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Deacons

PERMANENT DEACONS

IN THE UNITED STATES

GUIDELINES ON THEIR FORMATION AND MINISTRY

Deacons

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U.S. BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON
THE PERMANENT DIACONATE

PERMANENT DEACONS IN THE UNITED STATES

GUIDELINES ON THEIR FORMATION and MINISTRY

Bishops' Committee
on the
Permanent Diaconate

1971

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PERMANENT DEACONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Guidelines on Their Formation and Ministry

Historical Preface

1 A little more than four years ago, in June, 1967, Pope Paul VI began the restoration of the permanent diaconate suggested by the Second Vatican Council in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* and the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*. The principles of decentralization and response to local need were prominent, as the Holy Father restored the diaconate only for those countries that wished it. Our own National Conference of Catholic Bishops made such a request ". . . both to complete the hierarchy of sacred orders and to enrich and strengthen the various diaconal ministries at work in the United States with the sacramental grace of the diaconate." Pope Paul approved the U.S. request in late August of 1968.

2 When the Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate came into existence in November, 1968, its principal responsibilities had already been outlined by the NCCB. Three functions of the committee stood out:

- a. to offer local bishops recommendations concerning concrete details of and questions about the diaconal vocation;
- b. to establish a formation program including doctrinal, pastoral, and spiritual aspects of training;
- c. to review and approve plans for the use (i.e., specific ministry) of deacons developed by the various dioceses.

3 Within two months of its inception, the Bishops' Committee

received initial proposals for training from the four units that were to become the pioneer centers—The Orchard Lake Schools in Michigan; St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota; the Archdiocese of Detroit; and the Josephite Fathers in cooperation with the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Richmond. The opportunity to once again have permanent deacons had been accepted as a gift from God; creative people were responding to that gift.

4 By the middle of 1969 the committee clearly recognized that the need for experiential models responding to local situations extended to programs for the training of deacons, not just to plans for using their ministry. The development of national formation guidelines, sought by the NCCB and listed above as "function b," was deliberately delayed until an adequate experience base had been built up. The committee and its secretariate director, William W. Philbin, thereupon sought to generate widespread interest in the diaconate, communicating not just with bishops but with vocation directors, seminary rectors, chancellors, priests' senates and associations, lay leaders, and with a wide spectrum of national organizations. People began to think about the diaconate in terms of its contribution to the Church's total mission. The Catholic Theological Society of America was asked to reflect theologically on the nature of the diaconate as well as on particular questions that occurred with its growth.

5 Spring of 1971 saw thirteen programs in operation with a total of 430 candidates. Ordination to the permanent diaconate came in May and June, 1971; by September there will be approximately 50 permanent deacons in the U.S. Our conviction grows that the experience developed up until now is just a hint of the future. Formation and ministry plans must remain open to what is being learned in dioceses across the country. The laymen who have offered their lives and services to this office are already helping shape its form; their experience after ordination will do so even more. Although the recommendations in the main body of the text have been developed within the framework of existing church law, various broader suggestions for the future are included in the epilogue, "New Directions."

6 The following pages articulate general lines of direction found in the first thirteen formation programs and in those of other

dioceses well along in planning. The original thirteen programs were those of Baltimore, Chicago, Des Moines, Detroit, Gallup, Galveston-Houston, Hartford, the Josephite Fathers for Washington and Richmond, Orchard Lake, Phoenix, St. John's University in Collegeville, San Antonio, and San Diego. Responsibility has remained local but there has been generous sharing of what has been learned. After broad consultation we recommend these first guidelines towards a program for the training and ministry of lifetime deacons. May their lives remind all of the Servant Christ.

August 5, 1971—BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON THE PERMANENT
DIACONATE

Harry A. Clinch, Bishop of Monterey

Maurice J. Dingman, Bishop of Des Moines

Francis J. Furey, Archbishop of San Antonio

F. Joseph Gossman, Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore

Walter J. Schoenherr, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit

John S. Spence, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

Ernest L. Unterkoefler, Bishop of Charleston, Chairman

Chapter One

THE DEACON IN THE POST- CONCILIAR CHURCH

7 Delineation of a deacon's ministry and of an appropriate preparation for that ministry presupposes some knowledge of what a deacon is. This opening chapter describes and identifies the deacon in terms of his symbolizing the Church's service in the world, of his relationships to other persons and ministries within the Church, and of the threefold scope of service that he shares with bishops and priests: ministry of liturgy, of the word, and of charity.

A. *Christ as Servant in the World*

8 After washing the feet of the Apostles at the Last Supper Jesus said, "What I did was to give you an example; as I have done, so you must do." (John 13:15) If any image captures the proper relationship not only of Christians to one another but of the whole Church toward the rest of mankind, it is that of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Only through fidelity to the Son of Man who came to serve can the Church be the light of all nations, the sign of union with God and of the unity of mankind.

B. *The Church as Servant in the World*

9 Perhaps no words of the Lord were repeated so often during the Second Vatican Council as, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." Pope John had identified the Council as pastoral; "diakonia" became one of its great themes, generating a search for the "signs of the times" and culminating in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*.

10 In his recent (May 14, 1971) letter to Cardinal Roy "in response to the new needs of a changing world," Pope Paul VI repeatedly stressed the theme of the Church's serving mankind. The following passages can be noted:

“The Church, in fact, travels forward with humanity and shares its lot in the setting of history. At the same time that she announces to men the good news of God’s love and salvation in Christ, she clarifies their activity in the light of the gospel and in this way helps them to correspond to God’s plan of love and to realize the fullness of their aspirations.” (#1)

“To build up the city, the place where men and their expanded communities exist, to create new modes of neighborliness and relationships, to perceive an original application of social justice and to undertake responsibility for their collective future, which is foreseen as difficult, is a task in which Christians must share.” (#12)

“Today more than ever the word of God will be unable to be proclaimed and heard unless it is accompanied by the witness of the power of the Holy Spirit, working within the action of Christians in the service of their brothers, at the points in which their existence and their future are at stake.” (#51)

11 Precisely in this context of the Servant Church will the deacon discover his identity and his proper role. All Christians have shared the Church’s common responsibility to service and charity, but in the early ordained ministry, which consisted of overseers, elders, and deacons, it was the third group whose very name described their function of being living sacraments of service. This same symbolism has returned in our time.

12 In the wide sweep of history, today’s restoration of the permanent diaconate is especially timely. Just when the Church has changed her emphasis on “despising” earthly things in contrast to heavenly things and has rather seen all of life as sacred and as experiencing redemption, just at this time when the Church has reemphasized her servant role, so at this time does she restore an office of certain Christians to be living symbols of that service.

C. The Deacon as Called and Ordained Servant

13 Catholic tradition has recognized the sacramental nature of diaconate as a sharing in the ministerial priesthood of Jesus Christ.

But what distinguishes the deacon from lay people? In the past, the reservation of particular functions to the ordained deacon provided the most popular and practical means of distinguishing him from the Christian lay person. But a more penetrating view goes beyond those specific functions, which have varied according to different times and structures. Instead the deacon can be identified by his relationships to the Christian community that surrounds him.

- a) Sacred Scripture describes the first deacons as men "full of the Spirit." The sacrament of holy orders is freely given at the initiative of the Holy Spirit. God calls and invites those whom He chooses, "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you." This is the active presence of the Holy Spirit, always at work in the Church and in her ministry. The vocation to diaconal service effects a new relationship to the Holy Spirit. The deacon's ministry becomes a visible response to the God who has called him.
- b) The local church through the bishop by means of sacramental ordination effects and witnesses to the call of the Spirit. Through the sacramental sign of holy orders, the Church gives public acknowledgement to the action of the Holy Spirit. Thus the call received and accepted in personal grace takes on a church-wide dimension. As is true of all sacraments, holy orders relates to the whole community of believers. The entire community is committed to the deacon and the deacon to the entire community. Through the bishop a new relationship to the entire Church becomes visible in the Christian who is ordained deacon.
- c) The deacon enters into special fraternal relationship with all ordained priests of the universal Church. With them he is united in a fraternity of service and sacramental ministry. This sharing of the one sacrament in witness to the call of the Spirit makes them brothers in service and commitment to the People of God.
- d) The vocation to ministry, whether priesthood or diaconate, implies a relationship of mutual trust and acceptance. The ministry of the Church calls for a bond

of charity. The effectiveness of the deacon's service is very much conditioned by acceptance from those whom he would serve. Without this new relationship of trust, the deacon's service would be severely limited.

- e) A final relationship is necessary in order that the diaconate be fully realized. The call of the Spirit and the imposition of hands by the bishop assume meaning and force only when the deacon fully and totally responds to and accepts the call with a responsible and permanent personal commitment. The commitment of the deacon is a dedication which accepts responsibility for communicating God's word and announcing His kingdom, with the special task of living and speaking and acting as one who shares the apostolic mission of Jesus. Thus the deacon becomes accountable in a new way for the task of building God's kingdom on earth. The deacon expresses his commitment in the way he lives out his relationship to the bishop, to the priests, and to the people whom he serves.

14 The deacon, therefore, is more properly defined in terms of who he is rather than of what he does. He is a person with a special mission requiring special relationships within the community of God's people. With such a self-understanding, the deacon will realize that his roles, his duties, his functions of service are to be performed not only in response to the needs of the people but also in the light of all those relationships by which his office of deacon is verified. His functions will not be limited by historical precedent but will show a flexibility and a creativity that express his identity in any given place and milieu where the Holy Spirit invites his ministry. However much these functions may vary, the essential elements of diaconal identity remain: the invitation of the Spirit, the manifestation and realization of this call through sacramental ordination for the benefit of the universal Church, the special fraternal sharing of accountability for the kingdom with all ordained ministers, the acceptance by the community he is called to serve, and the complete personal commitment of self to serve in the name of Christ and His Church.

15 Where the above elements are present, the deacon will be recognized, in whatever service he performs, as one who shares

in a proper and distinct way in the priesthood of Christ, as one who is a special servant of Christ and His Church.

D. *The Deacon's Service in Liturgy, Word, Charity*

16 Though much of a deacon's work can be done by either lay people or priests, though his identity is therefore to be found more in his official mission or ordination than in what he does, though his overall symbolizing of service is more meaningful than his specific function*, the legitimate question remains "Since the deacon is ordained to do something, what is it?"

