ordained, the deacon is called to servant-leadership through enabling the ecclesial-baptismal priesthood of all the people.

Lescher, Bruce H. "Spiritual Direction: Stalking the Boundaries." In *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers: Perspectives for the 21st Century*. Edited by Robert J. Wicks. *2*. New York: Paulist Press, 2000.

The author attempts to address the challenges post-modernism creates for spiritual direction. The essential characteristics of post-modernism are suspicion for meta-narratives as a mask for the ideology of those who created them, related distrust for totalizing institutions which lay claim to meta-narratives, attention to the marginalized, preference for the particular and the local, and an eclecticism that does not require synthesis. There are many borders created by post-modern sensibilities and the spiritual director is called to stalk these borders between institution and personal spiritual quest. He or she does this by listening to the other, listening to Christian tradition, and fostering a conversation between the person and tradition.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Method in Theology*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1972.

Theological method is a framework for collaborative creativity. Such method includes eight distinct tasks: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. This classic work provides a detailed consideration of these eight tasks and the fundamental concepts which underlay the method considered. Lonergan describes his model for theological reflection as Transcendental Method. It is a matter of heightening one consciousness by objectifying it. It rests upon the fundamental operations of consciousness: experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. This book is foundational for the consideration of self-transcendence considered in this D.Min. paper and in the primary references cited in this paper relative to self-transcendence.

Lonsdale, David. "Spiritual Direction as Prophetic Ministry." In *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers: Perspectives for the 21st Century*. Edited by Robert J. Wicks. *2*. New York: Paulist Press, 2000.

The spirituality underlying spiritual direction must be wholesome and integrative, avoiding dualism or fragmentation. Where spirituality falls into the traps of fragmentation and dualism it becomes domesticated, focusing on a privatized spirituality, and the status quo. The article considers the basic dynamic of prophesy; which is criticism, energizing and amazing a people. The aim of prophesy being a radical transformation of consciousness. Spirituality must be understood from the Hebrew perspective, as animating force—the Holy Spirit active in our lives. It is a charismatic activity in which the breath of the Holy Spirit animates and shapes every dimension of life. Spiritual direction is one person helping another to understand what the spirit of God is doing or desires to do in the world and in their own circumstances. Prophetic action comes from a contemplative base, in the sense that they are rooted in attentiveness to the mystery and word of God.

McAdams, Daniel P. *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993.

Each of us comes to know who he or she is by creating a heroic story of the self. The person naturally constructs his personal myth to bring together the different parts of ourselves and our lives into a purposeful and convincing whole. It is an act of the imagination that is a patterned integration of remembered past, perceived present and anticipated future. It is not simply a matter of discovering ourselves through myth, rather we make ourselves through myth. The kind of main characters we script into our self-defining stories help determine the quality of our overall identity. This books reinforces the importance of a personal narrative history, or at least key elements of a personal narrative history, as a means at getting to issues of identity and the integration of the elements that make up the identity.

McKnight, Shawn. *The Latin Rite Deacon: Symbol of Communitas and Social Intermediary Among the People of God*, dissertation. Rome: Pontifico Athenaeo San Anselmi, 2001.

The author argues that for the diaconate to become successful it must have aspecialized ministry that is well defined and important to the life and mission of the Church. That specialized ministry is that the deacon has been and could still be a symbol of *communitas* and social intemediary among the People of God. The deacon functions both in a personal and symbolic manner. As a personal agent and promoter of *diakonia* among the People of God, deacon serves to bridge whatever distance may occur between liturgy around the altar and the prasie and glory of God in daily life. The diaconate, as a normative structure of *communitas,* serves the practice of charity among the People of God not only through direct service. Once members of a society cease being concerned with the needs of others, then that society loses its character of true community. The diaconate as an intermediate structure, functions within the day to day structure to encourage the practice of *communitas* values among the people of God.

Martos, Joseph. *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to the Sacraments in the Catholic Church*. Tarrytown, NY: Triumph Books, 1991.

This is a history of Christian sacraments within the Catholic tradition. The book is rooted in the understanding that ideas and experiences, thinking and doing, theory and practice, mutually influence each other over the course of time. This principle serves as the interpretative key for the author. Related to this principle is the understanding that religious experience, specifically sacramental experience, is a genuine human experience. The book reflects the state of theological research and thought around 1980. However, in its emphasis on experience and interpretation in understanding the sacraments it anticipates much of the research that has occurred since its publication.

May, Gerald. *Will & Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982.

The author establishes that spiritual guidance is any situation in which people receive help, assistance, attention, or facilitation in the process of their spiritual formation. When this occurs in a one to one relationship it can be called spiritual direction. He makes the distinction between meditation as a process of quiet reflection and thinking about some

topic and contemplation as an attitude of open awareness free from any restricted focus. He notes for meditation or contemplation to be prayer it must have some specific intent towards God. He describes four forces impinging upon spiritual growth: our spiritual longing, God's longing for us, opposition to our growth towards deeper realization and freedom in spiritual life (resistance), and evil. The spiritual director attempts to take the balance of these forces in an individual and to assist in one's inclination towards God.

_____ . *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 2004.

The book is a practical study of the concept of darkness in the works of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. He also draws upon his many years as a spiritual director and author. He argues that spiritual darkness does not necessarily refer only to times of aridity or difficulty, nor is it some final obstacle to be overcome on our way to union with God. Rather, darkness refers to the hidden character of most spiritual development. It is hidden because God is at work transforming us in ways of which our conscious mind is not aware.

Merton, Thomas. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. New York: Image Books-Doubleday, 1968.

This is an important work marking a critical juncture in Merton's spiritual development. It is hear that he stresses the contemplative life as openness, growth and development. Contemplation must lead to engagement with life. This work documents his epiphany at the corner of Fourth and Walnut in Louisville, which seems to be a focal point in his engagement with the world. Following this we see a Merton that is involved in the Civil Rights movement and is more of a pacifist in his writing. This book brings many of these issues to the front burner for the first time in his published writing.

_____. *Contemplative Prayer*. New York: Image Books-Doubleday, 1996.

Before his death Merton was working on a short book of reflections on monastic prayer. The book was never put into final form while he was alive. However, that manuscript has been edited and published as Contemplative Prayer. The book is intended for monks, though Merton acknowledges that it may be of interest to others. He stresses the ordinary character of contemplation. Because it is ordinary does not mean that it is not challenging. One who is open to contemplative prayer is open to encountering all of the dread, confusion and sin in his or her own heart. It is not a way of finding God, so much as it is a way of resting in God. It is prayer of the heart. It is a prayer of awareness, gratitude and obedient love. It is not a method but an attitude.

_____. *Seeds of Contemplation*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1949; Reprint, New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1960.

This is classic Merton written fairly early in his monastic career. It was revised, expanded and reissued later as *New Seeds of Contemplation.*  The particular section this quote is

taken from deals with the fallacy of trying to shut oneself up within one's own soul and ignore all outside reality. Contemplation requires fundamental openness, not closing oneself off from realtiy. The entire chapter stresses *kenosis*, in which in order to live I have to die; to find myself, I must go out of myself. *Kenosis* is the breaking down of barriers that keep us from standing outside of our self-created images of who we imagine ourselves to be. *Kenosis* is openness to who we really are.

_____. *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*. Edited by William H. Shannon. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.

Not long after gaining fame through his autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Merton wrote a short book on contemplative prayer for the general reader. He was not satisfied with the work and over the years made several major rewrites of the work. In 1968 he described his current effort at producing another consideration of the topic. He refers to this version as *The Inner Experience*. It was not completed when he died. Further editing was undertaken by William Shannon and this work was published in 2003. In this work he pays particular attention to contemplation and the inner experience of people "in the world" and not just monks.

Mezirow, Jack. *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.

This is a classic presentation on Transformative Learning Theory for adult learners by the primary developer of this approach to learning. This approach is built upon constructivist philosophy. All learning (in adults) serves the person's sense of meaning. Information is fit into meaning perspectives, which are cognitive structures for synthesising cognitive input in a meaningful way. When we are faced with situations in which a meaning perspective does not work, the result is cognitive dissonance. We come to understand the dissonance, the presumptions of the meaning perspective that is unable to deal with the situation that doesn't fit, and the distorted assumptions that underlie it through critical reflection. This allows us to develop more effective meaning perspectives which allow us to act more effectively. Since our meanings and actions are changed, this is considered transformative learning. The goal is not information processing but personal development/ transformation.

Mezirow, Jack, and associates. *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990.

This is an anthology of articles on the role of critical reflection in the process of transformative learning. The introduction and conclusion are written by Mezirow. The other articles give examples of how this approach has been used, as well as techniques for making use of critical reflection in learning situations. While the introductory article provides a concise overview of critical reflection as viewed by Mezirow, the entire book is a valuable resource in presenting approaches to critical reflection to adult learners in formation programs such as discussed in this paper.

Niebuhr, Richard. *Experiential Religion.* New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

How does one experience faith and the spiritual in a material and secular world? This is the fundamental question that the book explores. We live in a world that is radically different from the one in which our faith tradition had its roots. We are immersed in the modernist philosophies and worldview (book was written before post-modernism became as prominent as it is today), which is not hospitable to traditional religion. His approach seems to be to focus on the person of Jesus Christ and to let Him speak to us in the context of contemporary life. While we can honor our tradition, it is the experience of encountering Christ in the context of life in the 20th century that is critical. Thus, the emphasis on experience is in both our experience of life today and the experience of our encounter with Christ in our lives and scripture.

Neville, Robert C. *The Truth of Broken Symbols*. Albany, NY: The University of New
      York Press, 1996.

Religious symbols refer to a boundary condition or conception of the world. Being on the boundary, symbols are finite, in the sense of being part of the world, and infinite, in that they point to a mystery and reality that is beyond the world but unintelligible to us apart from the symbols that point to it. These symbols convey their meanings within semiotic systems of overlapping signs and symbols.  The book is not merely an academic exercise but relates all of this to the experience of transformation in the context of the devotional life and its implications for ethical behavior. This book provides a theoretical foundation for the discussion of the iconic character of ordained ministry and the importance of context in the experience of spirituality presented in this D.Min. paper.

Oliver, Mary Ann McPherson. *Conjugal Spirituality: The Primacy of Mutual Love in
      Christian Tradition*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1994.

She argues that traditional spirituality is designed for celibates, assuming their lifestyle. As a result it is out of sync for married people and broadly misses their needs or modes of relating. She begins her main argument by focusing on the couple as the subject of marital spirituality. The couple begins not with "falling in love" and not at a ceremony of commitment but at a usually undeterminable moment when both are first aware of being chosen by the other. The couple is unique because with other human groups is is a matter of bringing a new person into an already existing network of relationships. With the couple, a new network comes into being and they are the ones to mutually determine the shape of that relationship. The couple is formed by weaving imagined and imitated strands from many old patterns into a story of their own. There are three broad stages in the life cycle of a couple. The first is the creation of the couple. The second is primarily that of consolidation of the relationship. The third stage is *henosis*, or unity. The book is a well developed interpretation of classic spirituality from the perspective of marriage.


