

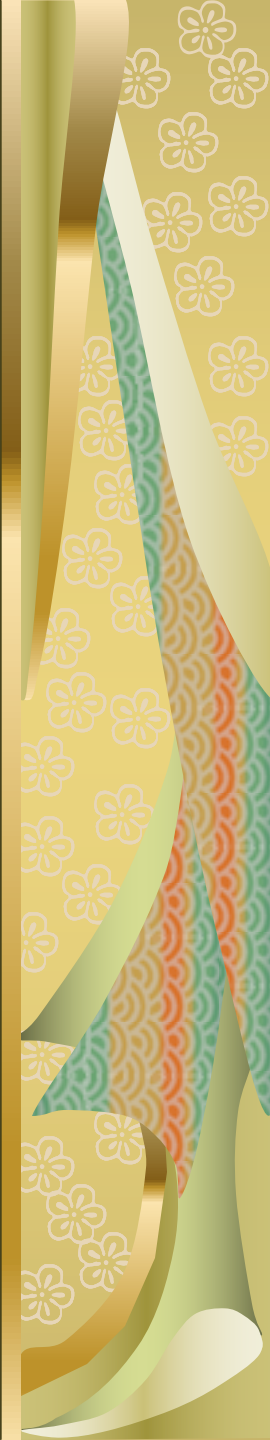


# Informational meeting September 23, 2017

Permanent Diaconate  
Archdiocese of Atlanta

# Where We Are How We Got Here

- First Class Ordained in 1977
- 230 Active Deacons in AoA
- 54 Currently in Formation



# Dachau Concentration Camp

- Clergy & Religious of all faiths: “no special treatment”
- *Der Priesterblock*
- Incubator for renewal: “How must the Church change so that this does not happen again?”



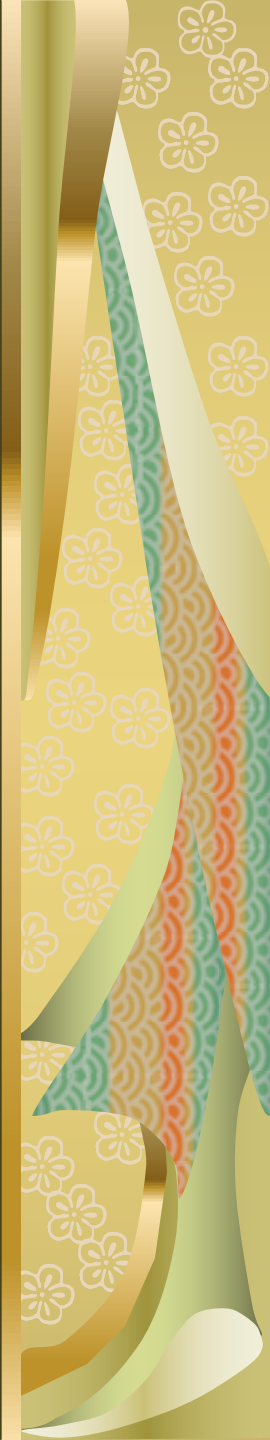
# The Deacon at the Council

■ 16 proposals (71 bishops) on functions of deacons. Speak of deacons of “mature age” (specifically, 35)

■ Specific functions:

- “experienced catechist”
- parish administration
- administration of church goods and property
- official preaching and teaching

■ **The Deacon was to be a person already a recognized leader in the community, not a person new or inexperienced in ministry.**