17 In *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, Pope Paul outlined eleven specific tasks for the deacon, most of them liturgical and most of them already mentioned in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. But the diaconal role might best be approached by viewing it in terms of the three ministerial areas of word, sacrament, and pastoral service so familiar with regard to priesthood. The *Constitution* specifies these same three areas regarding deacons: "For strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his group of priests, they serve the People of God in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity." (#29)

18 Many possible functions can be appropriate to deacons; the ones suggested in the following paragraphs do not comprise an exhaustive list. Other functions will be discovered or created, especially through the ministries of our early permanent deacons. But it is important to see each function in its proper category under ministry of liturgy, word, or charity, so that the three areas can be seen in proper balance. Otherwise there is danger that the diaconal ministry can be identified exclusively with one or another ministerial area. For example, a deacon might be considered solely in terms of his liturgical functions, with no regard for a complementary service of charity; or, conversely, a deacon might be seen as a community organizer, without relationship to altar and liturgy. To illustrate what is meant by needed balance, most of the specific functions outlined by the Council and the

* Cf. *Report on the Restoration of the Office of Deacon as a Lifetime State*, made to Bishop Unterkoefer and the BCPD by a committee of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Par. 22.

Pope have a liturgical emphasis. Yet the servant symbolism is communicated more strikingly through ministry of charity. To cite another example, when a deacon is recognized for his work with individuals and groups within a community, something very powerful is communicated by such a man's functioning as deacon at mass. The areas of diaconal service are then seen in harmony and the danger of lingering pelagianism is averted. The lesson is that apart from Jesus the Servant there is no church ministry.

Ministry of Liturgy

19 In his central liturgical function the deacon serves and assists the bishop and the priest rather than presides himself; his liturgy, like any Christian's, must be the Eucharistic action. Even in cities where there are enough priests for Sunday masses, the deacon should function at the Eucharist because it is appropriate that one who communicates God's word and serves God's people also minister at the altar. It is from the altar that the deacon is an ordinary minister of Holy Communion, no less a privilege because lay people also share it. The deacon may also read the gospel at mass and give the homily. His liturgical role, whatever it may become as it continues to develop, goes beyond meeting immediate needs; the deacon has a role in liturgical worship because he is a deacon.

20 The deacon's other liturgical functions develop from his role in the Eucharistic action. He may administer baptism solemnly. He may witness and bless marriages, officiate at wakes, funerals, and burial services, administer sacramentals, and preside at prayer services. Through the deacon, people at worship are linked more closely to their bishops, to ordained priests, and to their local church. This last point applies equally to a crowded city and to a remote country area where people are without a priest.

Ministry of the Word

21 The deacon's most solemn ministry of the word is that of reading the gospel and preaching at the liturgy. But as one deputed to bring the good news, he can extend this ministry in almost unlimited ways. At many gatherings and at formal and informal meetings—literally in his own back yard—he can communicate a word of joy and hope. Adult education and education

of young people can become part of his concern. At the same time he need not administer or be in charge of such educational programs simply because he has been ordained. What is appropriate to the office of deacon is simply that he proclaim and witness God's word in all his services, ministries, and actions.

22 Most of the new permanent deacons, as married men with full-time secular occupations, will have limited time to give to the church community. And each man will have his own personal limitations of talent, training, and experience. The "universal deacon" will be rare. Some, for instance, may not desire the faculty to preach or even to teach; various services of charity will take up nearly all the time they have to give.

Ministry of Charity

23 Loving and serving individuals and the community of persons in Christ is the deacon's most characteristic ministry; like the Lord he washes the feet of others. For many people the deacon's chief witness will be in person-to-person encounters. For the aged, the sick in hospitals and homes, prisoners, the poor and the rejected—for all of these a deacon can be one who cares, who brings good news from the heart of the Christian community. In all of this exchange it is to be hoped that he will neither appear nor feel different from lay Christians. Rather, as one who has come to value the Christian life profoundly, his service will inspire and support their work of charity.

24 The deacon must be a community man, with all the self-sacrifice and self-giving that the expression implies. This can involve participation in parish council sessions, in special discussion or action gatherings, in sub-groups within a parish, or in pastoral units independent of parish structure. Some bishops intend to assign deacons formally to such pastoral units.

25 The deacon as sign of the Church serving the world has a place in the lay Christian's more proper apostolate, that to the secular community. Recurrent environmental anti-pollution drives, cultural developments, and movements for the improvement of government, of schools, playgrounds, and community services—all these are appropriate spheres of activity for the deacon.

Chapter Two

THE COMMUNITY AND THE SERVICE OF CHURCH AND DEACON

A. *General Principles*

26 The Church must truly be part of the community in which it serves. Presence alone is not enough to achieve the necessary integral relationship with the community in its social, civic, economic, cultural, and broad human aspects. The Church can serve only in an experiential context of genuine interaction with the many varieties of concrete situations in which communities live.

27 Deacons, as well as other representatives of the Church's ordained ministry, must therefore be part of the communities in which they serve. The Church they officially represent must become flesh and blood through the quality of their personal witness. The gospel of Jesus Christ and his example must be shared with people in terms they can understand, especially in living terms of service.

- a) The sympathetic understanding and rapport necessary for effective ministry can best be attained through the ordination of people indigenous to a given community—whether that community be centered around values that are cultural, racial, linguistic, or geographical. Since the flexibility of the permanent diaconate allows for ordaining married men with varying occupations and educational backgrounds, the ordaining of deacons who emerge from the community in question should have the highest priority.
- b) Some deacons will nevertheless seek to serve in communities not previously familiar to them. In order to minister effectively such deacons must be willing to leave

their own personal life-styles and prior habits of socialization, "resocializing" themselves in a new environment.

28 All ordained representatives of the Church must be sensitive to the cultural dimension of ministry. The life of a community as well as of individual persons is profoundly influenced by cultural conditions. Human behavior grows out of the learned, shared responses to the needs people have for social experience and interrelating. The deacon must therefore not only listen to the concerns of the community and recognize its feelings and values; he must allow himself to be sensitized by these cultural realities. The community itself, with its natural leadership, becomes the training ground for his service.

29 In the light of the gospel, the Church's ministry must go beyond identifying with what the community is and work towards what that community can become. This means that the deacon and other ministers must learn the processes and dynamics of social change. Ministry that is relevant to the community's best potential demands the wisdom and courage to challenge social customs in a positive, creative way, in a way that is perceptive to the implications of social change. The motivation for such ministry is fidelity to the Kingdom of God and to the community of people, with a profound respect for their genuine interests. The deacon thus makes practical response to Jesus' command, "Love one another as I have loved you."

B. Diaconal Ministry Needed in Particular Communities

30 In the United States there are many examples of communities with distinguishable needs and challenges. Some of these needs are local and particular. Others are shared in common with members of the same community across the country. Eskimo and Indian people, in addition to many groupings of people based on age and culture, have distinct needs, although not outlined in these guidelines. Because the following four communities are represented in almost every U.S. diocese, the particular need for diaconal service is described for the black community, for the Spanish-speaking communities, for the rural community, and for the community of the college and university campus. In each case the descriptions are the work of representative spokesmen from the community concerned.

I. DIACONATE IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Deacons and Intermediaries

31 The restored permanent diaconate should reflect the *Didascalia of the Apostles* which calls deacons the ears, the mouth, the heart and soul of the bishops, with whom they make, as it were, one. They are the bishop's ear so that he may know the desires of the laity, for deacons are the intermediaries between them and him. They are his heart to minister to the necessities of the poor and the sick and all those who are in need.

32 In an attempt to draw up guidelines, the Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate has followed the spirit of the *Didascalia of the Apostles*: they have felt the need of the deacon in the very attempt to identify the needs of the laity. From its early meetings to the present, the Committee for the Permanent Diaconate, giving an example to diocesan committees, has appointed consultants suggested by the black community and has questioned a variety of persons and organizations in the formation of its guidelines.

Adequate Representation and Identification of Needs

33 Dioceses, therefore, in the establishment of deacon programs should involve black priests, sisters, and laity from the very beginning. Such representation and involvement must be strong enough to identify accurately the needs of the black community. Interested blacks know from experience that some deacon programs have been planned without their participation, and that others used token representation, causing the black voice to be lost in the multitude. In judgments about representation from the black community, that community itself should have a voice in the selection of its representatives on policy boards.

Accurate Knowledge of Resources

34 Acceptance criteria for the diaconate should reflect the diverse needs of the community. The needs of blacks are unique and even these unique needs will vary somewhat from place to

place. The black participation and planning will guarantee, for example, the inclusion of men, who, because of social circumstances, were unable to acquire academic credentials but whose talents and Christian lives make them obvious candidates for the diaconate. Such men should be admitted as a matter of course rather than by way of exception. Further, as representatives of the black community have told the Bishops' Committee on several occasions, the present legislation on remarriage, celibacy for young deacons, and the age question are a severe handicap to the development of the permanent diaconate in the black community.

Specialists With Church Endorsement

35 Another benefit of black participation in planning would be the development of Christian specialists who have the endorsement of the Church by ordination to serve the black community: not a mere multiplication of clergymen to serve only traditionally recognized needs, but the development of black deacons with a new task of clearly spelling out also the special needs of the changing black community and of proposing to the bishop corresponding ministries.

Service To The Entire Church

36 Diaconal candidates, both black and white, should have a sufficient understanding of the psychological and sociological conditions that breed the racism found in the Church and government and condemned by both. Such an understanding would indeed help the deacon develop means to change the attitudes supporting, reinforcing, and continuing prejudices that strike at the very foundations of Christian brotherhood.

Real Needs Served?

37 The black deacon's effectiveness will be judged by his ministry to the *real* needs of the black community—in preaching, in liturgy, and most importantly, in works of charity, i.e., individual and community Christian service. This may mean that, acting in the name of Christ and as a representative of the bishop, the black deacon may at times have to act with the community against established procedures, customs and structures.

Conclusion

38 The principles enunciated in Chapter Two, "The Community and the Service of the Church and Deacon," are generally accepted. Whether the above-mentioned problems and questions are adequately solved and answered on the diocesan level will determine the effectiveness and success of the restored diaconate in the black community:

- a) Has the bishop used black people nominated by the community in the planning of the permanent diaconate program and has there been adequate representation?
- b) Have black people identified the needs of the black community and also its resources?
- c) Will the deacon be a true specialist or only serve traditionally recognized needs?
- d) Will the diaconate as a whole work to change conditions that breed racism?
- e) Will the black deacon be allowed to serve the *real* needs of the black community?