O'Dea, Sheila Marie. A Mystagogical Reflection Process for a Liturgical Assembly.
      D.Min. paper: Catholic Theological Union at Chicago, 1995.

This paper explores the history of mystagogy as an on-going catechetical experience beyond the catechumenate. The author then presents a mystagogical process applicable to the liturgical assembly. This process borrows heavily from Thomas Groome and his praxis-reflection-praxis approach to catechesis. The paper is groundbreaking in the sense that it predates some of the more recent work (Richard Fragomeni and Kathleen Hughes) on the same topic.

Peterson, Eugene. *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdsmans Publishing Company, 1992.

This is a very readable exploration of vocational holiness using both the Book of Jonah and the author's experience as a new pastor. The part of the book that stood out for me was his discussion on *askesis*. He argues that Christian spirituality finds its basic structure in Sunday worship and the Liturgy of the Hours as its two pillars, as well as regular recollected/mental prayer. This helps us to see God in all of life. Other spiritual disciplines are seen as occasional supports for our spiritual life depending on the particular circumstances of our life at that point.

Rahner, Karl. *Spiritual Exercises*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1956.

This is a compilation of conferences given by the author on retreats he directed for his students. They are based on the reflections suggested by St. Ignatius in his "Spiritual Exercises", in that the reflections follow the general structure of Ignatius' work. The reflections have a theological depth that is rare in the context of a retreat conference. Though he attempts to keep the theology at the service of the retreat context and not turn the book into a theological investigation.

Roberts, William P. "The Family as Domestic Church: Contemporary Implications." In *Christian Marriage and Family: Contemporary Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*. Edited by Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts. Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1996.

The author describes the Christian family as domestic church called to be a sign, a sacrament of Christ to the wider Church and to the world. He suggests that family members can respond to this call in six ways. (1) give witness to their faith in Christ, (2) give witness to the sacrificial love of Christ, (3) be a sign of Christ's forgiveness, (4) have empathy with the suffering of others, (5) give sign to Gospel values, (6) give testimony to practical faith and hope in the death and resurrection of Christ. He also notes that as a domestic church the family is a worshiping community. He speaks positively of family prayer, as well as the family as participants in the worshipping of the broader community. He also describes the family as a servant people. The article seems a reflection on some of the categories offered by the US Bishops conference in a 1994 pastoral letter "Follow the way of love".

_____. "Toward a Post-Vatican II Spirituality of Marriage," In *Christian Marriage and Family: Contemporary Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*. Edited by

Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts. Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1996.

Focus of theology of marriage has shifted from ceremony as sacrament to the entire married life of the couple together as sacrament. The couple become sacrament to one another. The author tries to draw out its implications for growth in Christian spirituality for a married couple. Partnership is the first implication. This is broken down into a foundation of faith and religious belief, dying to sexist attitudes and acceptance of each other on equal footing. In turn this requires mutual respect, rejection of any hierarchy in the relationship, mutuality in decision making and mutual service. A second major category is intimacy. This involves self-revelation between the couple and openness. Love is also involved not only of the "falling in love" variety but in the intentional building love variety. Joyfulness in marriage is to be encouraged, which involves placing the marriage over other distractions, spending time with one another, and willingness to surrender one's wants to the other's needs. A healthy acceptance of sexual intimacy is important. There is also a sacramental dimension in which marriage relates to the other sacraments and in which the other sacraments are present in marriage.

Schillebeeckx, Edward. *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*. New York: Crossroad, 1981.

The author considers the history of Christian ministry within the Catholic tradition over the past two thousand years. He shows that the practice of ministry has varied greatly over the millennia, largely in response to the historical and cultural conditions in which the Church as found itself. He argues that ministry is again in the process of development and accommodation to the historic and cultural conditions of today. He views an expanded lay ministry playing an important role in this developmental process. Indeed, underlying much of his thought is the central role of the baptismal *diakonia* of the People of God in the ministry of the Church. Characteristic of Christian spiritual life today must be an integration of prayer and action directed to the building up of the Kingdom of God.

Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet Corbin. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.

This is a basic overview of the use of grounded theory in qualitative social research. Rresearch using grounded theory begins in a situation in which questions are raised about a particular phenonomon. One begins with a pheononon to be studied and from one's encounter with the phemonon a theory to explain the phenonon is developed and tested. One obtains data from many sources--literature, interviews, focus groups, etc. As data is coded the researcher looks for emerging patterns and emerging theories that might explain the phenomona under study. As a theory begins to emerge the researcher tests the theory against the data. This is an interactive process, with analysis and data collection a simultaneous and interactive process throughout the research. The researcher is looking for the emergence of core concepts which underly an understanding of the phenomon understudy and a theory that will explain the process. The book is fairly basic in its presentation but covers each topic well.

Thompson, Marjorie. *Family, the Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1989.

Her basic perspective is family as domestic church. She argues that the family is the initial and natural context for spiritual formation. Her understanding of spiritual life is the growing life of God's spirit in us, both individually and corporately. Spirituality signifies a path shaped by theological convictions, patterns of life and practices of faith that nurture our life in grace. God's life in us is both the source and end of any given spiritual path. The role the church needs to recognize and recover in relation to its member families is that of facilitator. The church should begin by calling families to their own sense of blessed and significant identity. Her basic conclusion is that the Christian spiritual life can be lived within the structures of ordinary family life and need not necessarily be sought in ascetic feats. Families can be intentional about structuring spiritual practices in the home, as well as viewing the ordinary events of life together as windows into God's abundant grace. She also notes that the church should not create an ideal "holy family" that no one can live up to as the "norm" and thus force real families to shamefully hide their brokenness and neediness.

Tilley, Terrence R. *Story Theology*. Wilmington, DL: Michael Glazier Books, 1985.

A Christian narrative theology undertakes exploring, transforming and proclaiming the stories of Christianity. All theology deals with metaphors for the Divine-human relationship. In the Christian context there are significant keywords: incarnation, salvation, redemption, and resurrection among others. The first task of Christian narrative theology is to uncover the stories which show what the Christian key words mean. This is done by reference to ths stories which provide the context for the keywords and help define their meaning. The narrative theologian shows the multiple meanings of the Christian keywords. Nnarrative theologians help to transform creatively the narratives of the tradition in order to recognize the new contexts in which we live and to express the tradition effectively in this new context. Story theologians proclaim and manifest the good news. A story is considered true to the extent that it: 1) represents the world revealingly; 2) is coherent by corresponding to the facts, by referring accurately and attributing correctly; 3) shows ways of a) overcoming self-deception; b) shows a person how to be faithful/true to others; c) provides a model for constancy in seeking to tell the truth."

Turner, Victor, and Edith Turner. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

Classic study by Victor Turner applying his symbolic anthropology concepts to the practice of pilgrimage. He explores the symbolic context and meanings from several major pilgrimages in the Christian west. Pilgrimage is a form of normative communitas common to most religious traditions. It has some of the attributes of liminality in passage rites, release from mundane structure, homogenization of status; simplicity of dress and behavior, *communitas*, ordeal, reflection on the meaning of basic religious and cultural values; ritualized enactemnt of correspondences between religious paradigms and shared human experiences; emergence of the integral person from multiple personae, movement from a mundane center to a sacred periphery which suddenly, transiently, becomes central for the individual.

Van Kaam, Adrian. *Formative Spirituality: Fundamental Formation*. Vol. 1. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983.

This is the first volume in Van Kaam's monumental series on Formative Spirituality. In this work he lays out the basic concepts of formative spirituality and the theoretical presumptions that underlie the concepts. He considers his work a science of formation, rather than a form of spiritual theology. He views formation as a process of development in which four dimensions interact to create various forms or expressions of our humanity at a given point in time. These dimensions include: socio-historic, vital, functional and transcendent. The book lays out the basic dynamics of these dimensions as they result in human formation.

_____. *Formative Spirituality: Human Formation*. Vol. 2. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983.

This is the second volume in Van Kaam's masterwork. The focus of this book is on the role of dispositions in the human formation of life and world. By disposition Van Kaam refers to consistent patterns of behavior. This is similar to the concept of habit. However, he prefers the term "disposition", as habit connotes a static quality. He wants to emphasize the dynamic character of formation. It is the particular configuration of our dispositions that results in our overall form at any given moment.

_____.*The Transcendent Self: The formative spirituality of middle, early and later years of life*. Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1979.

The mid-life crisis is a crisis of transcendence; its solution, is therefore a spiritual one. The first phase (30's to mid 40's) is marked by the heightened formation of the functional dimension of their spiritual life. The second phase complements the former by an emphasis on the formation of the transcended aspect of their spirituality. The mid-life crisis denotes a parting of life directions. The option lies between a central functional and a central transcendent direction of our spiritual formation. This crisis helps us to find out how we can meaningfully fill the time left to us before our transition to eternal lfie, how to age graciously. The core form of our personality is more or less lasting. Around that core we form a "current form of life". This current self consists of attitudes, social roles, self-images, skills, sensitivity, and projects. They are in tune with our present capacities because our situation changes in the second half of life, our current self has to change too. We must develop a new current life form more in tune with out core form and yet responding to the demands of the new situations we have to face.We do not as yet realize that our current self is not our whole self.

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich. *Marriage: The Mystery of Faithful Love.* Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1984.

This groundbreaking work had its origin in a lecture given by the author at the 1923 Congress of the Catholic Academic Association in Ulm, Germany. He argued that while the purpose of marriage is procreation, its meaning is love. Marriage is a community of love which finds its end in procreation.. While this was implicit in Church teaching, Von

Hildebrand helped to make the teaching explicit, as it was eventually in *Gaudium et spes*. His lecture was well received and eventually expanded and published as this book.

*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*. Translated by Benedicta Ward. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975; Reprint, 1984.

This is a compilation of sayings attributed to the Desert Fathers. It is organized by the Desert Father (Mother) to whom the saying is traditionally attributed. The Desert Fathers (Mothers) are arranged in alphabetical order. Many of the sayings are available in other collections but this appears to be the most comprehensive available.

Webb, Joseph M. *Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism*. St. Louis, MO: The Chalice Press, 1998.

This book draws upon communication theory and symbolic interactionism as a basis for preaching to a pluralistic and post-modern community. It provides a particularly cogent and detailed description of how persons draw meaning from symbols and generate affective responses to symbols which is relevant to the discussion of symbols used in this paper. In many respects this discussion is similar to that presented by Robert Neville.

Wood, Susan. *Sacramental Orders*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000.