# Deacons in a Diaconal Church

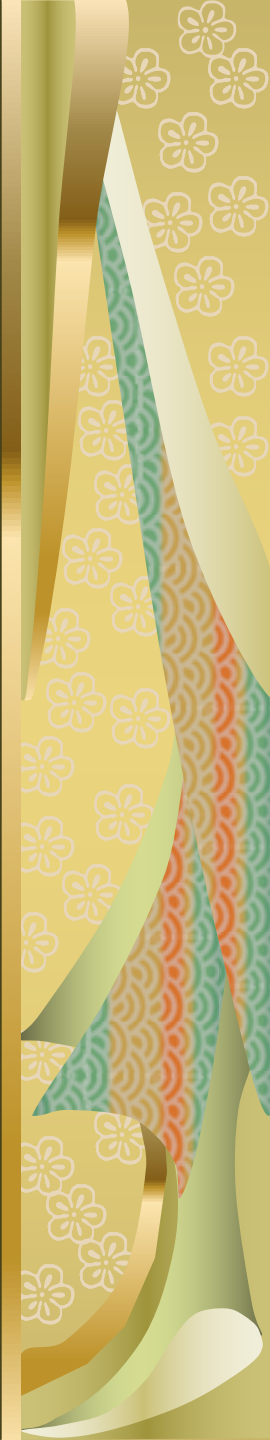


We stress that the teaching of the Council is channeled in one direction: the **SERVICE** of human kind, of every condition, in every weakness and need. The Church has declared herself a servant of humanity at the very time when her teaching role and her pastoral government have, by reason of this Council, assumed greater splendor and vigor. However, the idea of **SERVICE** has been central.



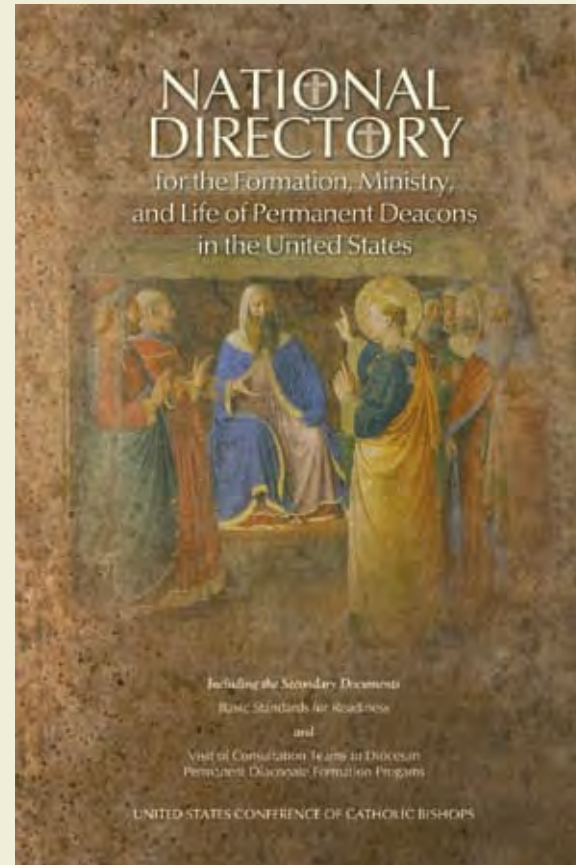
# Points from the Council Themes of the *Directory*

- Deacons needed as part of renewed identification of church-as-deacon
- Radical Sacramentality of the Deacon
- Relationship to the Bishop
- Restored the *permanency* of diaconate



# The Evolution of Directories

- Green book 1971
- Red book 1984
- Bishop's Committee
  - 1994-95 - Document
- New Directory 2004
  - Renewal of Recognition 2009 for five years



# Why a National Directory?

- Normative Guide
- Create Unity
- Encouragement
- Set National Objectives
- Pastoral Effectiveness





# Who is the Deacon

- Modeled on Christ
- Grounded in sacraments of initiation and ordination
- For those who are married, nurtured by matrimony
- Simplicity of Life
- Engaged in the world







# Our Program's Focus

- Word, Liturgy, Charity
- Social Justice
- 4 Dimensions
  - Human
  - Spiritual
  - Intellectual
  - Pastoral



# Standards of Readiness








## Human Dimension

-  Good Interpersonal communication skills
-  A realistic perspective on his life
  -  Able to speak appropriately of his personal limitations with a sense of how these affect his life, family, employment and present service ministry
  -  Able to successfully balance and prioritize his commitments to family, work, leisure, and ministry to demonstrate self-discipline in his life