Prepared by Very Reverend Eugene A. Marino, S.S.J., consultant of the National Office of Black Catholics to the Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate.

II. DIACONAL MINISTRY IN COMMUNITIES OF SPANISH-SPEAKING

39 Throughout the West and Southwest, and in certain other areas of the country, the greatest pastoral challenge facing the Church, in terms of people, is the Spanish-speaking community. In the West and Southwest, the diocesan Catholic populations comprise anywhere from 50% to 85% Spanish-speaking. Yet in the Church, as in the general body politic, this people is an alienated people because of a different culture and language, compounded by poverty and discrimination. For the same rea-

sons, there is a critical dearth of clergy from within its own ranks to serve this community. There is no decision-making power within the Church structure that represents the voice of the Spanish-speaking. This leadership gap within the Church has also been a factor in alienation.

40 It is within this context that a permanent diaconate program for the Spanish-speaking must be seen. If the mistakes of the past are not to be repeated, then programs must be devised in which the Spanish-speaking themselves have significant input and decision as to training, candidacy, and types of ministries.

41 These programs will vary from community to community, because it must be understood that there is no one Spanish-speaking, monolithic community in the United States. No one group can definitively speak for all the rest. The needs of a Mexican-American rural community in the Yakima Valley cannot be equated with those of urban Mexican-Americans in San Antonio or with those of the urban Puerto Ricans in New York. Therefore, these guidelines can only be very general.

Recruitment and Training

42 Educational background, economic conditions, cultural and linguistic differences must all play an important part in recruitment and training. These elements form the basis for setting down qualifications for candidacy and for the type of training. Guidelines based on an affluent white, middle-class life-style will simply not be adequate for the Spanish-speaking. A truly pertinent diaconate program will be bi-lingual and bi-cultural.

43 Existing diaconate programs and guidelines emphasize close liaison with the family of the deacon candidate. This emphasis will have to be particularly strong for Spanish-speaking candidates because of the family-centered culture he comes from. The extended family relationships of the Latin cultures, in contrast to the atomized family structure of the dominant American culture, is what causes the Spanish-speaking generally to be non-joiners of clubs and organizations. Hence, any program will have to take this into account for the Spanish-speaking more so than for their Anglo counterparts. This emphasis on the deacon's family will, moreover, be an excellent witness in Spanish-speaking communi-

ties, where religious matters are traditionally left in the woman's hands.

44 Training should be given within the barrio context in which the candidates live. Since quite a few of the cleric-teachers will be from outside the barrio, it will be necessary for the teacher to come to where the pupils are. In this way, hopefully, his teaching will be adapted to and influenced by the environment. The specific world-context in which a candidate lives must be used as an essential element in theologizing.

Ministries

45 Besides the variety of ministries that are open to deacons, there are two areas that will be peculiar to minorities and to Spanish-speaking deacons.

46 The first is the ministry to migrants, the "forgotten Americans." The need here for the Church's presence in her deacons is absolute. The training and actual ministry will tax the ingenuity of program developers and the openness of bishops to allow these ministers to function as they travel from diocese to diocese.

47 The second peculiar area of ministry will tax the openness of bishops still more. This is in the area of "La Causa." Because of the position of the Spanish-speaking as subjects of discrimination, second-class citizens, as persons lacking in human dignity and representation, a primary scene for diaconal activity should be in this area, where the struggle is bitter. Unless the Church sees that this is "where it's at" and that the Church's presence must be felt through her deacons, a large segment of the Spanish-speaking leadership will see the diaconate as meaningless or as just an attempt on the Church's part to keep the Spanish-speaking merely pious and content with their lot.

Commitment

48 Finally, we come to a more delicate area—the area of time commitment asked of a candidate. There is no doubt that the diaconate is a permanent state in the sense that once ordained a person is never re-ordained. But to go from this theological statement and jump to the psychological arena and state or assume that, therefore, a candidate must intend to function all his

life ("permanently") as a deacon, does not follow. We must make clear distinctions between state, function, and time commitment.

49 It is felt that unless these distinctions are made, any development of the diaconate in Spanish-speaking communities will be seriously crippled.

Prepared by representatives of PADRES (Asociados para Derechos Religiosos, Educativos y Sociales) and the Division of Spanish Speaking, United States Catholic Conference.

III. DIACONAL MINISTRY IN THE RURAL COMMUNITY

Rural Community Life

50 The rural community has traditionally fostered close family ties. The frequent presence of the father in the home has protected family life. There is also a neighborhood identity in which people are conscious of their mutual interdependence. Villages and towns experience a strong sense of community. The open space of the countryside encourages a sense of freedom.

Rural Poverty

51 The United States has moved, and is continuing to move, from a labor intense form of agriculture to a capital intense form. This has caused a loss of population in many of the non-metropolitan counties of the country. With a loss in population comes a corresponding decline in the economy, in the vitality of institutions and government, and in the social climate of villages and towns. Empty homes, business failures, and the flight of youth contribute to a sense of helplessness and psychological fatalism.

52 The rate of poverty and suffering is usually significantly higher in rural areas. Many poor persons are forced to leave their rural communities because there is not sufficient employment available. They have been and are continuing to feed the urban slums. Young people in great numbers are also forced to enter

the urban scene, often without sufficient preparation. The plight of the migrant worker should especially be noted. They are without voice or power, not only in government but also in the Church.

Rural Ministry

53 Because dioceses are centered in urban areas, and because priests sometimes do not understand the mentality of the rural residents, the rural community is estranged from the major structures of the Church. Rural people think of themselves more as recipients than participants. A deacon, taken from their midst and continuing his secular employment, would bring them more into the mainstream of Catholic Church life by becoming part of the organizational life of the Church, even while remaining one of them.

54 Too often small towns are used as training grounds for pastors to move up the ecclesiastical ladder or as retirement possibilities for the sick and aged. In either case, creative, concerned leadership is often lacking. The Church could begin to correct this situation by encouraging deacons to commit themselves creatively in a rural ministry.

55 More than six hundred counties in the United States are without a resident Catholic priest. The small group of Catholics in these counties usually finds itself without pastoral leadership. A deacon could be their leader, their "pastor," uniting them into a community of love, worship, and service.

56 Regional and multi-county groupings are beginning to emerge on the secular scene, displacing neighborhood and village communities as the dominant units of society in rural areas. The new diaconate form of ministry might be able to respond to this new rural structure more easily than the traditional small town parishes do.

The Rural Diaconate

57 Deacon candidates will be coming from widely scattered communities. This will require special adaptations to particular training programs. Correspondence courses, individual tutoring, weekend visits by theologians, week-long summer programs are all possibilities.

58 Rural communities have a special need for orientation to the diaconate. The deacon is a religious leader, but he is also a citizen with multiple relationships in the business, educational, political, and social systems of the community. To be effective he must be fully accepted in each of these relationships. Although this is true in any area of ministry, it is especially true in the rural areas.

Prepared by representatives of The Glenmary Missioners and the diocese of Des Moines.

IV. DIACONATE IN THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUS COMMUNITY

59 Many people are convinced that the academic community is the most influential segment of American society today. Faculty members and students often set patterns later on taken up by others, not just in fashionable concern of the moment but in enduring values and attitudes.

60 The campus is also the place of contact between society in general and the culture of younger people, so many of whom feel alienated from the ascendant culture of society and "the establishment," with all its human failures. In the university community, thought is brought to bear on the cultural chasm between younger and older people; the potential for reconciliation is present. The kind of ministry exercised within the academic community therefore becomes all important for the sake of the whole society.

61 For the sake of the academic community itself, the principle that ministry can best come from the ordination of people indigenous to the community is most appropriate. Priests, sisters, and lay campus ministers already find that they must become part of the community, usually by teaching, in order to authenticate their ministry. However, ordination of professors would ground ministry in the university community more genuinely. Such ordained deacons would add new power to the pastoral teams of priests, sisters, and lay people.

62 The ordination of qualified faculty members, especially those tenured and holding high status in their various academic departments and disciplines, would contribute in substantial ways to obviate many problems facing campus ministry programs. Briefly noted:

- a) The faculty member would give stability to the campus apostolate, since the student is but a temporary sojourner on campus and as such only a temporary participant in any program.
- b) The faculty deacon as a resident of the local community could do much by both presence and understanding to resolve "town and gown" misunderstandings.
- c) As a recognized minister holding faculty status, the professor-deacon would enhance not only the campus ministry program in the sight of university administrators and faculty colleagues but also could bring into academic areas legitimate aspects of religion.
- d) With his broad and special academic background, the faculty deacon would give a new dimension to the diaconate itself. (NOTE: "Occupational prestige scales" place the college professor fourth in rank—above that of ordained minister.)*
- e) The special research skills and experience of the professor-deacon would permit and promote greater latitude and more fruitful results in purposeful experimentation in various campus ministry programs.
- f) The professor-deacon could by presence and personal dedication overcome the strong feeling of alienation manifested by the majority of students toward faculty members.
- g) As long as the deacon program itself is still on an experimental basis, the active and close cooperation through personal involvement of the most literate of any community could not but give optimum indices for evaluation of the diaconate.

63 Particularly in metropolitan areas in any diocese where there are colleges and universities, thought should be given to a par-

* Joseph Kahl, *The American Class Structure*, p. 73.

ticular kind of diaconate designed for the local academic community and its needs. But relationship should be maintained with the overall diaconal program of a diocese, since reconciliation of elements within society and concern for the total good are paramount. Some experimentation in preparing university professors to be deacons has already begun in the Boston area; similar initiative would be welcome in other areas of the country.

64 The limitations of existing church law are likely to appear as constricting for a university diaconate. Younger professors (under 35) will be ineligible, as will be the sisters and lay women who have already been accepted as integral to pastoral teams. But such anticipation should not hold the university apostolate back from preparing deacons from the rest of the faculty. Their ordination will link the university life to the institutional church. Limitation actually experienced in present church discipline will afford all the more reason for amending such discipline.

Prepared by Campus Ministry Department, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Martin W. Davis, S.D.S., Coordinator.

Chapter Three

SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF THE DEACON CANDIDATE

Goal

65 The goal of Christian spiritual formation is union with God in Christ. There are many possible ways to that goal, all of them involving a growth and development that is fundamentally the work of the Spirit. To put on the mind of Jesus Christ is to see life circumstances and activities constantly in relationship to the Father, sharing the awareness of common possession of the Spirit with others.