The book begins with an overview of the theology of orders as presented in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Four primary models can be derived from these documents: monarchical, Eucharistic, People of God, and Sacrament. She then considers the theology of the episcopacy, presbyterate and diaconate, as well as the ordination rite for each office. In summary, she stresses the diaconate as an order apart from the priesthood dedicated to the work of charity; the normative character of the permanent diaconate over its transitional expression; she touches on something of an intermediary role in presenting the needs of the people to the Church. She also agrees with Rahner who suggested that the Church ordain to the diaconate only those for whom the diaconate is a vocation. That is, it constitutes the inner structural principle of his life.

Wright, Wendy M. *Sacred Dwelling: A Spirituality of Family Life*. Forest of Peace Publishing: Leavenworth, KS. 1994.

This book uses the metaphor of the physical structure of a house and the nature of the activities which occur in each room as a way of explaining family spirituality. The author suggests that most metaphors for Christian spirituality deal with movement from "here to there". While such metaphors speak to basic life patterns, they also speak to the experience of those who live in solitude rather than settled habitation. Family spirituality involves movement but it also involves cultivating a settled space, making it richer and more inhabited with meaning. The book speaks to issues of intimacy, nurturance, communication, letting go, the family as part of the broader community, the "dark side" of our lives, recasting traditional vice/virtue language into the contemporary parlance of full-Christian living, as well as the importance of self-reflection as a tool for continued growth into the image and likeness of God. She also does a reflection on how the

monastic vows are not that different as a lived reality from the marital vows. It is a good overview of major issues in family spirituality and might be a good source of readings for use as a basis of group discussions.

Yarnold, Edward. "The Theology of Christian Spirituality." In *The Study of Spirituality*. Edited by Chesylin Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

This is an article in a larger anthology regarding Christian Spirituality. This particular article is one of several that provide a highly condensed summary of the fundamental theological concepts related to Christian spirituality. It discusses God, human nature, sin, grace and prayer. It draws upon Rahner, Pannenberg, Von Balthasar, Underhill, Tillich, Poulain, and Augustine in presenting a basic theological overview of spirituality.

Zagano, Phyllis. *Called to Serve: A Spirituality for Deacons*. Liguori: Liguori, MO. 2004.

She links self-emptying with service, which is essential. She doesn't spell out the equally important linkage with communion, though she seems to assume it in describing the role of the deacon with the rest of the community as conscience and prophet. She describes formation as conforming the mind and heart to God and learning how to act on it. From that base diaconal spirituality grows. A healthy part of the booklet is devoted to specific spiritual practices, she feels are essential to the spirituality of any deacon. Everything she mentions is good but is offered without reference to the contexts in which the deacon lives and ministers. Her comments on spiritual growth, ministry of the word, liturgy and service are excellent. Though, for the most part, the book is frustrating. While she makes some good points about the ministry and spiritual life of deacons the booklet lacks an integral vision of diaconal spirituality or attention to the contexts in which diaconal spirituality is experienced.

Articles

Bernardin, Joseph Cardinal. "Sexuality and Church Teaching." *Origins*, no. 10 (9 October 1980): 260-262.

The intervention of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin at the 1980 Synod of Bishops presented a consideration of the Church's teaching on marital intimacy. He was concerned that the beauty and power of the Church's teaching was lost on many people today, even clergy, and as a result the moral consequences of the teachings are lost as well. He emphasizes the holistic character of the teachings on sexuality; pointing out that sexuality is not just genital—though that is an important element of marital sexuality—but that it engages our full humanity and even more makes us a communion of persons. The intervention was later published in *Origins*.

Brown, Sandra Reed. "Clergy Divorce and Remarriage." *Pastoral Psychology* 30, no. 3 (spring 1982): 187-197.

The author notes that the process of psychological recovery from the trauma of divorce is often exacerbated for the clergy couple by the expectation that clergy couples are model families/marriage for others to see and follow, even when circumstances don't warrant it. Given such expectations, clergy couples often remain hidden until it is too late to assist them in dealing with their marital problems. It is also noted that system resources devoted to the pastoral care of clergy are often limited. Without denying or playing down the goods of marriage, pastoral care must be provided to clergy couples who have reached the point of divorce. The goal, whether separation follows or not, is to help the couple restore and renew their lives firs through reconciliation with Christ and the with one another. Harsh judgment allows no room for forgiveness, confession or change and in itself becomes an idolatrous position. This process helps the couple to work through their sense of involvement in the breakup of the marriage by honest confession, genuine repentance, and realistic recovery of faith. This allows a stronger foundation for any subsequent attempted marriage.

Bureau of the Census. *Growth in Single Fathers Outpaces Growth in Single Mothers*. Census Bureau Reports. CB98-228. April 12, 2001.

This is one of several statistical reports from the Bureau of the Census which discusses the demographics of the American Family. This report is based on data from the 2000 US census. The report provides data on the average household size in the United States as of 2000. This information was used as a point of comparison in describing the reported household size of deacons in Chapter Three of this paper.

Cannon, Noreen. "Becoming Holy & Whole." *Human Development* 3, no. 1 (1982).

Holiness and wholeness refer to essentially the same phenomonon. This requires a balanced spirituality that builds upon nature and Scripture rather than Platonic dualism. A defining charactic of human nature is freedom. There is a tendency in the spiritual life to run from freedom. Yet, healthy spirituality demands one embrace one's freedom and be responsible for one's life. This is being fully human.. This is a short but meaty reflection on the relationship between spiritual and mental health/psychological development.

Dillon, Michele, Paul Wink, and Kristen Fay. "Is Spirituality Detrimental to Generativity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 3 (2003): 427-442.

This study compared religiousness and spirituality relative to concern for future generations. In recent years psychologists have operationalized religiousness as the reported importance one places on institution centered and traditional beliefs and practices. Spirituality is operationalized in terms of the reported importance of non-institutional and non-traditional beliefs and practices. As expected, religiousness, with its communal character, showed a positive correlation with generativity (as measured by the LGS scale). This was a stable pattern and could be predicted by scores in early adulthood.

The study also noted that spirituality, when operationalized in terms of intentional and systematic practices was also positively correlated to generativity. The correlation was to different sub-scales than religiousness. While spirituality is operationalized differently in the Dillon study than in this paper, the correlation of religiousness and spirituality with generativity points to the significant impact of faith orientation on important behavior in a stable manner.

Ditewig, William. "The Deacon as a Voice of Lament and Link to Thanksgiving and Justice." *Liturgical Ministry* 13 (winter 2004): 23-31.

The Church and the world need constant reminders of the diaconal nature of the Church; that deacons are signs of the presence of a broken-yet-risen Christ present in a broken but redeemed world. Deacons give voice to the world's lament while at the same time they proclaim the saving Gospel of Christ to a world most in need of it. The diaconate is a sacramental sign of the kenotic Christ. The order of deacons should present to the Church the image of the Christ who "emptied himself and took the form of a slave." Those who would be leaders in the community of disciples are to be identified by their own self-sacrificing love in imitation of the *kenosis* of Christ. Deacons are ordained precisely to serve at the margins, where people are most at risk, where senseless violence continues to rule, where religion is an alien reality, and where faith and hope in anything are unknown or are a fading memory. Deacons should be leading us all to the margins and then leading us back to the assembly so that the lament will be heard and responded to by all.

Evans, Michael. "To Foster Closeness." *Deacon Digest*, January/February, 1996, 23-27.

Our relationships make us who we are as persons. The deacon is an ordained person and that person is defined in a special way by his relations with his wife and children. This means that the married deacon can not separate the "minister" from the husband and father. The married deacon is always an ordained minister and a sacramental sign of Christ and his Church, even for his wife and family. Both marriage and ministry are rooted in the call to discipleship. In the person of the deacon many different yet complementary vocations exist together, truly distinct from each other but never separate. Ordination consecrates a person, re-orders him, gives him a new relationship to Christ and his Church, precisely in order "to foster closeness" between Christ and the Church and between members of the Church. Far from separating or dividing an ordained person from the rest of the Christian community, his consecration enables him to be totally dedicated to them in the name of Christ. Thus ordination should not diminish in any way his relationship with his wife. The deacon is committed to promote and sustain her, and to foster closeness between his ordained ministry and his wife's activity. The first brothers and sisters a deacon must serve while serving the mysteries of Christ are his own wife and children. The broader service to the community thus becomes an extension of the diaconal service of his wife and family. The married deacon's ministry flows from and extends his husbandly and parental ministry.

Healey, Ann. "The Role of the Family: Diaconate Formation and Ministry." Deacon Digest, July/August 1999.

The author argues that there are four essential dimensions of an integral formation. These dimensions include (1) family, (2) cultural diversity, (3) social justice, and (4) ecumenical spirit. This particular article focuses on the role of the family in the integral formation of deacons. She argues that deacon candidates do not come into formation as individuals but as members of families--domestic churches where God is first discovered and known. With formal ministry they are bringing their love and faith as well as life issues into a wider community. She argues that the wife should participate with her husband in as much of the formation she is willing but at least in the spiritual, pastoral and community experiences. She also speaks of the spiritual dimension of deacon formation. The first goal of spiritual formation is always the establishment and nourishment of attitudes, habits and practices in the spiritual life that will set the foundation for a lifetime of faithful discipleship. A man should not be admitted to diaconate formation unless it is demonstrated that he is already living a life of Christian spirituality....His ministry should draw upon the riches of his family life and respect his duties as husband and father....Spiritual formation should assist the participant in assessing the depth and quality of his integration of personal, family, employment and ministerial responsibilities, together with his growth in self-knowledge, in his commitment to Christ and his Church and in his dedication to service. A strong spiritual life and a realistic commitment to serve people converge in the continual transformation of the participant's mind and heart in harmony with Christ. The article is a nice summary of consensus thinking on diaconal formation.

Huneger, Richard J. "Diaconal Spirituality." *Deacon Digest*, May/June 2001.

The author argues that Christian spirituality has always been a matter of becoming "configured to Christ", as in St. Paul's statement "I live now, no longer, not I, but Christ lives in me." He points out that such language is closely related to the sacraments that bestow a "character". He begins with baptism and confirmation, noting that those who receive these sacraments are called to live in such a way to make visible, and be a driving force for, the communion and mission of the Church as a living organism in history. He describes the graces of the sacraments. He notes that although marriage is not said to bestow a character because it can be repeated, at least by one party, it does share with holy orders sacramentality as a state of life. Turning to orders, he notes that the presbyter and deacon are derivative participations in the apostolic ministry. He speaks of the *diakonia* of the deacon as a form of service with missionary urgency. Certainly acts of charity are included in such diakonia but the essential *diakonia* of the ordained deacon is to make visible the light of Christ. In a sense the family is caught up in this "ambassadorial" and missionary role of the deacon. While the author's approach to sacramental theology is a bit mechanical, I like where he goes with his argument in the end.

Kasper, Walter Cardinal. "The Ministry of the Deacon." *Deacon Digest* 15 (March/April 1998): 19-27.