# Standards of Readiness




## Spiritual Dimension

-  God's Redeeming activity in his state of life, experience, and ministry
-  The importance of a personal and communal prayer life
  -  **Able to reflect/meditate with faith on his life with a sense of discovering God's will for him**
  -  **Conveys examples of God's presence in his life**
  -  **Has or will commit as a reader or extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, to serve his parish community, especially in charity and outreach to the needy; to be responsible and confident**
  -  **Demonstrates a commitment to a consistent pattern of prayer; participates frequently in the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation; participates in retreat experiences or a renewal group**
  -  **Can support others' growth in prayer; to show interest in sharing and serving with others**



# Standards of Readiness





## Intellectual Dimension

-  The basic teachings of the Church
  -  Demonstrates familiarity with the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church
  -  Sufficient intellectual capacity to complete the academic work of the formation program and to carry out diaconal tasks



# Standards of Readiness

## Pastoral Dimension

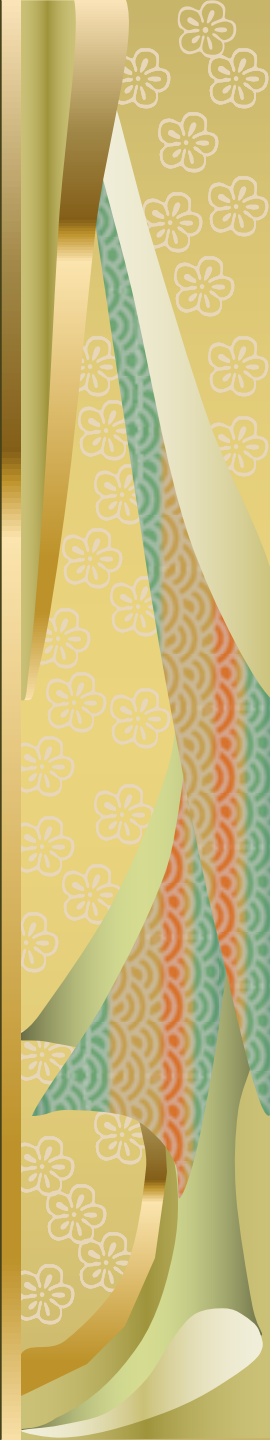
-  Living the Gospel in his life, home, place of employment, and neighborhood
  -  Able to connect the teachings of the Church to daily living and his personal/communal (family, church, civic) responsibilities
  -  Able to be flexible in attitude and behavior; to be open to change; to analyze situations in light of the Gospel and the Church's teachings
  -  Able to be a good leader and a good follower



# Standards of Readiness

## ■ Diaconal Vocation and Ministry

- **Feels a personal call to diaconal ministry within the Church and a realistic sense of his capacity to commit himself to it in fidelity to his state in life and employment, with sufficient time for formation**
  - **Witnesses to Gospel values in ways that are life-giving; to articulate his sense of a call to the diaconate primarily because of the needs of the Church, as well as for personal growth; and articulates reasons that support his desire to be a deacon**
  - **Is interested in and attracted to the diaconal ministry of word, liturgy, and charity**
  - **A desire to be of service, beyond liturgical ministries**
  - **Can support and assist his pastor, as a representative for the parish community**
  - **Can be docile to the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the application and screening processes, acknowledging it is the Church that verifies the call**



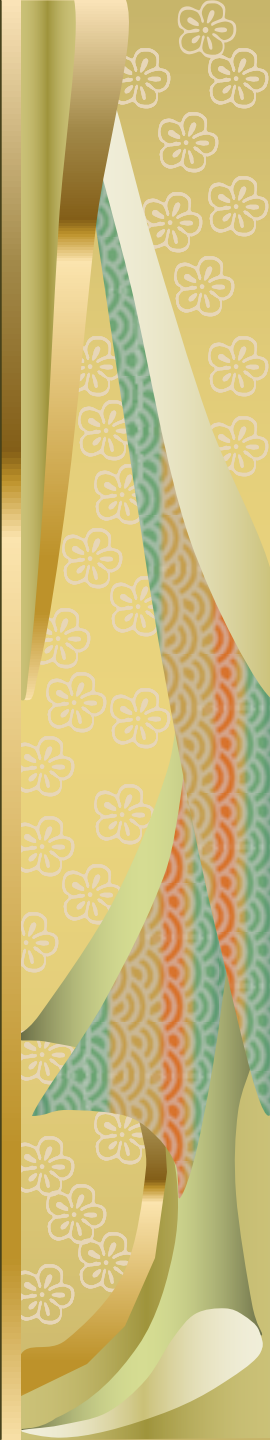
# So What is Discernment?