The Human Foundation of Christian Life

66 Those responsible for the formation of deacon candidates should not talk about spiritual formation without careful consideration of human formation and development. Deacon candidates, like people generally, cannot develop a strong spiritual life unless they have first developed a strong human life. Academic proficiency is cold and aloof if not accompanied by such warm human virtues as compassion and love. Even an externally well-defined and regulated spiritual life would be nothing more than a shell of pious practices if the individual were not a well-integrated human being. Academic preparation and spiritual development should therefore be preceded and accompanied by genuine human growth.

67 Such human development ought to include a high degree of self-knowledge and self-esteem, the ability to be spontaneous and properly self-assertive, the capability of having appropriate emotional reactions and of being free to respond to others. More than anything else it is a question of helping a person to come to terms with himself and with his own abilities and limitations. Such self-knowledge will not only help one chart his own growth pattern but it will also help him avoid many frustrations he might otherwise encounter in ministry. More important, it will help him deal with the anxieties peculiar to any ministerial involvement.

68 It is important that a person learn to relate well to others before he enters into any kind of ministerial service. Even a profound knowledge of theology fails to serve unless one can communicate it to others. Therefore a deacon candidate should develop both confidence in expressing himself and openness in listening to others. In view of a deacon's function of community leadership, it is also important that the candidate learn to confront issues in a constructive way, to express disagreement, and to express support. When someone has developed along these lines, he is ready to study theology and focus attention on a spiritual life.

Program

69 Christian spiritual development is a gift of the Holy Spirit and therefore cannot be arranged by techniques. A program can only make available certain generally recognized means for the meeting of man and the Spirit.

70 Available means must recognize not only the diversity among individuals but also the high degree of diversity and individuality among and within the various ethnic and cultural groups. Aside from age and urban versus rural differences, black people and people who speak Spanish and other languages than English should have modes of liturgical and doctrinal expression that fit their life-experiences and prior spiritual development based on their own cultural heritage. These recommendations repeat the emphasis of Chapter Two that the Church and its ministers be immersed in the culture of a given community.

71 Much of spiritual growth occurs outside the scope of any program. For example, if a deacon candidate continues in his job, that very job offers him opportunity for spiritual growth by his applying the gospel perspective to it. The job is no longer simply "secular," for it has become a grace-opportunity for him. In that sense there are only "full-time" deacons; adequate spiritual orientation will show the candidate that his whole life is diaconal.

72 In no way should the program of spiritual formation be a means of promoting clerical or monastic forms among men whose life circumstances are meant to remain thoroughly lay. To use "spiritual formation" as a psychological technique to clericalize the mentality of deacon candidates, even inadvertently, is to

prejudge the general rethinking of ministry presently going on in the Church.

Growth in the Christian Life

73 Spiritual formation in any Christian's life is an ongoing process. Preparation for the diaconate attempts to stimulate and facilitate that process with a view to new service. The deacon candidate's deepening exposure to sacred scripture, to doctrinal studies, and to pastoral experience leads him to new sensitivity concerning the faith-value of his family and job; the brotherhood of deacons, priests, and bishops; and his new ministering stance towards the People of God. He becomes more than ever a "community man," a man of the Church, in his image of himself, in his awareness of his mission, and in practical relationships with people. The deacon candidate's spiritual formation penetrates and is part of all other aspects of his growth. Consequently, the following assumptions must be made:

- a) that the candidate is seeking to grow in self-knowledge and the ability to communicate with others;
- b) that the candidate already is living a spiritual life—related to his vocation as worker, husband, and father—that finds expression in prayer and apostolic work;
- c) that the candidate will selectively choose from among those means of spiritual growth made available by his further studies and experiences.

74 The deacon candidate can assume that the program offered to him for his spiritual growth will respect his prior development and his unique family and work situations. Since each candidate has a personal spiritual foundation to build upon, care should be taken that the program offer individualized means for growth.

Means

75 The means to spiritual formation can be put in four categories: fraternities, a spiritual coordinator, a personal spiritual consultant, family and job. These recommendations are not meant to be exhaustive of the possibilities; nor need they all be used in any given program.

76 *Fraternities.* Candidates and ordained deacons may be organized into small groups for the purpose of employing the advantages of group dynamics toward the continuing spiritual

development of the deacon. Group prayers, liturgy, and other spiritual activities are often more meaningful for spiritual development in a small group that maximizes individual participation than in a large group where most individuals must assume a more passive role. Where lay-oriented spirituality movements are available to the deacon candidates, they could be used in addition to or in conjunction with the deacons' fraternities. These small groups, meeting together on a regular basis, provide a framework for sharing experiences and stimulating mutual assistance and encouragement, as each member strives to complement the others in his own way. The presence of men with various skills and abilities in a closely related group will facilitate the growth of each member. Looking on the group as a sounding board may enable an individual to develop from the collective wisdom present. Each member of the group, having different experiences and interests, assists the others by making them aware of events, thoughts, means, and methods of spiritual growth that an individual could hardly become aware of by himself. As to leadership, a leader may arise from within the fraternity, he may have to be appointed, or there may be a diffused leadership of many members. Regardless of the method of selection, the group must have careful leadership.

77 *A spiritual coordinator* should be responsible for organizing workshops and seminars or giving retreats and formal classes on the spiritual life. He can unify the various aspects of the total program. Spiritual growth has a priority in the formation process; but it is achieved in the context of theological and apostolic formation, and in the situation of the candidate's family life and work.

78 *A personal spiritual consultant* should be chosen by the candidate to counsel, guide, and help search through problems as they arise. Perhaps it would be well to select someone outside the program in those cases where problems arise concerning the program itself or its leadership. And a man with black or Spanish-speaking heritage might be encouraged to seek an advisor from his own community. Certain values in having a personal spiritual consultant are as follows:

- a) Such a one can "meet the candidate where he is." The background of candidates may vary broadly from those

who have a highly structured spiritual life to those whose faith and awareness of God is very simple.

- b) He can deal with problems, questions, and concerns which might not emerge in classes or which the candidate might be reluctant to discuss even in the intimate atmosphere of the fraternities.
- c) He can assist the candidate to reflect on his dispositions toward Christ, the Church, and his family. Along with the program spiritual coordinator, he can be concerned with how doctrinal instruction is finding expression in apostolic activity; with creating an inner disposition toward Christ and the Eucharist; with challenging the candidate to be a man of contemplation, i.e., one who sees all reality in the perspective of the gospel.

79 *Family and Job.* In general, the deacon candidate's family and job should be psychologically and spiritually supportive to his formation, but should not be part of the program. Wives can be included in spiritual activities such as retreats and small group masses, but they must not be required to participate. Especially in equalitarian marriages, the wives can take the opportunity to grow spiritually along with their husbands if they wish to. Getting together with wives of other deacon candidates seems to help a wife understand the new dimension in her marriage. Liturgies provide the best opportunity to express and build upon the oneness of purpose that deacons' families share.

80 Any listing of means of growth in the Christian life suggests Jesus' words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me." (John 14:6) The vision of Christ as the way to life in God and as the center of ongoing redemption calls attention to the gift of participation in the Eucharist. The deacon candidate's previous life in Christ was nourished in the Eucharist; the power of his later diaconal work will come from the altar. No less should his formal diaconal training find its strength in the Eucharist.

81 Since spiritual formation is a continuing process and fills a lifetime, the program should be open-ended and leave the candidate with the conviction that there is much left to be done after ordination.

Chapter Four

THEOLOGICAL FORMATION OF THE DEACON CANDIDATE

82 The academic program of diaconal formation is designed to recognize the faith commitment of the candidate, to sustain and develop that faith commitment, and to enable the candidate to articulate it. The specific goal of the study program is to prepare ministers of the gospel rather than professional theologians. To be effective as an ordained representative of the Church, the deacon should have enough knowledge of theology to be competent in the specific ministry he exercises.

83 Through lectures, seminars, small group discussions, and individual direction the candidate should develop a basic understanding, appreciation, and integration of the following:

- a) sacred scripture—the experience of God in the community of Israel and in the primitive Church as evident in the sacred writings;
- b) Christology—the person and mission of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, as perceived by the primitive Church and by Christian believers today;
- c) the Church—concepts, structures, and tasks of the Church in word, sacrament, and service;
- d) pastoral sociology and psychology—a consideration of the individual and society, a study of the cultural, economic, social, and political influences affecting the family of man.

84 In the ministry of liturgy, of the word, and of charity the deacon will appear frequently in the community as a preacher, celebrant of the liturgy, religious instructor, counsellor, leader of small groups, and community organizer. For effective ministry his particular talents should be recognized and strengthened.

This can be done by training in homiletics, religious education, counselling, and community organization. It is not the purpose of a training program to prepare every deacon for all ministries, but rather to recognize areas of competence and develop them.

85 The aim of these theological guidelines is not a fixed roster of courses but an emphasis on basic areas of study and pastoral experience. As far as possible, each training center should be encouraged to develop programs that integrate theory and practice, which should enable the candidate to be an effective minister of the gospel.

86 Programs should recognize the varied experiences and particular qualities of each candidate. Because of the necessity for a diversity of ministries to a variety of peoples, programs should encourage and recruit candidates from all backgrounds and cultures. While some candidates may well profit from courses at universities, colleges, or seminaries, others may best be served through programs specifically developed in new structures on a diocesan or regional basis. These considerations need especially to be noted in arranging curricula: language and cultural differences, academic background, and age.

87 Poverty, racism, and ethnic problems are realities in the United States. Therefore a deep respect for different groups should be made possible through any program, and an opportunity offered for mutual enrichment, developing bonds of brotherhood in ministry across the lines of age, race, language, and economic condition.

88 Since deacons will minister to younger as well as older people, candidates should be assisted with the most skillful of modern pedagogical methods, including the use of television, programmed instruction, and audio-visual devices. Reflection on personal experience, under the guidance of a trained supervisor, is a fundamental dimension of learning, as is indicated at greater length in Chapter Five. It should be noted that most diaconal candidates have matured through adult experiences of work and family life. They must be trusted to learn at their own pace, with their own selection of priorities, and inspired by their own inner motivation.

89 Academic programs may or may not be accredited. Where

accreditation is possible without excluding good candidates, it should be sought with appropriate certificates or degrees from colleges, seminaries, or universities. In this way the academic work performed can receive particular recognition, and improvements in the resources of library, faculty, and administration can be made more secure.