Christian *diakonia* is entrusted to the deacon in a special way. The diaconal service of the deacon is not simply a matter of social and charity work.The *diakonia* of the deacon is practiced in the name of Jesus Christ and therefore to be understood in a single overall

theological and ecclesiological context. The deacon inspires and motivates *diakonia* in the parish. The church is not there for itself; it is a Church for others. It is a serving Church. *Diakonia* is the essential dimension of the Church. Faith and preaching, as well as the Eucharist and liturgy must be oriented to *diakonia*. Faith without *diakonia* is not a Christian faith. Preaching without diakonia is not Christian preaching. If one member is glad, all people are glad, in one member suffers, then all suffer. Thus *diakonia* is not a sideline of a parish or the hobby of some fewer number' n the image of Christ and in obedience to his message it is a central task of the Christian community, especially of the Church. The deacon does not conduct the whole *diakonia* of the Church but he can and should inspire, motivate and qualify others for diaconal service and he does this best if he himself leads by example in his own diaconal works, by his preaching invites others to follow his example and by sacramental service strengthens them for the way ahead.

Morris, Michael Lane, and Priscilla White Blanton. "Denominational Perceptions of Stress and the Provision of Support Services for Clergy Families." Pastoral Psychology 42, no. 5 (1994): 345-364.

This study explores the perception of denominational leaders regarding stress in the lives of their clergy and families and examines the types of supportive services currently being provided for the clergy and their families. Stressors impacting clergy relate to emotions, burnout, congregational relationships, physical/mental illness, sexuality and self-esteem. Financial demands are a chronic stressor, with pastoral compensation decisions made to reflect an "ascetic ideal" that is not in line with the practical reality of family life today. Many clergy and their spouses complain that they have few if any close friends. This is exacerbated by change of assignments and the need to uproot and move to another parish. Pastors and their wives were significantly lonelier and reported lower levels of marital adjustment than did non-clergy husbands and wives. Another stressor is divergence between the role expectations of the clergy and the actual responsibilities; fixing the toilet pipes rather than counseling or preparing a homily. There are also powerful emotional and boundary challenges that make ministry stressful and absorb clergy time and resources. In general denominations fell far short of the needed range of services needed to support their clergy and their families. All seemed to provide some form of marriage enrichment program for the clergy families. However, only a minority provided services for clergy children and wives of clergy or even counseling services for the cleric.

Pandit, Naresh R. "The Creation of theory: A Recent Application of the Grounded Theory Method." *The Qualitative Report* 2, no. 4 (December 1996).

This paper summarizes grounded theory and applies it to an analysis of corporate turnaround in two companies. His primary data sources for the study was the technical literature drawing on primary and secondary documents available through on-line databases. The paper is interesting as it is (1) a good summary of grounded theory and (2) provides an example of the use of grounded theory as a method of analysis. Speaking to an audience that is largely quantitative in orientation, he seems at pains to explain distinctions between the two approaches to research. The distinctions are helpful in understanding grounded theory.

Shewman, Richard. "Roots of a Marianas Spirituality." *Pacific Journal of Theology*, II, no. 10 (1993): 65-76.

The article describes an incident which sparked the author's interest in the role of social context on one's experience of spirituality. The article draws upon the methodology of Robert Schreiter, as presented in Constructing Local Theologies, to construct a local spirituality. Much of the article considers those cultural and historical conditions that shaped the experience of Christian living in the Northern Mariana Islands as of the early 1990's. The article has value in that is the seed from which this project paper has grown. There is also resonance between the importance of context on the experience of spirituality as presented in that article and this paper, as well as the symbolic networks of Robert Neville.

Strange, Kimberly Sparrow, and Lori . Sheppard. "Evaluations of Clergy Children Versus Non-Clergy Children: Does a Negative Stereotype Exist?." *Pastoral Psychology* 50, no. 1 (September 2001): 53-60.

This research tests the hypothesis that a clergy child (PK) would be judged more harshly if he or she behaved badly than a non-PK. Only one significant difference was found in support of the hypothesis, even though several factors were examined. In terms of the self-perception of PK, most PK respondents said they would not consider going into church related ministry as a career. They believed that their actions were closely watched by the community and church because they were a PK. They felt that they were expected to be more spiritual and knowledgeable of the Bible than their peers. A majority also agreed that sometimes their parents were treated unfairly by the church and they wanted to defend them. The authors felt that the findings suggested that PKs do have a stressful lifestyle. This is consistent with previous studies (Lee 1992, Stevenson 1982). It is felt that the minister and his family need services, such as counseling provided by the Church.

Webb, Raymond J. "Mentoring Newly Ordained Permanent Deacons." *Seminary Journal* (Spring 1999).

This is a short article on the use of mentors in the formation of permanent deacons. However, the mentors come into play after ordination, as the new deacons are attempting to adjust to ministry in parishes and their new assignments. The use of mentors is viewed in a positive light. The use of the term mentors in this article is similar to than common in corporate practice, where older employees will help the new ones learn the ropes. While different from the more structured use of mentors in education, as described by Daloz, the article provides precedent for the use of any type of mentor in deacon formation.

Zimmerman, Joyce Ann. "Editor's Notes." *Liturgical Ministry* 13 (winter 2004).

While essentially an editorial explaining why the issue was dedicated to the topic of the diaconate, the editorial covers many good points. She notes that the deacon's role is primarily that of icon of service to the Church. By serving, the deacon demonstrates and draws others to service. She touches life at the center issues...the formal works of service

performed by so many might blur or minimize the basic service all of us are to perform: doing the everyday things well out of love for the other...we can't overlook those many countless times in a day when we are acting like Jesus and serving others just in the simple things of our everyday lives. Deacons can remind us that this generous service to those we love is part of our discipleship and is our way of following Jesus. Service is not simply performing a task but is really a spirituality that is grounded in our shared baptismal identity of being members of the one body of Christ.  The deacon is the icon of service among us and reminds us that service is part and parcel of our baptismal commitment.

Websites

Ballard, P., and J. Pritchard. "Practical Theology in Action." SPCK 1996 [journal on-line]; available from http://www.bangor.ac.uk/rs/pt/ptunit/definition#ref; Internet; accessed 10 February 2004.

This website is maintained by the University of Wales at Bangor and discusses the practical theology programs offered by the faculty there. The site describes practical theology as "Christian thinking in the service of church and society." According to the authors, "such concerns bring practical theology face to face both with the rich variety of theological traditions and with the practical realities of the contexts within which mission and ministry operate. Broadly conceived practical theology finds itself concerned with issues like homiletics, preaching, communication, catechetics, religious education, liturgy, worship, pastoral care, prayer, and spiritual formation."

Dick, Bob. *Grounded theory: a thumbnail sketch*. http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html. 2002.

This website provides a brief but clear overview of grounded theory concepts for the graduate student. He covers such topics as the research situation, note taking, constant comparison, coding, memoing, theoretical sampling saturation, the use of technical literature and report writing. Dick discusses the practicalities of coding, sampling, sorting and theory building.

Stafford, Cardinal, *The Ideal Family of the Permanent Deacon*. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_19022000_idf_en.html. 2000.

This is a talk given by Cardinal Stafford at the Deacon retreat in Rome for Jubilee 2000 on February 19, 2000.  The Cardinal assumes a conventional family of deacon, wife and children, since that is the norm for most deacons. The primary thrust of the article is the responsible witness to Christian marriage that can be given by deacons and their families.

He draws upon the sacramental theology of marriage and orders to provide a backdrop for this argument. He draws upon the Norms for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons as a source of practical guidance in giving witness. While dense, it is an excellent reflection on the relationship between marriage and ministry.

West, Christopher. *The Theology of the Body: an education in being human*. http://www.solidarityinstitute.org/family/spirituality.asp. 2002.

This article by Christopher West of the Denver Archdiocese summarizes the Pope's "theology of the body" as applied to marital spirituality.  West paraphrases the Pope explaining, "The body has a nuptial meaning because it reveals man and woman's call to become a gift for one another, a guft fully realized in their "one flesh" union. The body also has a "generative meaning" that brings a third into the world through their communion. In this way, marriage constitutes a "primordial sacrament" understood as a sign that truly communicates the myster of God's Trinitarian life and love to husband and wife, and through them to their children, and through the family to the whole world.  This is what marital spirituality is all about: participating in God's life and love and sharing it with the world. While this is a sublime calling, it's not ethereal. It is tangible. God's love is meant to be lived and felt in daily life as a married couple and as a family. Living a spiritual life never means rejecting our bodies. Authentic spirituality is always an embodied spirituality.

Documents of the Hierarchy

Committee on the Permanent Diaconate, *A National Study on the Permanent Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States: 1994-1995*. United States Catholic Conference. Washington, DC, 1996.

A study sponsored by the Bishop's Committee on the Permanent Diaconate to obtain a more accurate profile of the diaconal community, its experience in ministry, the experience of spouses and supervisors. In this paper use was made for comparative purposes of some demographic data. However, it is also an excellent source of information on how the diaconate is perceived by "significant others".

Congregation for Catholic Education. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum Permantenium* (Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons). Vatican City: Congregation for Catholic Educaton, 1998.

This and its sister document, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons, are the product of the Plenary Assembly on the Permanent Diaconate held in November 1995. This document lays out the purpose of formation programs for the Permanent Diaconate and what criteria should be used to evaluate deacon formation programs.

Congregation for the Clergy. *Directorium Pro Ministerio Et Vita Diaconorum Permanentium* (Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons). Vatican City: Congregation for Clergy, 1998.

This document was released at the same time as the document on the formation of deacons and considers the circumstances of their life and ministry. While largely a review of the theology of the diaconate, it addresses many of the practical issues facing most deacons. The section on the spiritual life of deacons is good, though focusing largely on the prayer disciplines of deacons. It also provides more background in understanding variations in canon law dealing with deacons apart from other clergy.

"Gaudium et Spes." In *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents.* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).Translated and compiled by Austin Flannery. Vol. 1. Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1992.

While the other documents of the Council were mostly internal documents in their purpose and writing style, *Gaudium et Spes* was outward looking. It addressed itself to the people of the world and the concrete situations in which they found themselves. It attempted to show how the Church is meant to be of service to them in bringing hope of renewal. It emphasizes respect for the human person and concern for the common good. It speaks of social justice and human solidarity. It also addresses specific issues that urgently cry for attention in contemporary society. Among these issues is the dignity of marriage and the family in the modern world. It is here that real progress is incorporated into the Church's official theological position on marriage both with regard to the role of love in marriage and the importance of marriage as a community of life.

 "Lumen gentium." (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) In *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents.* Translated and compiled by Austin Flannery. Vol. 1. Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1992.