The whole aim of diaconal discernment is to teach men how to remove the hindrances in the way of the action of the Holy Spirit, and how to cultivate those virtues which are most favorable to his inspirations.



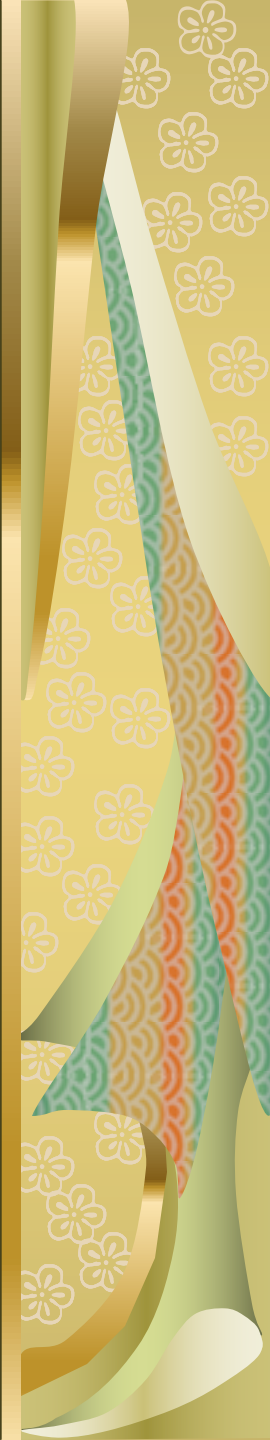


**HOW DO WE DO THAT?**



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- First of all we point out to the men that God is already doing the renewal, and He now seeks a cooperative will.
  - The largest obstacle to knowing the will of God is our personal sin.
    - Encourage frequent confession and spiritual direction during this time of discernment.



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- Second, by encouraging the man to become more aware of his affections within his own soul.
  - In discerning a vocation there can be much confusion around “feelings” and moods and attractions.
  - Help him to see that he must attend to these in quiet, naming them, remembering them, and entering them, all with the help of the formation team and/or the spiritual director.
  - The goal is to help him accept what is of God and reject what is of Satan, or is simply natural weaknesses brought on by fatigue and finitude.



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- What is of God will be accompanied by the desire to stop and wonder, or savor a thought or desire.
  - Diabolical spirits usually lead one toward disappointment, despair, hopelessness, discouragement.
  - The call of God will lead a man to be content and happy.
  - Help the aspirant to be able identify if the diaconate presents itself to him as a way of contentment and sustained happiness.
  - How does he see this practically?



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- This last question is crucial so that we can assist him to separate any fantasy he has about diaconate from reality.
  - This fantasy may be yielding consoling thoughts but they are emanating from a false reality, an invitation that cannot be fulfilled because its end does not exist.
  - On the other hand if his description of the vocation squares with doctrine and our own pastoral experience this glimpse into happiness could be one sign that God is personally involved in calling him to orders.



# Role of the Formation Team

## Assisting in Discernment

- Third, we help men remove hindrances to the Holy Spirit by inviting the man to share his vocation story, listening carefully to the instances that he relates which draw him to the diaconate.
  - Also, listen to his vocation story for interior stirrings.
  - Assist him in untangling all these movements, attractions and desires by placing them in the paradigm of all vocations, “Come follow Me.”
  - Ask him to describe his relationship with Christ.
  - Who is Christ for and to him?



# Role of the Formation Team

## Assisting in Discernment

- Can the man see, is he aware, that in looking over his life God has been active all along?
- Does he appreciate the providence of God?
- Do you notice any discontinuous traits in the man from these questions?
- Is he going to “set the church straight” in its habits and doctrines?
- Is he brushing off your questions that lead him deeper, “I want to do stuff, action, what is all this talk about feelings, prayer?”
- Does he say things that indicate a real ignorance on his part regarding the meaning of liturgy, morals, and scripture?
- These discontinuous traits may be signs for you to simply suggest he attend adult faith formation, go on retreats, and join a service organization rather than pursue the diaconate.



