

From the Deacon's Wife

So how does one become a Deacon? It is simply a calling like any other vocational calling. Some of us are called to be teachers, doctors, mechanics, priests, parents, or business people. For most professional vocations, one needs only to train and study, perhaps pass a certification exam, and that's it! With a vocation to become a deacon, however, there is discernment on the part of the individual and the community. Recall from scriptures how the first deacons were chosen:

About this time, when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenists made a complaint against the Hebrews: in the daily distribution their own widows were being overlooked. So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food; you, brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom, to whom we can hand over this duty. We ourselves will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word.' The whole assembly approved of this proposal and elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these to the apostles, and after prayer they laid their hands on them. — Acts 6, 1:6

It was the community who chose the men to be given the responsibilities of diaconate. In this diocese, however, it starts with an individual calling. This may come in many forms. It could be that because you are familiar with a deacon, you identify and aspire to become like them. It could be a sudden or gradual “knowing” in your heart. It could simply be an idea that comes to you in prayer, or perhaps a response to someone who suggests or invites you to think about becoming a deacon.

The next step would be to talk to your Pastor about your sense of calling to a vocation as a deacon. You will need your Pastor's recommendation when you apply to the Diaconate Director (currently Fr. Ralph O'Donnell). You (and your wife if married) will go through several interviews before being accepted into the formation process. Formation is a 4½ year process during which you will learn about many areas of faith formation. Topics include Biblical Studies, Christology, Canon Law, Sacraments, Church Traditions, and many more. The length of the formation process is first, to provide you with the knowledge and tools to perform your duties as a deacon, and second, to allow time for both you and the community to discern that you are suited for this commitment. The community is represented by the Diaconate Director and several other priests and deacon couples. They will interview you each year. At any point in the process, you can choose not to continue, and they can choose not to invite you to continue.

The role of the deacon's wife begins with entry into formation. If the candidate is married, he has already made a vow to give himself totally to his wife. Therefore, he is not free to make another commitment to the Church unless his wife gives permission. This letter of permission is required at the time of application. In addition, the wife must be willing to commit to attend all formation activities (weekly class, and other events) for the 4½ years of formal formation. It is a big commitment to support your husband in this way, but one that I feel is for the benefit of the wife and the marriage. It is a wonderful time of spiritual growth for both of you!