Together with *Gaudium et Spes*, this document has proven to be the most crucial of the Second Vatican Council. While Gaudium et Spes looked out on the world, giving witness to its faith in Christ and presenting itself as servant, *Lumen Gentium* is the Church reflecting on itself. It describes the purpose of the Church and its appropriate structure, both in its fundamental nature and in its particular incarnation of that nature in the middle of the 20th century. It plays an important role in more clearly defining the nature of episcopal ministry, along with *Christus Dominus*, the role of the laity in the Church, our relationship with other religions, and in restoring the permanent diaconate.

Pope John Paul II. "Allocution to the Permanent Deacons and their Wives Given at Detroit, MI (19 September 1987)." *Origins* 17 (1987): 327-329.

As part of his visit to the United States in September 1987, Pope John Paul II set aside several hours to meet with some of the deacons of the nation in an auditorium in downtown Detroit. The meeting was electric in the warm reception given by the deacons to the Pope and in the Pope's acknowledgement of the important ministry being performed by deacons and of his support for deacons.

Pope John Paul II. *Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in America*. Vatican City. (1999).

This document is the response of the Pope to the American Synod which occurred prior to the turn of the millennium. The theme of the Synod was "Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity in America." The document looks for those areas where people encounter Christ, especially through the witness and ministry of the Church. It also considers some of the challenges that must be faced in making it possible for people to effectively encounter Christ. It speaks of conversion in terms of *metanoia* and of the continuing need for *metanoia* in the Church as well as broader society. Such *metanoia* includes responding to the call to holiness, both individually and as a community. It is here that I draw upon the document. Ultimately, the document is a call for renewal in the Church.

Pope John Paul II. *Deacons Are Called to a Life of Holiness: General Audience, October 20, 1993*. Vatican City: Internet Office of the Holy See, http://www.vatican.va, 1999.

This is a talk of the Pope given at a general audience. He sees diaconal spirituality rooted in the grace of orders and deeply affecting his heart. This grace spurs him to offer his whole self to the service of the Kingdom of God through service to the Church. The spirit of service characterizes the interior mind and will of the deacon. The diaconate commits one to follow Jesus with the attitude of humble service, which is expressed not only in works of charity, but shapes and embraces one's whole way of thinking and acting. He sees a close, interactive relationship between ministry and an intentional spirituality that nourishes the deacon's ministry.

Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, issued July 25, 1968, Janet E. Smith (tr.), (Pope Paul VI Institute Press; Omaha, NB; 1993).

This encyclical is best known as reaffirming the opposition of the Church to artificial contraceptives. At a time when this was questioned by many and in which medical science blurred the distinction between natural and artificial, the encyclical was controversial. However, the encyclical did not just prohibit artificial contraception. It also affirmed the right of married couples to space their children for serious reasons and if mutually agreeable. It also offered a reflection on the role of conjugal love in married life for the first time by a sitting pontiff.

*Model Standards for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Deacons in the United States*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2003.

This document was originally developed as part of the National Directory for the Formation of Permanent Deacons by the Bishop's Committee on the Permanent Diaconate. When the Directory was approved and sent to the Holy See for *recognitio*, it was suggested by the Holy See that the standards be treated apart from the Directory. It was separated out and developed this document. The document presents specific standards of knowledge for each significant step in the formation process relative to the spiritual, human, theological and practical dimensions of ministerial formation for deacon

candidates. While the Directory has received *recognitio*, as of this writing the USCCB is waiting for *recognitio* of the standards. Thus, they are not yet being officially implemented. The author obtained an information copy of the standards from the USCCB Office on the Permanent Diaconate. That copy is cited in this paper.

*National Directory for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2003.

The Directory is the attempt by the USCCB to implement the Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons published by the Holy See in 1998. Drawing on that master document, the Directory provides guidance on the formation process for the various Diocesan formation programs. It presents a well balanced model for the formation of deacons. This reflects the input of representatives of various successful deacon formation programs and several years of hard work by the committee of consultants who took part in the development process.

**APPENDIX A:**

**TABLES AND FIGURES**

The following figure is the concept map from which the core concepts presented on page 104 are developed. It was developed using *Atlas.ti 5.0.*

*Figure 2. Schematic Map of Axial Code Categories*

Legend
G = part of
R = associated with
N = is cause of

Transitions (11)
Experience/life condition (7)
obligations/expectations (12)
role/expectation conflicts (10)
distractions (11)
schedule conflicts (25)
break in routine (34)
conflicting commitments (34)
spouse as means of accountability (15)
marriage as school of love (13)
togetherness (21)
family (18)
marital relationship sacramental (24)
spirituality & marriage integral (34)
marriage as foundation for ministry (15)
none (9)
difficulties (2)
cares of life (6)
challenging (22)
CF: Inner Life
expression of faith (31)
home (29)
work (4)
retirement (13)
ministry setting (17)
anywhere (15)
sacred place (34)
ministry related (19)
who I am (24)
personal fallings (5)
resistance (8)
self (20)
Personal spiritual growth (49)
generativity (18)
icon/image of God (3)
Wounded healer (11)
more skillful (23)
Christ focused (13)
integral (10)
integrity of life (16)
Knowledge (3)
Nurturance/Scripture (16)
relationship with God (16)
Relationship with people (3)
communication (22)
communion (9)
co-ministers (11)
people served (18)
parish community (9)
deepens spirituality (34)
spiritual sustenance (24)
pray/reflect (28)
mass/office (36)
confessor/spiritual director (2)
Devotional practices (9)
affective (17)
affective response (10)
affective incentives (21)

# APPENDIX B:

## THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

*Thank you very much for helping with this study. Let's begin with a little personal information. Please answer the following by filling in the blanks or selecting the appropriate option.*

Year of birth: _____          Year of diaconal ordination: _____

I am a:  ? deacon     ? spouse of deacon          Year married: _____

Highest grade/degree completed *(exclude deacon formation unless academic degree was part of formation)*: _____

We have _____ children through birth or adoption.          There are still children living at home.
? yes    ? no

With regard to my employment, currently I am:

| ? employed | ? self-employed | ? retired | ? unemployed |
|---|---|---|---|

*Please respond to the following questions. Space is provided for your responses. <u>If additional space is needed, please feel free to use the back of the questionnaire</u> but please number your response.*

1. If you were asked to tell your life story, you could probably break it down into various chapters, each with its own theme. What is the theme of the current chapter in your life story and what is the key event that marks the transition from the previous chapter to the current?

2. Is the theme of the current chapter of your life more a departure from the theme of the prior chapter of your life story or is it more a development of that earlier chapter? Please explain.

3. Since your ordination, or during the formational program, have you experienced any major transformations in your relationships, the way you view the world, or in the way you perceive yourself? If yes, please describe the changes and how they came about.

4. How would you define "spirituality" as it applies to your life?

5. Please describe the image/metaphor that best represents your spiritual life. Also, please explain how this image/metaphor is a symbol for your spiritual life.

The following is a list of common practices in the Christian tradition that may be of support to the spiritual life of a deacon. Please select the **three that you do most often**. Also, from this list please select the **three that are most meaningful** for you. If your most frequent or most meaningful are not listed, please add them to the list.

| attend Mass | family prayer | visit sick, elderly or shut-ins | receive spiritual direction | conversation with wife |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| rosary | journal | prepare homily | reflect on Scripture | meditation |
| fast or abstain | centering prayer | quiet walk | activity with children | Divine Office |
| conjugal intimacy | read theology | prayer with spouse | retreat | day of reflection |
| help at homeless shelter | sacrament of reconciliation | listen to troubled, grieving or lonely | bring Eucharist to sick, elderly or shut-ins | watch sunset |
| teach religious education/ RCIA | give alms to panhandler | give spiritual direction | pray novena | make donation to charity |
| Eucharistic adoration | share meal with friends | intercessory prayer | other: | other: |

| In the appropriate column below list your responses: | |
| --- | --- |
| 6. Most frequent practices | 7. Most meaningful practices |
| a. _____ | a. _____ |

| b. _____ | b. _____ |
| c. _____ | c. _____ |

**With the single most _frequent_ practice of the three you listed above in response to number 6 please answer the following:**
*8. How did this practice begin with you?*

*9. How often do you participate in this practice?*

*10. Who is normally involved in this practice with you, if anyone?*

*11. Where do you participate in this practice?*

*12. What events, if any interfere with your participation in this practice?*

*13. Please describe what happens when you participate in this practice, so the actual content of the practice is clear. Detail is appreciated.*

*14. What impact has this practice had on your marriage?*

*15. What impact has this practice had on your ministry?*

*16. Why do you participate in this practice so often?*

*17. How long has this practice been a regular part of your life?*

*18. How has this practice changed over the time that it has been a regular part of your life?*

***With the single most <u>meaningful</u> practice of the three you listed above in response to number 7 please answer the following:***
*19. How did this practice begin with you?*

*20. How often do you participate in this practice?*

*21. Who is normally involved in this practice with you, if anyone?*

*22. Where do you participate in this practice?*

*23. What events, if any interfere with your participation in this practice?*

*24. Please describe what happens when you participate in this practice, so the actual content of the practice is clear. Detail is appreciated.*

*25. What impact has this practice had on your marriage?*

*26. What impact has this practice had on your ministry?*

*27. Why is this practice so meaningful to you?*

*28. How long has this practice been a regular part of your life?*

*29. How has this practice changed over the time that it has been a regular part of your life?*

*30. What impact does your marriage have on your spiritual life?*

*31. What impact does diaconal ministry have on your spiritual life?*

*32. a) Do you have an on-going relationship with a spiritual director? ( )yes ( )no*
*b) If yes, what is the primary value of this relationship to your diaconal ministry and marriage?*

Thank you for your help in this study.

# APPENDIX C

## SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR DEACONS AND THEIR WIVES

It is beyond the scope of this project to produce a detailed curriculum for the spiritual formation of deacons and their wives. However, a variety of elements appropriate to such a program are suggested by the research. These elements are discussed in Chapter Five. The purpose of this appendix is to provide a more detailed outline of what a spiritual formation program might look like based upon the insights of this study. Included in the outline are relevant educational objectives for each year of the formation program and for individual class session. The outline allows the reader to see how the content, practice, and reflective components interact to provide a transformative experience.

The outline is structured based on a four year pre-ordination formation program with one required year of post-ordination formation. Preparatory activities are identified and briefly discussed.

### *The Logic of Formation*

The program of formation draws largely from the work of Adrian Van Kaam, in that it views spirituality as integral with all of one's life and is conscious of the various forces that shape one's formation field. It is structured on a transformative learning

model, drawing from the work of Jack Mezirow, in which reflection upon one's experience is a significant part of the learning process.

The Holy See describes the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours as the pillars of the spiritual life of the deacon. This assertion is consistent with the research presented in the main body of this paper. As a result, there is significant emphasis throughout the formation program on the Eucharist; contemplative awareness in its celebration and mystagogical reflection on the liturgy. The Liturgy of the Hours is also present throughout the formation program, as part of the worship activities of the deacon aspirants and candidates on class days and at the beginning of each mentoring session.