90 During the two-year diaconal training period, the arrangement of theological, pastoral, and spiritual formation should be designed with a pattern of lifetime continuing education as goal. A third year of formal training after ordination might mark the transition to the less guided program of continuing education. As part of the continuing education envisioned, adequate understanding of current developments in the Church's teaching and special mission in areas such as poverty, world peace, and justice can often best be attained through workshops, study weekends, or specially designed courses.

91 The faculty engaged in the training program should be comprised of competent teachers deeply committed to the Church's ministry of service. Faculty members should exemplify in their own life-style the content they present in lectures, discussions, seminars, etc. Every effort should be made to develop a faculty that works closely in integrating the academic, pastoral, and spiritual aspects of the program.

92 Evaluation of the program by the candidates, the faculty, and the program directors should be a regular part of each year's activity, in order that continued improvements in every area may be assured. Through continued concern for such evaluation, candidates themselves can be encouraged to foster evaluation of their own performance after ordination on a regular basis, and thus guarantee the likelihood of continued improvement in their ministry of service.

Chapter Five

PASTORAL FORMATION OF THE DEACON CANDIDATE

Relationship to Ministry

93 Those preparing for the public ministry of the ordained diaconate are already consciously in mission; like other men and women in a church with a variety of ministries, they have been serving others. Whenever and however men conscious of Christ's saving presence and aware that Christ acts through them for the good of others—whenever and however such people are “for others”—they “minister.” Such an open-ended, unspecified description is needed in view of the varied modes of ministry the diaconate may employ.

94 This broad understanding of the ministerial development looks to the entire diaconal mission in liturgy, in word, in charity-inspired service. For this reason the term “ministerial formation” is suggested here to supplement the more familiar term “pastoral formation.” However, just as previous chapters have concentrated on spiritual and theological growth, the focus of this chapter is on the candidate's experience of different ways to encounter and serve others as a deacon. Thus the emphasis is on ministries of charity and is in this sense “pastoral.”

95 Through deepened faith understanding, through the awakening that men experience in their common search for God, through grappling with what is needed in the actual field of service and what is possible with each one's talents—through these, men of faith refine and particularize their individual ministries and their pastoral orientation. As Bishop Unterkoefer said at the national workshop on the diaconate in Chicago, in December, 1970, “There is a feeling that the Holy Spirit, at this time in history, has called us upon an uncharted course, a venture in creativity, based upon the needs of men and the needs of the Spirit.”

96 Any valid ministry is at once an expression of faith and a skill. The structures of any diaconal training program should relate to this dual thrust: one learns both by reflecting and by doing. The process is an experience of growth.

Relationship to Spiritual and Academic Formation

97 It is crucial to bear in mind throughout all phases of formation that the gospel is to be proclaimed. This should provide the reason for study as well as an incentive to prayer. The study of theology is not, therefore, simply a pursuit of greater knowledge but an effort to equip each candidate to share the insights of revelation more competently and authoritatively and become an increasingly believable sign of the true ministry of service embodied in the person of Christ. Greater and more enlightened pastoral and ministerial activity should be the natural result of growth in understanding the mysteries of faith. Both from such deeper understanding of the word of God and from more active ministry should come a spirit of prayer.

98 The entire formation program should have a radical ministerial focus. Its immediate concern is not to assist the development of professional theologians but to provide necessary knowledge and sensitivities for those who would dedicate themselves to a special ministry of service in the community.

99 Active involvement reveals how theological-scriptural disciplines are relevant to the mission of service. Conversely, learning through doing is an essential part of the educational process. Therefore, during the formation process itself the candidate should be actively involved in some form of ministry as in-service training. The experience of pastoral ministry emphasizes the necessity of teaching methods that constantly integrate the theoretical and the practical.

The Role of Theological Reflection in Pastoral Formation

100 Pastoral formation involves both the acquisition of skills, so that the diaconal candidate can secure a sense of confidence in his leadership and talent, and some answer to the deeper and more personal question of why things are done. Ultimately, the second is the more important. The former question is one of

experience and practice; the latter is a lifelong search to extend the insights and demands of "mission." The question of one's personal limitations and potentialities, the need for continual creativity in presenting the word, the evaluation of goals, one's personal dedication—all of these questions must be explored.

101 This kind of questioning is usually called "theological reflection," or sometimes "faith awareness." Formation calls for a continual evaluation, arising in a context of prayer, of how the activity that engages us has value for the "mission" that we share as Christians. Theological reflection demands the honest evaluation of the genuineness of what one is doing, so that it might be seen as authentic and charismatic, that is, truly from the Spirit. Thus a basis is provided for seeing the world as an essential element for theologizing.

102 By such reflection diaconal candidates begin to develop patterns of prayer concerning the roles that they perform, bringing the theological questions into greater perspective. They try to make an intellectual and systematic response to the needs of the day, so that the scriptures and their developing prayer lives offer a solution to the problems that must be faced.

Types of Ministerial Involvement

103 In such a living situation, deacon candidates can acquire a sensitivity to the needs of people, to their hopes and aspirations. They become better acquainted with the various life styles of today's world, probing some of the questions and the reactions of people. Since theological questions are viewed in the context of life, candidates become increasingly conscious of the fragile human elements surrounding such questions.

104 Unlike seminarians in preparation for the priesthood, most diaconal candidates come with some expertise through past service. The task of involving them in ministry is not difficult, but the type of such involvement is very important. First of all, the candidates should be helped to analyze their present pastoral involvement, refining and renewing their commitment to it. Then they should encounter a variety of programs, including experience with such things as catechetics, home visitations, political and community organizations, housing, school boards, prayer groups,

work among addicts, etc. This will enable them to appreciate the scope of the Church's mission, to test their own flexibility, and to acquire the ability to cope with the unusual. The result should be a deepened faith awareness and a strengthened commitment to service.

Group Work as an Aid in Theological Reflection

105 In implementing theological reflection on the various experiences of ministerial involvement, discussion and interaction groups have been found helpful. Such groups are much like the "fraternities" described in Chapter Three as a means of spiritual formation. Ideally, groups would consist of eight to twelve people, with a facilitator to assist but not necessarily direct the various processes set in motion. Although the size of reflection groups might vary in different dioceses, the number suggested here appears ideal for ministerial growth during the training program.

106 Personal development is more likely to take place through active interrelating with other people than through passive listening. Honest, open encounter provides the foundation for self-knowledge and growth. Furthermore, by exchange, confrontation, and support within their groups, deacon candidates can minister to one another and witness to the presence of the Spirit. The group becomes a model of their broader apostolic community and of the total community that is the Church.

Supervision

107 Supervision of pastoral activities and experiences should reflect that openness, flexibility, and multi-faceted approach to service that is inherent in the notion "diakonia" itself. During the past several years, however, new field education and clinical pastoral education programs within seminaries and various advanced seminars and laboratories concerning ministry have stressed the importance of supervision as a specialized skill. To be qualified as a pastoral supervisor, one must have pastoral experience and skill; beyond this, he should be trained in the art of supervision, which is more than an assembly of skills and techniques. Even though the formation of mature men should take advantage of their experience and should therefore be different from that of seminarians, the person responsible for the

pastoral formation of deacons should nonetheless be highly trained in supervision, just as a seminary field education director should be so trained.

108 One area of a supervisor's work has to do not so much with facilitating for the candidate the acquisition of particular skills, but rather with providing that broad experience of ministries to which a deacon candidate is profitably exposed. This broad experiential base provides an index not only of the candidate's initiative but also of his ability to cope with many personalities and with a variety of experiences. And it opens him to the possibilities of integrating and synthesizing a whole complex of ministries, as well as refining his selection of a particular area of ministry.

109 The second area of supervision has to do with specialization of ministry. In this case the candidate who is in training for a particular apostolate might be assigned to a "supervisor" either in field education or at an institute for clinical training. Under the sympathetic guidance of—and demanding confrontation with—the supervisor, the candidate can develop to a level of competence in a particular ministry. The application of supervisory skills to pastoral work in social welfare agencies, hospitals, and prisons is already highly sophisticated. More and more, such supervision is finding a place in parish work and in special apostolates.

110 Supervision and instruction that respond adequately to the needs of the community should be as open and varied as the needs themselves. Through the creative ministries to be undertaken by deacons, pastoral work and the supervision that accompanies it may extend to new frontiers and open the lives of more people to the good news of Christ.

Catholic Charities Agencies as a Resource

111 Because the third and characteristic area of a deacon's apostolate, the ministry of charity, coextends with service already being rendered by Catholic Charities agencies, these agencies can give help to and receive help from emerging diaconate programs. Charities' agencies are accustomed to having lay people in positions of heavy responsibility. Further, Charities' training programs for their own ministry of service can be a resource

for the training of deacons, especially in the matters of personal and professional accountability and of the art and skills of supervision. As an indication of the counsel and collaboration that may be given to new diaconate programs, an appendix to these guidelines carries a statement from the director of the National Conference of Catholic Charities.

Chapter Six

PROCEDURES IN ESTABLISHING A FORMATION PROGRAM

The Initial Decision: Role of the Community

112 Traditionally the ceremony of ordination to priesthood has given people an opportunity to approve or reject the choice of men who will minister to them. Since no diocese is obliged to inaugurate the permanent diaconate, people can have a more radical and influential voice concerning this ministry. For instance, they can advise whether even to have deacons, which diaconal ministries to emphasize locally, what kind of training deacons should receive, and how to incorporate the counsel of all segments of the Church into a plan for diaconal service.

113 There are practical limits and difficulties about a whole diocese's advising its bishop on the question. Until an orientation and education program has been functioning, most people are not familiar enough with the diaconate to care whether it comes. But the principle of having the community speak can still be preserved. Thorough discussion can take place in the priests' senate, diocesan council of religious, apostolic lay organizations, and certainly in the diocesan pastoral council, where that body has been established. Some dioceses have appointed committees to study the feasibility of the diaconate in terms of local apostolic needs, with committee membership drawn from various organizations and subgroups within the particular diocese.

114 Where such communal responsibility has been exercised in evaluating and planning a possible diaconate, there are immediate advantages. First, the bishop's task of decision-making becomes easier since others, in addition to giving their final recommendation, have shared in all the information-gathering, priority choices, and evaluations that lead to the decision. Secondly, if the decision is to develop a diaconate program, every segment of the diocese will have at least some initial readiness to under-

stand and receive the program, and a nucleus of working committees will already be available.