# Role of the Formation Team

## Assisting in Discernment

- Fourth, we can help remove hindrances to the Spirit by asking him to explore the habits of his daily life that may be diversions from the spiritual life, habits of escaping the Spirit rather than letting the Spirit confront and name the truth about the self.
  - A man who is identified by diversions and distractions will be of little help to parishioners who look to clergy to guide them out of a consumerist, materialist and experientialist culture.
  - The deacon is to be with the people of the diocese as an agent of spiritual renewal and charity, not simply one of the boys.





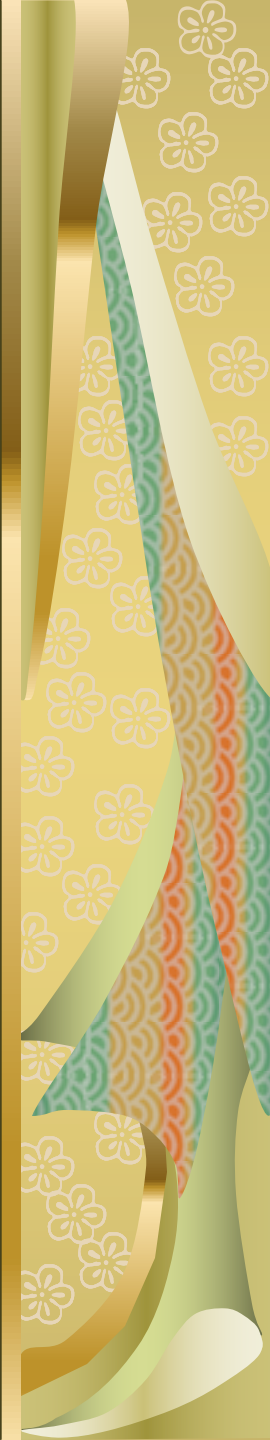
# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- Again, we are looking for clues of resistance to interiority...does he simply want to be in fellowship with other men, does he simply want to “belong” to some group, does he simply want to increase a low self-esteem...or does he have the courage to undergo the conversion that Christ leads the deacon to in service of Word, Liturgy, and Charity?
  - We are looking for spiritual leaders who can preside at the liturgy of charity, who can minister at the mysteries of Christ and relate these to the secular character of lay life.



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- Fifth, in the course of several conversations with the man interested in diaconal life do you get a growing sense that he receives the vocation with a spiritual *understanding*.
  - Does he get it?
  - Do you sense he is growing toward an appropriation that this attraction to diaconate is not his idea, it is a response to a person, Christ?
  - Do you sense that in light of this growing understanding he is EAGER to undergo the purification of formation?
  - Does he actually say things to you that indicate he wants to suffer and sacrifice for a deeper availability to God's will, and service to those in need.
  - Do you get an idea that he UNDERSTANDS how the diaconate interpenetrates with the vocation of marriage?
  - Does he speak about how his call to service organically arises from within his first call to marriage?



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- Sixth, is the inquirer open to learning in aspirancy that diaconal formation is not about simply attending to feelings and desires but those affections that impact his adherence to the will of God.
  - Formation is not psychotherapy, but interior renewal.
  - This interior renewal occurs within a matrix of theology, pastoral work, and worship.
  - Does the man have an interest in studying doctrine, does he have an interest in leading people to Christ by inhabiting the corporeal and spiritual works of mercy?
  - Can he give a nascent explanation of these interests?
  - Where is God's will to be found *in the interest and affection you he is experiencing in seeking Holy Orders?*



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- Correct discernment of our vocation is crucial because it must be cemented at a very deep level of interiority, an interiority born of communion with Christ speaking these words, “come follow me.”
- If the man has only an anemic sense of this interiority he will be shaken when the crosses of his vocation are laid upon him, and he will begin to have second thoughts, “Did I make a mistake in becoming a deacon?”
- There is no wasted time in taking the man deep at the very initial stages of discernment, **resist the temptation to think that interiority is window dressing...it is in fact the kernel of any diaconal vocation.**



# Role of the Formation Team

## Assisting in Discernment

- We linger on spirituality, interiority and discernment because of what we know of Satan.
  - He wants to keep our sins, our fears, our rationalizations, our temptations secret.
  - If we keep these realities secret then our ministries will be enslaved to them and we will have no freedom nor minister freedom to others.
- We are invited by the Spirit to gently lead an aspirant to the diaconate to name the reality he lives in.
- He is asked to name his mixed motives for wanting to become a deacon, to shift through the weeds and wheat.