An existing general awareness about Christian spirituality in the aspirants and candidates is assumed for most of the topics presented. The object is to help them develop and apply this understanding in practice. The dynamic of the program is to provide a conceptual map of Christian spirituality during the first year, along with significant practice in skills important to a variety of spiritual disciplines and to the transformative learning process. The second and third years focus on Christian spirituality in the contexts of marriage and ordained ministry. The fourth year draws heavily on the concepts and skills presented during first three years, helping the candidate to integrate them and apply them not only to his own life but to the spiritual and pastoral care of others. It is particularly a time of preparation for ordination. The mentoring sessions of the fifth year are primarily a support during the transition into diaconal ministry. Classes relate the material covered in the previous four years to the long spiritual tradition of the Church and to contemporary challenges. Each year builds upon the previous experiences and skills of the participants both within the formation program and from their general life experience.

*Structure*

The spiritual formation program is based upon a five year model, with four years pre-ordination and one post-ordination year. Each year in the program assumes ten class sessions and ten mentoring sessions. Each class and mentoring session is usually divided into two parts. The first part of each class session is devoted to cognitive content. The second part of the class session tends to focus on the presentation or practice of a skill or spiritual discipline. Mentoring sessions usually include time for the practice of the skill or spiritual discipline and a group reflection, either on the cognitive material presented in a recent class or on a related experience.

It is anticipated that each class and mentoring session will run for approximately an hour and a half. A short break can be provided. This can serve as a natural transition between the two parts of the session. This structure is flexible and varies as the subject or situation requires.

Social activities and respect for the traditions of the various liturgical seasons are encouraged. Such activities may be done as part of the general formation program during the study weekend, or as additional or extended gatherings of the mentoring groups. This is to be encouraged but left to the discretion of the participants.

*Reflection*

The spiritual component of deacon formation presented here includes both the horizontal and vertical dimension of spirituality, the need for a contemplative awareness of our environment, as well as a developed ability to reflect upon one's experience.

Serious reflection always involves an element of transformation; yet, there are different ways in which one can undertake reflection. Three different types of reflection are used as part of this formation process.

Mystagogical reflection, as used in this outline, refers to a process Kathleen Hughes describes as liturgical contemplation. This involves awareness, reflection, reception and transformation. Awareness is alert, focused and mindful attention to what unfolds before us and within us during the celebration of liturgy. Reflection is attention to the symbolic language of the liturgy and to our experience, allowing us to consider and meditate upon these realities. Reception is similar to reflection, except that instead of attending to the liturgical experience with our intellect, we attend with our hearts; allowing the power of the experience to touch and transform us. Transformation is the work of God; the change that is worked within us as a result of our "Amen" to the liturgical experience.[159]

Critical reflection involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions in light of new information or experience. Such assessment seeks to determine if the assumptions or premises upon which the person's meaning perspective is based is authentic, valid and accurate. Critical reflection is transformative when the assessment determines that present assumptions or premises are found lacking and a more authentic, valid and accurate meaning schemata or perspective is developed.[160]

Theological reflection refers to a process of reflection, usually on events that arise in the course of ministry, which leads to action. It normally involves a group who focus

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[159]Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999), 17-28.

[160]Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 6.

upon a meaningful event in ministry from a faith-theological perspective. It seeks a practical outcome. It tries to help a person discover God's presence in the event. Its goal is not knowledge about God but encounter with God. It asks the person to consider what difference God's presence makes and what God expects as a result.[161]

## *Presumptions for Participants*

It is presumed that all participants come into the formation program with the practice of daily prayer, regular participation in the celebration of the Eucharist and an active involvement in the life of their parish community. It is also presumed that within an appropriate time frame the participants will establish an on-going relationship with a competent spiritual director. The spiritual formation program builds upon these presumed baseline practices.

## *Preparatory Activities*

Educational objectives

Prepare educators to perform their specific duties by (1) providing sufficient information about the character of the spiritual experience of the aspirants and (2) by orienting mentors to specific tasks expected of them.

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[161]Robert L. Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), vii-x.

Profile Aspirants

Either during the pre-selection screening of aspirants or following their acceptance into the program, it is necessary to interview the aspirants and their wives to determine their understanding of Christian spirituality, the character of their spiritual practices, and their experience of spirituality as a family. This information helps to establish a baseline for each participant and a broad history of the course of spiritual growth and transformation which brought them to the decision to seek formation for the diaconate.

Mentor Orientation

Deacon couples identified to serve as mentors, and who have agreed to serve in this role, need to be oriented to what is expected of them. This includes background on the role of mentors in transformative learning models, a review of skills they will be expected to exercise with the aspirants, a review of the class content which will be background for the mentoring meetings, and instruction on how to conduct the monthly mentoring sessions. The orientation should be held at least a month in advance of the beginning of formation. Between the mentor orientation workshop and the beginning of formation for the new aspirants, the spiritual formation coordinator should meet with each of the mentors to provide them with information about the aspirants assigned to them. Such information should include some of the background material collected as part of aspirant profiling. Suggested outlines for the scheduled mentoring sessions are also provided by the coordinator to the mentors.

*First Year*

Educational Objectives

Both the conceptual information and the practical skills presented during the first
year are the foundation for the remaining years of formation and will be drawn upon
repeatedly in the following years.

1. Students will demonstrate a conceptual understanding of and appreciation for the
   nature of Christian spirituality, as it is nurtured through spiritual disciplines and
   lived out in different contexts.

2. Students will demonstrate familiarity with and an ability to practice contemplative
   awareness (mindfulness) and reflection (critical/theological) as a support for
   greater self-awareness and engagement in spiritual disciplines.


First Class Session
1. Be able to articulate a basic understanding of spirituality
2. Distinguish between spirituality in general and Christian spirituality
3. Demonstrate basic skills in self-awareness (paying attention)

First Mentoring Session
1. Initial community building among members
2. Deeper understanding of class material
3. Practice reflection skills (paying attention)

Second Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of communion (*koinonia*) as a dynamic
   of Christian spirituality
2. Demonstrate basic skills in self-awareness (journaling)

Second Mentoring Session
1. Deeper understanding of class material
2. Practice reflection skills (journaling)

Third Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of self-emptying (*kenosis*) as a dynamic of Christian spirituality
2. Demonstrate basic skills in self-awareness (auto-biography)

Third Mentoring Session
1. Deeper understanding of class material
2. Practice reflection skills (autobiography)

Fourth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of service (*diakonia*) as a dynamic of Christian spirituality
2. Demonstrate basic skills in critical reflection.

Fourth Mentoring Session
1. Deeper understanding of class material
2. Practice critical reflection skills

Fifth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of self-transcendence as a dynamic of Christian spirituality
2. Demonstrate sufficient basic knowledge of Liturgy of the Hours to begin practice at home

Fifth Mentoring Session
1. Deeper understanding of class material
2. Review structure and practice of using a breviary
3. Practice the use of the breviary by praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

Sixth Class session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of: the role of disciplines in Christian spirituality, common spiritual disciplines, and how they are organized by categories.
2. Demonstrate sufficient basic knowledge of Liturgy of the Hours to begin practice at home
3. Be able to apply basic contemplative skills of awareness and reflection to experience of praying the Liturgy of the Hours alone and with a group

Sixth Mentoring Session
1. Deeper understanding of class material through review and discussion
2. Discussion of relationship of spiritual disciplines to one's total spiritual life.
3. Practice the use of the breviary by praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

Seventh Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of: schools/spiritualities in the Catholic tradition, the role of contexts in Christian spirituality and the most common contexts for Christians
2. Be able to apply basic contemplative skills of awareness and reflection to experience of *lectio divina*.
3. Be able to apply basic contemplative skills of awareness and reflection to experience of Easter Vigil.

Seventh Mentoring Session
1. Discuss any questions raised regarding the schools of spirituality and contexts for experience of spirituality.
2. Practice *lectio divina* as a group
3. Discuss the participants experience of the Easter Vigil as a mystagogical reflection

Eight Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of characteristics of marriage/family and diaconal ministry as major contexts for diaconal spirituality
2. Demonstrate a familiarity with the concepts of interior silence and contemplative prayer; with an introduction to centering prayer as an example of this tradition.

Eight Mentoring Session
1. Brief discussion of marriage and family and ministry as contexts for diaconal spirituality
2. Questions & answers and practice of centering prayer.

Ninth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of characteristics common to experience of spirituality of deacons. *(core characteristics & timeline from study)*.
2. Be able to apply basic contemplative skills of awareness and reflection to an examination of their practice of spiritual disciplines and experience of spirituality (questionnaire provided as support).

Ninth Mentoring Session
1. Brief discussion of questions arising from class content.
2. Review and open discussion of responses to questionnaire

Tenth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate differences between healthy and unhealthy spirituality; as well as primary challenges to a healthy spirituality.
2. Take Meyer-Briggs Personality Inventory

Tenth Mentoring Session
1. Brief follow up discussion regarding healthy and unhealthy spirituality.

2. Return MBPI findings to participants and discuss the meanings of the classifications on person's spiritual practice.
3. Open discussion in which participants demonstrate insight into the character of their spirituality at present and what has contributed to its current state of development.

*Second Year*

Educational Objectives

The focus of the second year is marriage and family spirituality. This is the primary context in which the deacon and his wife live and function. It is also the context that has exerted the greatest influence in shaping his or her present spirituality.

1. Students will demonstrate a conceptual understanding of and appreciation for the nature of Christian marriage and family life, as well as those spiritual disciplines most appropriate to the marital context.

2. Students will demonstrate familiarity with and an ability to practice contemplative awareness (mindfulness) and reflection (critical and theological) as a support for greater awareness of self, spouse and their marital relationship, as well as to facilitate engagement in those spiritual disciplines most fruitful for marriage and family life.

First Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of marriage as viewed as a social institution in contemporary America
2. Demonstrate basic skills in theological reflection.

First Mentoring Session
1. Critical reflection on summer reading assignment books for both content and student's reaction to content.
2. Brief discussion of any questions raised regarding marriage in contemporary America

3. Group discussion of theological reflection topic assigned as homework, as practice experience of theological reflection

Second Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of evolving history of marriage as part of the Judeo-Christian tradition.
2. Demonstrate basic understanding of the character of spiritual direction as a Christian discipline and support for spiritual life.

Second Mentoring Session
1. Follow up discussion of the experience of spiritual direction, how to go about finding a spiritual director, Character of the relationship.
2. Group theological reflection based on some family based experience of member or mentor during the previous few weeks.

Third Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of human sexuality as presented in Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. (Part 1 of 2 class sessions)
2. Demonstrate basic understanding of the value and varieties of family prayer as a Christian discipline and support for spiritual life.

Third Mentoring Session
1. Open discussion of Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, particularly with regard to statement that *spirituality finds its expression through the flesh.*
2. Group reflection on experience of family prayer in various forms.