Community Awareness

115 Once the decision to start a diaconate program has been made, it is already time to begin preparing priests, religious, and lay people to learn about the new ministry that will soon affect their lives. Part of this educational emphasis should be towards understanding the nature of the Church and the responsibility that each member bears for her life and growth. When the development of the program has involved widespread collaboration and many groups in the local church have pondered over the kind of diaconal ministry needed, orientation and education already have a strong beginning.

116 Many techniques and approaches can be used to make the word "deacon" a familiar one, including the use of the public media, the diocesan newspaper, sermons, parish meetings, meetings with clusters of parishes, meetings with priests and periodic progress reports sent to them. Each diocese will finally devise its own appropriate means for publicizing its diaconate program. At present, however, it is the unanimous feeling of program coordinators that a good publicity and public relations program is essential if deacons are to operate in the ministry effectively. The diaconate will be a major structural change in church ministry; if lay people and priests are not prepared for it, the results could be disastrous. There could be opposition not only to the deacon in his role but to the deacon personally. With effective orientation, however, the church community can move together to receive the new kind of ministry and to grow in the love that is its goal.

The Emerging Candidate: Recruitment

117 From the experience of the past two years, clear delineation of who a deacon is and what he is called to do results in many applications for diaconal service. People of faith who have served church and society in other ways come forward to be ordained for this ministry. They come especially if their parish and parish priests show esteem and enthusiasm for the diaconate. Together with frequent news about diaconate coming from the orientation

program, such attitudes create a climate in which people ponder whether the Holy Spirit may be attracting them to ministry.

118 It may be friends or members of the family who suggest that a person become a deacon. It may even be that a local parish community decides that certain of their members should prepare to be deacons. In either instance the personal recruiting should be seen as an instrumentality of the Spirit. Up to the present, priests have been the most effective recruiters of candidates; subsequently deacons themselves are expected to be the most influential recruiting agents. Whoever he may be, the recruiter searches out people who have the qualities necessary, i.e., who have strong faith and wisdom, who associate comfortably with other people and yet have the courage to lead and to be different. As an added help in reaching candidates, the diocese might make available a paper on the meaning of diaconate and the qualifications necessary for this service.

Screening and Acceptance

119 Whether a diocese has its own training program, sends candidates to a neighboring diocese, or sends them to a nationally oriented program like the ones at Orchard Lake, Michigan, or Colledgeville, Minnesota, the formalities of official acceptance can be similar and should be implemented by a diocesan board. Each potential candidate fills out an application that looks to basic personal statistics and biographical facts. If he is married, his wife is asked to state her feelings regarding his becoming a deacon. Certificates of baptism, confirmation, and marriage are required. Letters of recommendation are obtained from the candidate's pastor, from a lay person in his parish, from another priest or religious, and from his employer. Finally, at least one personal interview is held with the candidate and his wife.

120 The forementioned steps should be seen as an extension of the parish community's offering and of the diocesan community's accepting of a man for immediate two-year preparation to become deacon; the candidate's earlier life and Christian service comprise his principal preparation.

121 The term "screening" suggests that certain qualities are sought in a deacon candidate. The overall criterion is that the diaconal office is one of active service and leadership; therefore

people should not be ordained simply as a recognition of moral goodness or as a reward for past service.

122 Psychological testing has been used by most of the original thirteen programs and is recommended by these guidelines but not necessarily for screening purposes. It should rather be an instrument for development, to help the candidate assess his own attitudes and the strengths and weaknesses of his personality. The small group emphasis discussed in Chapters Four and Five also offers an opportunity for continuous evaluation of the candidate's qualifications by his peers in the program as well as by its staff.

Styles of Program Leadership

123 The various programs already functioning have taken different approaches to the immediate, week-to-week direction or leadership of diaconal training. Common to all programs is the insistence that, whatever its form, leadership be competent. Thus from the previous chapters it is clear that there must be capable and trained faculty in the fields of spiritual formation, theology and scripture, pastoral supervision, and group dynamics. It is in regard to overall administration that there are different styles of leadership.

124 Most bishops have appointed as "Director" or "Vicar for the Permanent Diaconate" a priest whose background equips him to integrate the various phases of formation and to relate the diaconal program to other areas of the diocesan apostolate. One of his indispensable tasks is to encourage, receive, and use the insights and contributions of the candidates themselves, especially valuable because of their background of experience.

125 An alternate style of leadership puts the administration of the program into the hands of the candidates. Where the numbers are small, candidates might act as a committee of the whole; ordinarily, representative leaders would be elected by and for the candidates. One appeal of this second style is that people work more actively when they are involved in the decision-making process. Another is that those who will function as deacons should have significant voice in their preparation.

126 Concerning policy as distinct from administration, the whole diocese should have representation on a deacon training

program's board of directors. Ordained ministry is the concern of the entire local church and not just of those who will exercise that ministry. Since a board of directors would link candidates, faculty, and administration to broader church concerns and represent those concerns in the name of the bishop, it should be constituted with great care. Representation should include priests, deacons, men and women religious, people from organized lay apostolates, lay men and women in general, young people, and members of minority groups.

Family Considerations

127 Most deacon training programs take the candidate away from his wife and family two evenings a week; periodic weekend retreats or special meetings add to this time away; and the candidate spends additional time with the church or civic community of which he is a part. Aside from the question of time, the nature of a deacon's commitment to the community has reverberations in his family. Though the time he can give is limited and his commitment to his wife and family has clear priority, there is a new kind of belonging to the community that has to be carefully considered throughout the formation period so that the accepting of ordination becomes a free and conscious choice, shared in and supported by the man's wife and children.

128 Because of this family dimension, two-way communication between the diocesan diaconate office and the wives of the candidates is crucial. Especially during the early period of a candidate's training, the emerging picture of what repercussions the diaconate will bring to his family may cause his wife to be apprehensive. Only clear information and accurate understanding can allay such apprehension.

129 It is also necessary to offer developmental programs for the wives, so that they too might be involved in personal growth experiences similar to those their husbands are undergoing. During a two-year program, candidates have unusual opportunities for personal growth. Unless their wives have a similar opportunity, there can be an imbalance that might affect the marital relationship.

130 Another consideration is the family's economic situation. The gift of diaconal service should not impose unfair burdens on the deacon or his family. For this reason, minority group programs may need to be subsidized to a greater degree than other programs. The plight of the poor ought to be understood when a deacon is drawn from his own, the poor.

Chapter Seven

MINISTRY AND LIFE AFTER ORDINATION

A. The Deacon's Ordination and Relationship to His Bishop

131 The dignity of a sacrament and the action of Christ Himself envelop ordination to diaconate as well as to priesthood and episcopate. Since for the lifetime deacon this is his definitive apostolic commission rather than a step to other orders, the ceremony should reflect a great investment of rejoicing and hope on the part of the deacon, his family, his church and civic community. As part of the ceremony, the announcing by the candidate's wife that she gives consent and approval to the ordination adds dramatic meaning. Pope Paul himself called for the assurance of such consent when he ordained deacons in Bogota, Columbia, more than two years ago.

132 Through the imposition of the hands of the bishop, the deacon comes to share, together with bishop and priests, publicly and officially in the Church's carrying out of Christ's ministry of word, sacrament, and service. Since the bishop's pastorate is diocesan wide, the ordination ceremony can take place appropriately either in the cathedral or in the candidate's parish. When a man has clearly emerged as a leader in his parish community—and particularly when a diocese plans to locate the ministry of deacons at the parish level—ordination in a parish church allows the people who really know the man to share this moment. Other reasons, especially a diocesan plan for extra-parochial ministry for its deacons—or simply too great a number of deacons for the bishop to ordain in each parish—would incline towards one, central, cathedral ordination. A third, intermediary possibility would emphasize ordination in and for a region, vicariate, or deanery—i.e., some unit consisting of a number of parishes.

The Deacon's Bond With His Diocese

133 This official sharing in Christ's ministry to a specific local church is the basis of the ordained man's enduring relationship to his diocese called "incardination." But the fact that the great majority of deacons will continue secular work and be part of a very mobile American society must qualify a man's commitment to his diocese. With the cooperation and dialogue common among U.S. bishops, a deacon who is transferred into another diocese by his occupation will ordinarily be welcomed into ministry by his new bishop. However, the option exercised by a diocese, i.e., a local church, is a value to be respected; when a deacon moves into a diocese that has decided not to implement the permanent diaconate, he will simply not exercise his office.

Title of Ordination

134 The ordination "title" traditional for priests in the United States, "the service of the Church," is appropriate also for deacons. In the case of priests, the title has had no connection with sustenance or "benefice" and is not changed when a man becomes a pastor. The same will be true of deacons, the vast majority of whom will continue their previous occupations, supporting themselves independently of diaconal work. The title, therefore, will underscore the whole purpose of ordination—service.

135 According to present church law, the age minimum for the ordination of married men (and in the U.S. for single men also) is thirty-five years. The bishop is empowered to dispense from an age deficiency of only one year. When younger candidates come forward who are mature in their faith, personality development, and marital life, the Bishops' Committee recommends that the bishop of the diocese seek a dispensation from the Holy See in order to ordain.

B. The Process of Assignment to Ministry

136 The range of ministries in which a deacon may serve is within the broad parameters outlined in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* and in Pope Paul's letter of 1967 (cf. Chapter One, par. 18)—ministries of liturgy, word, and charity. Although ministry of the word runs a gamut from formal preaching to

personal dialogue, even more limitless possibilities fall under ministries of charity. This becomes the most important area regarding assignment procedures.

137 Two central factors affect assignment—the needs of the diocese and the capacities of the individual deacon. The diaconate relates to the overall apostolate of a diocese—which includes lay and ordained ministries—and ordinarily will have a certain thrust and character in response to local needs. The individual deacon’s ministry must be limited by his capacities and circumstances—his talents, interests, training, and the time he has available to give. Some deacons, for example, will be charismatically inspired to conceive new ministries to groups previously alienated from the Church and closed to the gospel message.