# Role of the Formation Team

## Assisting in Discernment

- We are asking him to “come clean” so that the vocation, if he has one, can be built upon a foundation of truth.
  - This foundation can be secure because the Spirit can shore it up with consolations and strengthen it with purification.
- No one comes to ordination without lingering difficulties but no one should come to ordination unable to name these, own these, offer these for healing and forgiveness.
- A man who will not become spiritual, has no interest in doing so, or deflects the challenge of formation to become so ought never be ordained.



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- Although it can be difficult to maintain a solid diaconal community it can assist in keeping a man free of “secrets”.
  - True Christian friendship is itself invitatory of self-revelation, intimacy, humility.
  - Good friends create a circle of trust that inhibits satanic movements that tempt men toward leading double lives cloaked in secrecy.
- Does the man before you seek Christian friendship with other deacons?
- Or, is there evidence that he has such with other men of the diocese?



# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

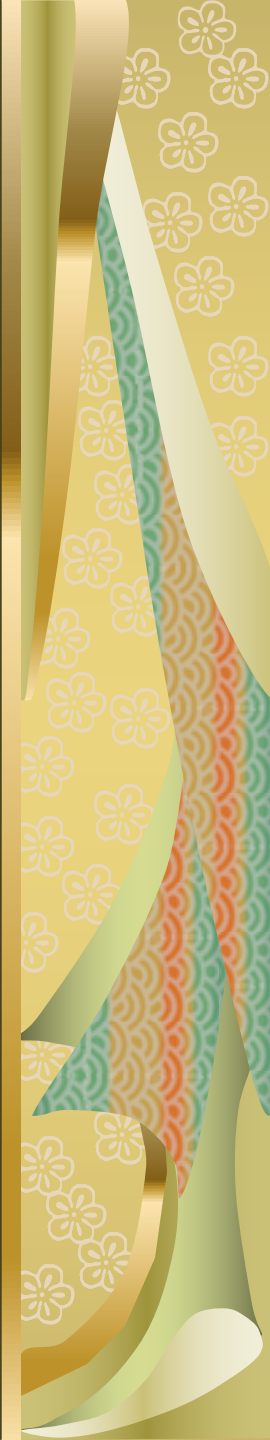
- Does he understand, further, the role that his wife and family play in keeping him from becoming a “private” person?
- To be inaccessible to others may mean he is inaccessible to God...He wants everyone to stay away from his secrets.





# Role of the Formation Team Assisting in Discernment

- Seventh, alternately, do you see before you a man who simply wants to pray, a natural introvert using the diaconate to further a dynamic interior life but has little or no skill or interest in being what ordination makes you: a public figure.
  - The deacon is integrated, he is not simply “one of the boys” “a back slapper” nor is he to be a monkish introvert.
  - His *lively interior* life is ordered to *serve pastoral desire*.
  - Can the man before you become such a man?
  - Do you discern that Christ has called him to be such?
  - Does the man himself know this to be true?
  - Together, is there a fair hope that the church will concur?
  - If so then it would be prudent to accept him into aspirancy with candidacy as the fulfillment of all that these ideas on discernment tried to convey.