Fourth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of human sexuality as presented in Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. (Part 2 of 2 class sessions)
2. Demonstrate basic understanding of the value of family traditions, especially those related to religious themes or the sacraments, as a Christian discipline and support for spiritual life.

Fourth Mentoring Session
1. Group discussion of relationship of sexuality and spirituality in Catholic marriage.
2. Introduction and practice of conversational prayer

Fifth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of marital spirituality (ie. Marriage as a context for the spiritual life) as presented by contemporary theologians (aside from Pope): Kasper, Gaillardetz, Wright, Oliver and Boyer.

Fifth Mentoring Session
2. Group discussion applying Boyer's model of life at the center and life at the edge to participant's life experience. Does it resonate?

3.  Discussion and practice of *contemplative (mindful)listening* as a spiritual discipline for deacon and spouse.

Sixth Class Session
1.  Be able to articulate basic understanding of communication skills appropriate to marriage as a result of presentation by Marriage Encounter representatives, with practical exercise.

Sixth Mentoring Session
2.  Group discussion of ideas & skills presented by Marriage Encounter representatives at previous class.
3.  Couples practice one of the Marriage Encounter communication exercise assigned by mentor.

Seventh Class Session
1.  Be able to articulate basic understanding of cultural myths and challenges to the ideal of Catholic marriage and marital spirituality.
2.  Autobiography as a spiritual discipline (revisited): Be able to do and appreciate the value of an autobiographical reflection on some key point in the courtship or marriage.

Seventh Mentoring Session
1.  Group discussion of the autobiographical reflections and the experience of sharing them with one's spouse.
    a.  Describe the experience of writing and sharing
    b.  What were internal experiences as this occurred?
    c.  What made the experience described in reflection so meaningful?
    d.  What impact did it have on relationship with spouse, relationship with God?
2.  Presentation on Fr. Lawrence of the Resurrection, *Practice of the Presence of God* with discussion of its applicability to marriage and family life.

Eight Class Session
1.  Be able to articulate basic understanding of deacon as icon of Christ and the inherent iconic role applied to deacon's family, with its good points an bad.
2.  Centering Prayer revisited--consideration of its value as a spiritual discipline for families.

Eight Mentoring Session
1.  Brief group discussion based on iconic role of deacon & family relative to any concerns raised by students.
2.  Group discussion of spiritual practices used by deacons and wives and extent to which they promote marital spirituality.
3.  Practice centering prayer

Ninth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of common experiences of wives and children of clergy, as they apply to deacon families.
2. Presentation on imagination and visualization in prayer with practice based on selected scripture passages.

Ninth Mentoring Session
1. Discussion opportunity regarding experience of wives and children
2. Practice use of imagination and visualization in context of Welcoming prayer and forgiveness prayer

Tenth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic understanding of significant factors in the spiritual formation of one's children.
2. Presentation on the use of imagination and visualization as it applies to storytelling as a spiritual practice.

Tenth Mentoring Session
1. Opportunity for discussion of issues raised in the class on the spiritual formation of one's children.
2. Presentation of each of the stories by its author.
3. Group reflection on: Experience of the writing process, experience of presenting it to family & their reactions, internal reactions to their experience, consideration of symbolism in story, consideration of spiritual character of story, what spiritual impact has the story had on the author?

*Third Year*

Educational Objectives

The focus of the third year is pastoral spirituality. How is the charism of the diaconate realized in the life of the deacon? Ministry is one of the most significant contexts in which the deacon and his wife live and function. It is also a context that will significantly influence his or her spirituality in the years to come.

1. Students will demonstrate a conceptual understanding of and appreciation for the nature of Christian ministry, as well as those spiritual disciplines most appropriate to a ministerial context.

2.  Students will demonstrate familiarity with and an ability to practice contemplative

    awareness (mindfulness) and reflection (critical/theological) as a support for

    greater awareness of self and person(s) encountered in ministry, as well as to

    facilitate engagement in those spiritual disciplines most fruitful for ordained

    ministry as a deacon.

First Class Session
1.  Be able to articulate basic understanding of the charism of the deacon drawing upon theology and historical studies.
2.  Review of theological reflection as applied to pastoral contexts.

First Mentoring Session
1.  Practice group theological reflection using an incident from recent ministerial experience.
2.  Demonstrate knowledge of summer assigned readings through group critical reflection of readings.
3.  Practice *Lectio divina* using John 13:1-17 or similar reading.

Second Class Session
1.  Be able to articulate basic theological consideration of diaconal ministry in the celebration of the Eucharist and its relationship to servant ministry.
2.  Be able to articulate basic understanding of liturgical ministry as a spiritual discipline

Second Mentoring Session
1.  Practice group mystagogical reflection using an incident from recent experience of liturgical ministry.
2.  Presentation on music as an aid to spiritual life with practical exercises (resource materials provided).

Third Class Session
1.  Be able to articulate basic theological consideration of diaconal ministry in teaching (including homily) and its relationship to servant ministry.
2.  Attend to a presentation on teaching as a spiritually formative experience and be able to reflect on it relative to student's experience.

Third Mentoring Session
1.  Participate in group reflection on experience of teaching as ministry/spiritual discipline.

2. Plan a class Christmas worship service for the following deacon weekend (assuming monthly sessions).

Fourth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of suffering and loss as part of the human condition; both as one ministering to the suffering and as one who suffers.

Fourth Mentoring Session

1. Discussion and reflection on suffering and loss
2. Mystagogical reflection on experience of Christmas worship service group had planned at last mentoring session and carried out at most recent class weekend.

Fifth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate basic consideration of pastoral leadership as ministry and a spiritual discipline, with its related spiritual gifts and disciplines.
2. Attend to presentation by several deacons ministering in pastoral leadership positions with group discussion following.

Fifth Mentoring Session

1. Participate in group discussion in response to request to...
   a. Describe the best leader you have ever followed.
   b. How did God use that person in your life?
   c. What did you learn from him or her?
2. Participate in group theological reflection on recent pastoral experience in which student had a leadership role.

Sixth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate basic theological consideration of caring as an expression of spiritual formation, with special attention to respect for the other's freedom and care as putting love into action.
2. Presentation from representative of Pax Christi or similar Christian organization on peacemaking as a spiritual discipline.

Sixth Mentoring Session

1. Develop a deeper understanding of the class material through a group discussion on the following points.
   a. Do the mentoring group members care for each other?
   b. How are the group members shaped and formed by each other?
   c. What spiritual benefits have come from this relationship?
2. Participate in a critical reflection of the movie "Groundhog Day" (or similar film) with special attention to assumptions and dynamics underlying the transformation of the protagonist (Bill Murray character).

Seventh Class Session

1. Be able to articulate basic theological consideration of solidarity and social justice as presented in *Solicitudo Rei Socalis.*

2. Attention to presentation by deacon with missionary field experience or by representative with field experience of Diocesan Mission Office to provide specific context for understanding the encyclical.

Seventh Mentoring Session

1. Deeper appreciation of past class topics through a reflection on and discussion of how the encyclical challenges them personally.
2. Plan and perform, as a group, some act of caring service in the community consistent with the challenges of the encyclical. This will be accomplished prior to the next mentoring session.

Eight Class Session

1. Be able to articulate basic theological consideration of ministry to the dying and its challenge to the minister's spiritual life; includes presentation by hospice minister.
2. Attention to presentation on sacred space and sacred time as elements of spirituality

Eight Mentoring Session

1. Group reflection on experiences of the deaths of loved ones.
   a. How did the experience affect you?
   b. What about empathy?
   c. Did it involve a crisis of limits?
   d. Present the eulogies assigned as homework. With group discussion on:
   e. Experience of writing the eulogy and feelings evoked.
   f. Does it describe you today or the you hoped for?
   g. What remains to be realized in your life between now and the time when the eulogy willl be used.

Ninth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of challenges to diaconal ministry and spiritual growth.
2. Deeper appreciation of impact of ministry on one's spiritual life by presenting impressions from review of journal entries related to pastoral ministry experience.
   a. What patterns emerged from the entries?
   b. What transformation is apparent in the entries over the year?

Ninth Mentoring Session

1. Deeper appreciation for the contexts of marriage and ministry through a group discussion/reflection on the interrelationship of family life/marriage and ministry in the lives of the students during the year just ending.
2. Consideration of character of ministry and the spirituality of the minister through group critical reflection on film "At Play in the Fields of the Lord" (or similar film).

Tenth Class Session
1. Be able to articulate consideration of the role of the ministerial community as an element of spiritual growth and fruitful ministry.
2. Presentation on creative expression (art, poetry, storytelling, music, etc.) as a spiritual discipline

Tenth Mentoring Session
1. Further discussion of creativity as an expression of spiritual life, with examples from art, literature, music and the mentor's own experience. Students should share their experiences of creativity as spiritual experience.
2. Remaining time to be dedicated to social activity (pot luck, picnic, etc.) to encourage community building among group members.

*Fourth Year*

Educational Objectives

The focus of the fourth year is the spiritual care of others. This includes mystagogy, spiritual direction and mentoring. As an ordained minister, the deacon is an ordinary minister of the sacraments. He leads the faithful in worship and devotion in those forms appropriate to deacons. He is a mystagogue as he leads others to a deeper and more meaningful encounter with the risen Christ in the public worship of the Church. People seek him out as one who can assist them on their spiritual journey. He does this not only through conceptual knowledge but through the example of his own deep engagement in liturgical and sacramental experience.

1. Students will demonstrate a conceptual understanding of and appreciation for the nature of Christian worship, especially the liturgy and the sacraments.

2. Students will demonstrate a conceptual understanding of and appreciation for the mystagogical responsibility of the deacon and ways to facilitate a richer experience of worship.

3. Students will demonstrate a conceptual understanding of and appreciation for the nature of spiritual direction and its related skills (contemplative awareness, listening, discernment, etc.)

4. Students will demonstrate a conceptual understanding of and appreciation for the nature of mentoring others as a form of spiritual support (in prayer groups, Bible study groups, CCD, etc.).

5. Students will demonstrate familiarity with and an ability to practice contemplative awareness (mindfulness) and reflection (critical/theological) as a support for a deeper engagement in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church both on his part and for those to whom he ministers; as well as to apply these spiritual disciplines in the context of ministry.

First Class Session
1. Be able to articulate consideration of what transformation means in the spiritual life of a Christian. Revisiting self-transcendence from the perspective of spiritual theology, to include: true/false self, active/passive purification, willingness/willfulness, and union with God.
2. Attention to a group discussion on the necessary rhythm of solitude and community in the Christian life.

First Mentoring Session
1. Presentation and discussion on role of simplicity in Christian life no matter the context.
2. Revisit "Paying attention" (mindfulness) as a spiritual discipline, with exercises to encourage mindfulness.