Formal Agreement on Ministry

138 From the balancing of these two factors, therefore, an agreement can be developed for the ministry of each deacon, containing at least the outline of a “job description.” Though very much open to concrete application, development, and change, the agreement should weigh what is known. Besides the two matters of diocesan need and personal capacity, other elements in the agreement process include consent of the deacon and his family, consultation with the appropriate pastor or agency head (e.g., a hospital, Catholic Charities, or social action agency), and with related community structures such as parish councils, organizational or agency decision-making boards, and diocesan personnel structures. The agreement should be subject to periodic review by all of those concerned.

139 Such clear agreements, taking full account of limits, should help the bishop and the deacon—also the priests and lay people with whom the deacon will work—to recognize authority as service rather than power or domination. Deacons recognize the fact of decision-making responsibilities in secular life and they expect it in the ordained ministry. But since they come freely and as adults, offering their talents and energies in service to the bishop and the community, they are not likely to tolerate an arbitrary approach to decision-making. With clear agreements, dialogue, and mutual respect, inevitable authority conflicts should be minimal.

140 At least regarding assignment, the liturgical expression of diaconate is simpler to determine than the service of charity. With the addition of the deacon's ministry to those of celebrant, lector, acolyte, commentator, music director, and congregation, the proper division of roles in the Eucharist is emphasized and the Church can be better experienced as community. Whether ministering at mass or in the action of other sacraments such as baptism or matrimony, the deacon should wear appropriate vestments. The effect of such liturgical attire will be all the more striking when the deacon's street-dress is non-clerical.

C. The Deacon in Relation to Priests and Lay People

Deacons and Priests

141 Sacramentally sharing as they do in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ, deacons enter into a profound collaborative bond with all the priests of a diocese, a bond which looks to the Christian life of all the people. (cf. Chapter One, Par. 13). Yet in their respective types of educational background and daily life-style, including both occupational and marriage/celebrity differences, deacons and priests will be very different. As a result, what is changed, broadened, and enriched is our understanding of ordained ministry. Primarily, ministry meant and still means a mission from Christ and the Church. Secondly, it was the priest with his life-style; now it includes the deacon with another.

142 Because the ministries from the Lord to people include the same three elements of liturgy, word, and charity, priests and deacons must work closely together. If needed harmony is to be developed, the traditional priestly ministers must welcome and assist their new collaborators. All indications are that this welcome is ready, at least in basic attitude. According to the recent NORC sociological study of the U.S. priesthood, "introduction of the married diaconate whenever and however the local church chooses" received from priests stronger support (86%) than any other "possible change" listed. Bishops were nearly as favorable, 80%. In the instigation of deacon training programs, priests' senates and associations have been more prominent than any other influence.

143 Beyond this general good will, priests need to be kept informed of the training that deacons are receiving; and priests need to participate in the planning done for the deacon's ministry. Conversely, deacons need to know that priests understand their training and welcome their ministry. There is a communications challenge here; otherwise information gaps are bound to develop, with the usual suspicion and misunderstanding.

144 It will help the perspective of all the ordained to remember the words of Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* that deacons "in communion with the bishop and his group of priests, serve the People of God." Depending on the kind of ministry that he is called to render to the Christian community—and this may well be something the deacon himself has suggested—the deacon may or may not work directly under a priest pastor. In any case, authority and communication lines cannot be blueprinted ahead of time to fit all circumstances. There is better insurance for a harmonious future in the shared ideal that deacons serve "in communion with the bishops and his group of priests."

Deacons and Lay People

145 Perhaps the prime value that deacons will bring into the ordained ministry is an experiential understanding of the lay person's point of view in living the Christian life. Even to speak of "deacons and lay people," as though they were somehow different, must seem strange to both groups. In the everyday, non-canonical frame of reference of Catholics, permanent deacons are lay people and will continue to be; indeed they are called popularly "lay deacons." Against this background, one can see why Pope Paul listed among the functions of deacons: "to promote and sustain the apostolic activities of laymen"; and we can appreciate why the theologians said in the CTSA report: "Far from rivaling or inhibiting the ministry of laymen, the ministry of deacons, when it is judiciously exercised, will powerfully promote that ministry so vital in the contemporary world." (Par. 23)

146 Although deacons share with priests and the bishop "sacred" functions in liturgy, their special service of charity carries them, in solidarity with lay men and women, into work of social action and human development. Since many candidates will have emerged as leaders in their communities, leadership in

many of these social areas can be characteristic of them as deacons.

147 But the majority of lay leaders will not seek ordination to the diaconate, nor should they. Deacons can very appropriately contribute their ministry in teams that are under the leadership of lay people. Serving does not have to mean leading. By personal witness to the Risen Lord even in the humblest service, deacons will be strengthening the faith and enthusiasm of a church made up predominantly of lay people. Thus deacons enhance the lay apostolate both by participating in it and by intensifying the faith of all members of the Church.

148 In this context of identification with lay people, questions of a deacon's ordinary attire and his title of address have arisen. The Catholic Theological Society's report suggested that deacons "resemble in dress and manner the laymen from whose ranks he is chosen but never separated." (Par. 23) This same emphasis against external signs of a new and somewhat segregated class in the Church (such as Roman collars, black suits and ties, the title "Reverend") has been powerful both from lay people and priests. The Bishops' Committee endorses the hope that deacons will resemble lay people in these matters of life-style. However, a fundamental trust on the part of priests and lay people must rest in the judgment and sensitivity of deacons themselves.

The Deacon as Bridge

149 In the United States we have taken satisfaction in the close bonds between lay people and those whose lives have been given to a religious vocation—priests, sisters, brothers. Still, there is a difference between the person professionally trained in religion, living as a celibate, working for the institutional church, and the lay Christian working in the world, raising a family, not externally different from people of other religions or none. From the point of view of sacred orders, the difference is between bishops and priests on the one hand and lay people—including religious—on the other. However wide or narrow the gap, the lay people who are ordained into the hierarchical ministry as deacons can constitute a *bridge*, reminding both clergy and laity that our common identity as Christians is more important than our particular roles.

D. Consideration for the Deacon's Wife and Family

150 The sacrifice of time during the candidate's formation will have prepared his wife and children for the new dimension and quality that diaconal ministry will bring into their family. It is because of such inevitable changes for the family that the wife must formally consent to her husband's ordination.

151 During the formation period there was need for the candidate's wife to be fully informed and to experience growth possibilities similar to her husband's; a parallel need exists after ordination. The deacon's new ministry should be a source of enriched union with his wife. As a member of the Church with apostolic responsibilities herself, the deacon's wife shares her husband's religious concerns and is free to contribute to his new ministry. In many cases the two will already have functioned as an apostolic team in Cana work, the Christian Family Movement, and the like. Even though some of her husband's family time will be sacrificed to the wider community, through ministry he may so develop and grow as a person that his family relationships become more profound.

152 On the other hand, there can be a danger of implicit demands and expectations that the church community has no right to make of a deacon's wife. She is not to be an unsalaried, unordained, and unrecognized auxiliary in ministry. Already, deacon candidates and their wives have recognized this danger of exploitation, which echoes the experience of ministers' wives in other churches. While her help is valued, it must be given in complete freedom; the wife is personally independent of her husband's vocation. For a variety of good reasons, such as her own career or profession or particular needs of her children, the wife may choose not to share at all in the active ministry of her husband.

153 Such a clear understanding of the position of a deacon's wife will also be of great benefit in the event that church law changes and women can be ordained deacons. In such cases the woman deacon would take on all the responsibilities of ministry, without any confusing comparison with the deacon's wife, who is unequivocally lay.

E. *Protecting the Deacon's Human Dignity, Rights, and Security.*

154 In addition to clear assignment procedures that take account of the deacon's preferences and also to the limitations on service that can be expected from his wife, a fundamental consideration for a man with family responsibilities is that of financial security. As the diaconate is developing in the United States, this matter is not connected with diaconal vocation for the majority of deacon candidates, who will continue to be self-supporting after ordination. However, several different situations of the deacon must be considered.

The Part-Time Ministry

155 Of the first 430 deacon candidates, more than ninety-five per cent intend part-time ministry in the sense that they will continue their secular occupation, gaining their sustenance from it. Relative to his diocese and church community, the deacon freely gives his apostolic services, just as do his lay confreres, who are equally members of the Church and whose contribution of service is no less valuable because they receive no money. The difference between these groups is that the services of one are at the level of the sacrament of orders.

156 Since, however, such a deacon candidate expects no money in return after ordination, the diocese or parish should carry the cost of his preparation and training. Donation of services is one thing, while sustaining of personal financial loss is another. Assignment agreements should make provision for expenses incurred in diaconal ministry. Regarding deacons from poor communities who would have to forego a necessary second job in order to serve in the diaconate, some just compensatory arrangement should be made. Even for deacons in part-time ministry, some dioceses may prefer to articulate financial arrangements in the form of a contract.

The Full-Time Ministry

157 There will be some deacons whose complete work is given to some form of church service. Many of these persons will seek ordination because their church work is already diaconal in character, e.g., social workers, religious education coordinators, ad-

ministrators of various apostolates. They will continue to be salaried for their task, independently of whether they be lay persons or deacons. In this sense, their financial arrangements are similar to those of the other deacons.

158 Guidelines such as these cannot anticipate every arrangement, nor should they. For example, one diocese might want a deacon to give half of his working hours to diaconal church work; the other half would be spent in secular work. Clearly, just compensation and security arrangements would be mandatory in such a case. Further variations might involve retired men who are allowed to earn a certain amount beyond pension and social security.

159 Still other dioceses may want a deacon to devote all of his time to various aspects of diaconal ministry. In this case, the man would be compensated precisely as a deacon and should be paid an appropriate living wage, with customary fringe benefits and security arrangements.

F. The Deacon's Continuing Education and Growth in Christ.

160 Since the first deacons from the pioneer training programs are being ordained during 1971, experience in continuing education for deacons is just beginning and guidelines must be appropriately tentative.

161 The first year of a deacon's ministry has been gauged as so important that many training programs are announced as being three years in duration—the third year coming after ordination. Study, dialogue, and reflection can then be related to actual ministry; and planning can be charted for study and growth that has no termination. As indicated in Chapter Four concerning doctrinal formation—worship, study weeks, and the like may be the most effective tools for such continuing education. In any event, scriptural, theological, and social sciences are so alive today that continuing education is a necessity.

162 Just as the deacon candidate's spiritual formation program recognized an already existing spiritual life related to his occupation and to his vocation as husband and father, so it continues after ordination with the help of a spiritual advisor and with the additional dimension of his diaconal ministry. Through

person-to-person and group contacts with people as he communicates the good news, and with the service to the community that is connected with discipleship, the deacon finds new occasions for his own growth. The very drama of ongoing redemption will stimulate him to personal prayer; and he will seek, through the medium of personal prayer, a sensitized awareness of that same drama.