# Program breakdown


## Inquiry Phase

### Informational Meetings


### Applications

### Interviews

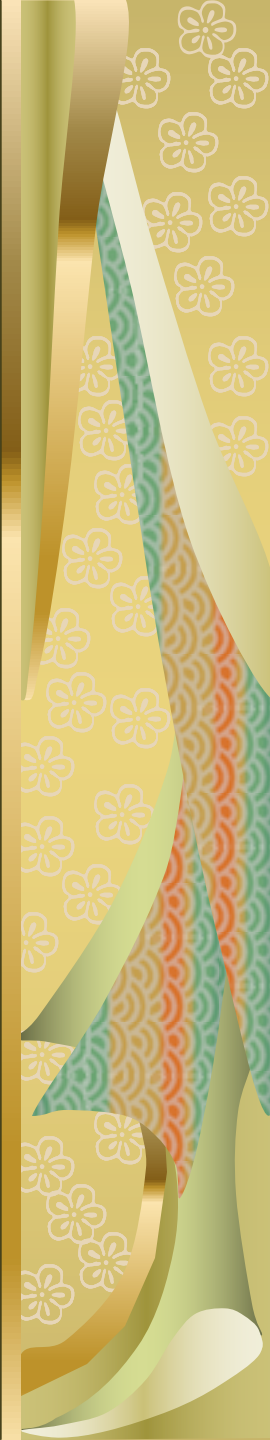
-  Deacon Couple/Home Interview

-  Pastor Support

-  Selection Committee/Possible 2<sup>nd</sup> interview

-  Psych Evaluation for couple

### Notification



# Program (continued)

- Aspirancy Phase (1 year) (begin in January 2019)
  - Discernment
  - Introduction to Social Justice
    - Project selection at end of Aspirancy Phase
  - Introduction to Scripture, Philosophy
  - Journaling
  - Observation and more discernment
- Admission to Candidacy



# Program (continued)

## ■ Candidacy Phase (4 years minimum)

- No Definitive Completion Date
- Formal study and testing
- Journaling
- Discernment
- Observation
- Weekend Sessions

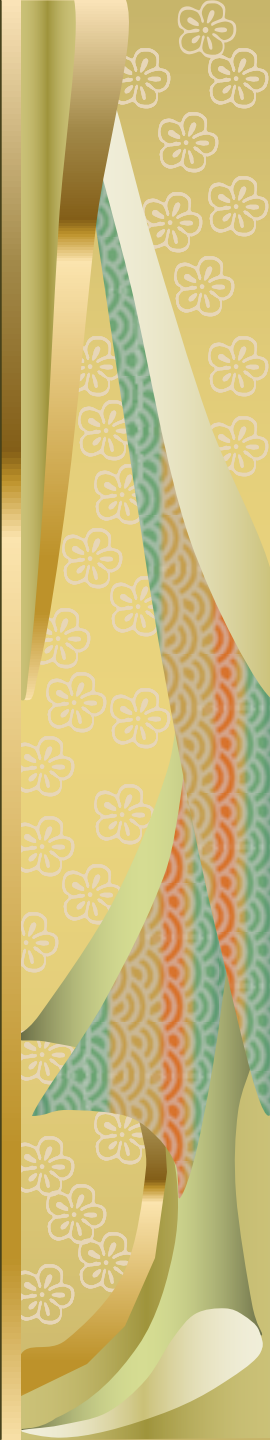
## ■ Steps in the Process

- Institution of Lector
- Institution of Acolyte
- Preparation for Ordination



# Program (continued)

- Monitoring
- Mentoring
- Spiritual Direction
- Retreats
- Days of Reflection
- Family Sessions



# Pastoral Assignments

- Archbishop Gregory appoints each ordinand to an assignment.
- You are NOT guaranteed your home parish after the first three years.
- We do consult with you prior to assignments but final decision for placement is through the Bishop's office.



# Post Ordination

■ Monitoring

■ Mentoring

■ Meetings

■ Continuing  
Education

■ Retreats

■ Spiritual Direction



# Suggested Reading

- The Emerging Diaconate by Deacon Bill Ditewig [www.paulistpress.com](http://www.paulistpress.com)
- The Deacon Reader by Deacon Jim Keating [www.paulistpress.com](http://www.paulistpress.com)
- The National Directory for Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States  
<http://www.usccb.org/deacon>
- Archdiocese of Atlanta Directories  
<http://www.archatl.com/vocations/deacons/manual.html>





# Impediments to Holy Orders

## ■ Civil

- Legal status
- Background Check

## ■ Canonical

- Reception of all Sacraments
- Regular Marriage
- Required Dispensations

## ■ Health Issues

## ■ Practical