Second Class Session
1. Be able to articulate consideration of the nature and practice of discernment as a support for one's own spiritual life and that of the person assisted. Presentation will draw primarily from the work of St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis de Sales.
2. Attention to a presentation and discussion on the body and gesture in prayer.

Second Mentoring Session
1. Critical reflection on selected readings from St. Ignatius and St. Francis.
2. Theological reflection on recent experience of pastoral ministry

Third Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of the role of deacon as mystagogue and its impact on his experience of the Eucharist and assisting in liturgical celebrations.
2. Attention to a presentation and discussion on freedom and submission in the spiritual life and diaconal ministry.

Third Mentoring Session

1. Group mystagogical reflection on baptism celebration.
2. Group critical reflection on assigned reading regarding freedom and submission.

Fourth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration on role of emotions and traditional devotions in the spiritual life.

Fourth Mentoring Session

2. Group mystagogical reflection on an experience of the sacrament of reconciliation.
3. Presentation on a "rule of life" (personal & corporate) and group discussion.

Fifth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate a conceptual understanding of and appreciation for the nature of mentoring others as a form of spiritual support (in prayer groups, Bible study groups, CCD, etc.).
2. Presentation and group discussion on the value of participation in various groups as a support for Christian spirituality for deacons & wives (e.g. Jesus Caritas, Group Spiritual Direction, Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, K of C, etc.).

Fifth Mentoring Session

1. Critical reflection on reading assignment (on mentoring) in light of experience as part of formation mentoring groups.
2. Theological reflection on recent event from the family life of the participants.

Sixth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate a conceptual understanding of the monastic tradition of "conversion of manners" (*conversatio morum*) as applied to the spirituality of deacons and their families.
2. Presentation and group discussion on labor/work as a spiritual discipline

Sixth Mentoring Session

1. Critical reflection on readings about labor as a spiritual discipline.
2. Guided meditation on the Stations of the Cross.

Seventh Class Session

1. Presentation and group discussion on study as a spiritual discipline.
2. Theological reflection on recent ministry experience.

Seventh Mentoring Session

1. Presentation and group discussion on value of interpersonal networks as support for spiritual life and ordained ministry.
2. Participate in group mystagogical reflection on the experience of participating in the Easter Vigil.

Eighth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate a conceptual understanding of symbolism and structure of wakes, funerals and communion services as experiences of worship and diaconal ministry

Eighth Mentoring Session

1. Mystagogical reflection on wakes, funeral services a communion services

Ninth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate a conceptual understanding of the structure and symbolism of the rite of ordination for deacons (entire class period, as preparation for mystagogical reflection after ordination).

Ninth Mentoring Session

1. At least an hour of the session dedicated to prayer as part of spiritual preparation for ordination
2. Social activity to reinforce group bonds and mutual support

Tenth Class Session

1. Brief review of discernment topic, with bulk of time available for a review of life and related discernment by students as a preparation for ordination.

Tenth Mentoring Session

No mentoring session this month.

*Fifth Year*

Educational Objectives

The focus of the fifth (post-ordination) year is transition into ordained ministry. The mentoring sessions of the fifth year are primarily a support during the transition into diaconal ministry, while the classes relate the material covered in the previous four years to the long spiritual tradition of the Church and to contemporary challenges. This is an

opportunity to bring everything learned over the past four years together in the actual context of diaconal ministry.

1. Students will demonstrate an integrated and effective conceptual understanding of diaconal spirituality, along with an appreciation of the influences of the contexts in which it has developed and currently functions.

2. Students will demonstrate a balanced spiritual life in the contexts in which they function and develop a plan for the maintenance and further development of an integral spiritual life.

First Class Session
1. Mystagogical reflection on ordination rite as experienced by participants

First Mentoring Session
1. Mystagogical reflection on ordination rite as experienced by participants (continued)

Second Class Session
1. Be able to articulate basic consideration of sociological concept of *normative communitas* as it relates to the deacon's ministry.
2. Be able to articulate basic theological consideration of pilgrimage and retreat as spiritual disciplines, with particular regard to their structure and dynamics

Second Mentoring Session
1. Critical reflection on prior class discussion regarding deacons as symbols of normative communitas.
2. Theological reflection on ministry since ordination

Third Class Session
1. Be able to articulate consideration of Prayer & personality; regarding prayer as primary speech
2. Critical reflection on MBPI as a support for spiritual life drawing on experience of formation period since first visit to the topic.

Third Mentoring Session
1. Theological reflection on marriage and family life since ordination.

Fourth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of the Biblical and philosophical roots of Christian spirituality.

Fourth Mentoring Session

1. Theological reflection relative to support networks since ordination.

Fifth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of the influence of the Eastern and Western Church Fathers on the development of Christian spirituality.

Fifth Mentoring Session

1. Mystagogical reflection on assisting as a deacon at the celebration of the Eucharist.

Sixth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of the influence of the Middle Ages on the development of Christian spirituality in the West.

Sixth Mentoring Session

1. Presentation and discussion on developing a personal rule of life (revisiting earlier session)
2. Participants will draft a personal rule of life to assist them upon completion of formation program

Seventh Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of the influence of the the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation on the development of Christian spirituality in the West.

Seventh Mentoring Session

1. Mystagogical reflection on assisting as deacon at Easter Vigil.

Eighth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of the influence of the 19th and 20th century developments on Christian spirituality in the West.

Eighth Mentoring Session

1. Group reflection on experience of self-transcendence during formation via communion, self-emptying and service.

Ninth Class Session

1. Be able to articulate consideration of non-Christian influences on the development of Christian spirituality.

Ninth Mentoring Session

    1.  Session is devoted to evaluation of the spiritual component of the deacon formation program with particular attention to classes and mentoring sessions.

Tenth Class Session

    1.  Be able to articulate consideration of the praxis of Christian spirituality in a post-modern world: opportunities and challenges.

Tenth Mentoring Session

    1.  Critical reflection on Christian spirituality in a post-modern world.
    2.  Social activity as a way of

***Table 24- Overview of Model Spiritual Component of Deacon Formation Program by Topic, Session and Year***

| | Year One | Year Two | Year Three | Year Four | Year Five |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theme | Christian Spirituality/ mindfulness & reflection | Marriage & family-context & spirituality | Ministry as context and spirituality | Spiritual care of others | Transition to ministry |
| 1st class | Intro. Christian spirituality/ paying attention | Contemporary marriage/ theological reflection | Service as deacon charism/theological reflection | Transformation/ rhythm of solitude & community | mystagogical reflection on ordination rite |
| 1st mentoring session | Liturgical attention and reflection | Contemporary marriage/ theological reflection | Theological reflection/ lectio divina | Simplicity/ mindfulness | mystagogical reflection on ordination rite |
| 2nd class | *Koinonia*/journaling | History marriage/ spiritual direction | Deacon & Eucharist/ liturgical ministry as spiritual discipline | Discernment/ body & gesture in prayer | Normative communitas/ pilgrimage & retreat as spiritual discipline |
| 2nd mentoring session | *Koinonia*/journaling | Spiritual direction /theological reflection family | Mystagogical reflection/ music | Discernment/ theological reflection on pastoral experience | Normative communitas /T.R on ministry since ordination |
| 3rd class | *Kenosis*/autobiography | Theo. of Body/ family prayer | Teaching as ministry & formative experience | Deacon as mystagogue/ submission & freedom | Prayer & personality/ Meyer-Briggs Personality Inventory revisited |
| 3rd mentoring session | *Kenosis*/autobiography | Theo. of Body/ family prayer | Teaching… / plan Christmas service | mystagogical reflection on baptism/ submission & Freedom | theological reflection on family life since ordination |
| 4th class | *Diakonia*/ critical reflection | Theo. of Body/ family traditions | Suffering & loss | Affect & devotions in spiritual life | spiritual traditions: Biblical & philosophical roots |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4th mentoring session | *Diakonia*/ critical reflection | Sex & spirituality/ conversational prayer | Suffering & loss/ mystagogical reflection on Christmas service | Sacrament of Reconciliation/ rule of life | Support networks since ordination |
| 5th class | Self-transcendence/ Liturgy of the Hours | Marriage context for spirituality | Pastoral leadership as ministry & spiritual discipline | Mentoring others/ support networks | spiritual traditions: Church Fathers East & West |
| 5th mentoring session | Self-transcendence/ Liturgy of Hours | Life at center/mindful listening | Pastoral leadership as ministry & spiritual discipline | Mentoring/ theological reflection on family life | mystagogical reflection on assisting as deacon at Eucharist |
| 6th class | Spiritual disciplines/ Liturgy of Hours | Communication/ Marriage Encounter | Caring/ peacemaking | Conversion of manners/ labor as spiritual discipline | spiritual traditions: Medieval Western developments |
| 6th mentoring session | Spiritual disciplines/ Liturgy of Hours | Communication/ Marriage Encounter | Caring relationships/ transformation | Labor as spiritual discipline / guided meditation | Rule of life revisited/develop personal rule |
| 7th class | Contexts/*lectio divina*/ Easter Vigil reflection | Challenges to marriage/ reflection on courtship | Social justice & spiritual life | Study as spiritual discipline / theological reflection on ministry experience | spiritual traditions: Reformation & Counterreformation developments |
| 7th mentoring session | Contexts/*lectio divina*/ Easter Vigil reflection | Reflection on courtship/ sacred presence | Social justice & spiritual life | Support networks/ mystagogical reflection on Easter Vigil | mystagogical reflection on assisting as deacon at Easter Vigil |
| 8th class | Family context/ silence & contemplation | Deacon & family as icon/ centering prayer | Ministry to dying / sacred space & time | Wakes, funerals & communion services | spiritual traditions: 19th & 20th century developments |
| 8th mentoring session | Family context/ silence & contemplation | Family spiritual practices/ centering prayer | Death as it relates to ministry and me | mystagogical reflection on Wakes, funerals & communion services | Reflect on self-transcendence during formation via communion, |

| | | | | self-emptying, & service |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9th class | Diaconal spirituality/ spiritual practices | Experience of clergy families/ imagination in prayer | Challenges of ministry & spiritual life/ service as spiritual discipline | Consideration of rite of ordination | spiritual traditions: Non-Christian influences |
| 9th mentoring session | Diaconal spirituality/ spiritual practices | Experience of clergy families/ imagination in prayer | Relationship of marriage & ministry/ relationship between ministry and spiritual life | Session as time of prayer/ social activity | Evaluation of classes and mentoring as means of spiritual formation for diaconate. |
| 10th class | Spiritual challenges/ Meyer-Briggs Personality Inventory | Formation of one's children/storytelling | Ministerial community/ creative expression as spiritual discipline | Review of life & Discernment as preparation for ordination | Christian spirituality in a post-modern world |
| 10th mentoring session | Spiritual challenges/ Meyer-Briggs Personality Inventory | Formation of one's children/storytelling | creative expression as spiritual discipline | -No session- | Christian spirituality in a post-modern world/ social activity |