163 Another source and motive for the deacon's prayer is his life with his wife and family, where his capacity to love is developed on the most intimate level. In addition to his private prayer, the deacon can very appropriately pray the liturgical hours of Lauds and Vespers as expressing the praise of God from the entire church community.

164 More and more the Christian who is a deacon should find his center of meaning and value in the Eucharistic sacrifice. This is his supreme prayer. Here he is in contact with the ultimate in service as well as in love—the Christ laying down his life for others, the prelude to resurrection.

Epilogue

NEW DIRECTIONS

A. *Current Suggestions for Change in Church Discipline Regarding Diaconate*

Age—Celibacy—Ordination of Women

165 Three critical questions very much under discussion in many parts of the country were intentionally omitted from consideration in the previous chapters—the matters of age, celibacy, and women in the diaconate. The reason for this omission is that training programs on which these guidelines are based have followed existing church discipline.

166 The widespread interest and response generated by the diaconate among mature and deeply concerned men in their late twenties have convinced many bishops, priests, and lay people of the urgent need to modify the present age requirement. Unless married men under thirty-five years old become eligible for the diaconate, the apostolate will suffer the loss of many highly qualified and committed people, at their peak in energy and dedication, when they are perhaps best able to communicate with the young, and at a point in their lives when they are most capable of seriously considering a lifetime commitment.

167 Regarding celibacy, the traditional prohibition of marriage after sacred orders has been opposed widely, not only for a deacon who might become a widower but for any unmarried man who would be ordained a deacon. Single men who are attracted to diaconal service hold back when celibacy is asked of them in order to accept a sacred order in which most men are married. Moreover, married men with younger children, even when their wives are healthy, are reluctant to hazard anything that might affect the security of those children. And diaconal program directors question their ability to train married men for a possible future charism of celibacy.

168 The third critical question concerns the ordination of women as deacons. Many women, lay and religious, have offered to serve in the ordained ministry and question the justice of being excluded. Among deacon candidates themselves and leaders of training programs, there is growing conviction that women would strengthen the diaconal ministry immeasurably.

169 The Bishops' Committee has spent many hours of discussion on all three of these questions, listening to people who sincerely seek a change in church law in order that the gospel message and the charity of Christ might be communicated more effectively. After the widely circulated February, 1971 report of the Catholic Theological Society of America had offered strong arguments in favor of the ordination of women, the Bishops' Committee discussed the question with individuals and groups who expressed reactions for or against. The committee of bishops has continued to pursue all three questions by listening to what people in the apostolate are saying and by carrying that message to churches in other countries and to the Holy See.

B. *Some Further Questions*

Religious

170 The 1967 Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI, *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, devotes four paragraphs (n. 32-n.36) to the question of the permanent diaconate among religious. The institution of the diaconate among religious is reserved to the Holy See, although it would be exercised under the authority of the local bishop as well as of the religious superior. The episcopal conference of bishops is not directly involved.

171 Some religious communities are investigating the possibility of having some of their members serve as deacons. Individually, a small number of religious brothers have begun to prepare for ordination as deacons. The great majority either have not considered the question or have apparently judged that such ordination would not be appropriate in the apostolate they are already exercising as professed religious whose vows have been publicly received by the Church.

*Laicized Priests, Seminary Deacons, and the
Question of Permanence*

172 Other suggestions have been made periodically that would call for a change in church discipline. One is that the way be opened for laicized priests to be restored to active ministry as deacons. However, the Bishops' Committee and its secretariat know of only a few cases in which laicized priests themselves have made such a request for diaconate.

173 In a number of instances known to the committee, seminary candidates for the priesthood have decided, during their period of pastoral preparation as deacons, not to go on to the priesthood but to remain as deacons with the hope that they might be free to marry. Present church law does not allow for such an arrangement; but if celibacy obligations were removed from the diaconate, it would become possible. In the meantime, the following clear advantage has stemmed from the absence of laicized priests and seminary deacons among the ranks of permanent deacons: the attitudes and experiences shaping the character of the new diaconate have been lay rather than clerical.

174 It has been suggested by some minority groups that, while some of their own might be willing to give of themselves as ordained deacons, they are not ready to do so permanently. Experience has indicated that the same question exists among others outside minority groups. It is a question that is current and deserves attention.

C. Influences on the Growth of the Diaconate

175 The direction and speed of growth of the permanent diaconate may very well depend on three other influences: first, the cooperation that priests and permanent deacons are able to build up among themselves; secondly, the growth of team pastoral ministries that include priests, sisters, and lay people; and thirdly, the success of and reception given to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

176 The first influence on the development of the diaconate, the teamwork evidenced by deacons and priests, has already been referred to in Chapter Seven. As indicated there, the cur-

rent attitude of priests towards their new partners in ministry is very encouraging; however, the rivalry between deacons and priests in earlier centuries is a caution that success must be achieved, not just presumed.

177 Newly developing "team ministries" can mean several priests acting as a team rather than all but one being assistants subject to a pastor; or it can mean priests, sisters, and full-time lay professionals working as a ministerial team. The latter kind of team is more likely to influence the diaconate, and this in two ways: again, the concept of ministry will be broadened; and permanent deacons, even though most of them be part-time ministers, will become part of the team.

178 Presently, many parishes in the United States are witnessing—some for the first time—the functioning of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Together with lectors and commentators, this new role may help more people realize that some church ministry is asked of everyone, though it may not be the ordained ministry of sacramental orders. Yet this very sensitivity to a broader concept of ministry is likely to inspire more candidates to the diaconate.

179 The emergence both of extraordinary ministers and of pastoral teams will particularly affect people's attitudes towards women in pastoral ministry and even towards the ordination of women. Already people are beginning to see women distributing Holy Communion and exercising ministries of community leadership and personal counselling, in addition to the more traditional roles of teaching and visiting the sick. Aside from theological considerations regarding the ordination of women and from the evident need of apostolic workers, there is the vast pastoral dimension that considers people's attitudes, habits, and readiness to accept change.

D. *Lessons of Other Countries.*

180 In his book *Ministry of Service*, the Englishman Robert Nowell stresses the idea of ordaining people who are already doing diaconal work; and he finds such people particularly in the organized structures of charitable service. The same linking of diaconate with "Caritas" structures has characterized the Ger-

man approach of Karl Rahner and been influential in the movement that affected the Second Vatican Council's discussion on diaconate.

181 A quite different approach has been taken in Brazil, Chile, Panama, and other countries in Latin America. Instead there has been a concentrated effort to build up small Christian communities and to make these communities the basic units of Christian life and renewal. These units are much smaller than ordinary parishes and small enough for the members to know and interact with one another. In these situations the deacon's function is that of leadership in the small community.

182 The Bishops' Committee offers these examples from other countries as hints of what may come from the creative energy supplied by men of faith who are receptive to the Holy Spirit. As the eleven members of the Catholic Theological Society of America put it in February, "We are not asked to control the future but only to be open to it and to the Holy Spirit as he leads us to it."

BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON THE PERMANENT DIACONATE

August 5, 1971

Appendix

The Permanent Diaconate in Relation to Catholic Charities (Statement of the National Director)

The restoration of the permanent diaconate has been described as one of the "most significant structural innovations instituted by the Council in regard to church office." From its viewpoint, Catholic Charities in the United States would subscribe to this analysis, and in all probability the Caritas organizations in other countries of the world would echo this opinion.

The Second Vatican Council points out that deacons are ordained "unto a ministry of service" and that "they serve the People of God in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity." This brings to the fore, and establishes in a distinctive mode, a ministry of service that has always existed, but that has not been given its proper place in the mission and activities of the People of God. It has always been part of the calling, responsibility, and work of the followers of Jesus, but for many centuries has not been clearly established in the same manner as the sacramental ministry or the ministry of the word. With the restoration of the permanent diaconate, the ministry of service is more clearly identified in hierarchical orders, confirmed by ordination, and distinctively manifested through the functions to be performed.

It is well to recognize that the ministry of service has always been carried on as part of the life and activities of the Church. Much of this as officially established has been delegated to Catholic Charities (or Caritas in other countries) and its allied organizations, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society. These agencies and organizations have enjoyed an official capacity and can be seen as an official ministry, inasmuch as they have been overtly constituted as part of the ecclesiastical structure. The distinctiveness of ordination has not been given them, however, except in terms of having priests put in charge. The actual personal service has been carried on largely by laymen and laywomen.

The ministry of service assigned to the deacon is also described as a "ministry . . . of charity." This verbal resemblance to the programs of Catholic Charities finds reflection in the work

to be done by the deacon. At least some of this work will certainly be in the field of social service, community service, social action, personalized help to individuals, and many other types of assistance to people in need. The programs stimulated by or conducted by Catholic Charities cover the total range of these fields of activity. They are as broad or broader than what is generally considered as the field of social welfare. It seems that this broad scope also beckons to the emerging deacon.

The restoration of the permanent diaconate is a most welcome development. This immediately establishes the ministry of service in its rightful place as a legitimate and necessary ministry in the Church. This no doubt will lead to a deeper understanding of its meaning and its function, including a fuller theological exposition of its total dimensions. It should broaden the vision of all the People of God in respect to this ministry and their involvement in it, resulting in a fuller commitment to service. Thus the total Christian witness will be enhanced. Above all, it will place in sharper focus the fact that we are followers of the Christ who came "not to be served but to serve."

These have been the thoughts and works of Catholic Charities for many years. In the course of these years, a rich body of experience has also been accumulated. Catholic Charities, in welcoming the restoration of the permanent diaconate, also expresses its desire and willingness to cooperate in this new development in the Church. It stands ready to serve the Church nationally as the directions of the permanent diaconate are clarified, and to provide help to any of the programs that are established locally in each diocese.

As a beginning, we will study and make suggestions on this document, *PERMANENT DEACONS IN THE UNITED STATES—Guidelines on Their Formation and Ministry*. Other types of cooperation will be developed in discussion with those responsible for diaconate programs. We look forward to outlining what the experience of Catholic Charities suggests for these programs.

Rev. Msgr. Lawrence J. Corcoran
National Conference of
Catholic Charities

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Note of Thanks

The work of many people is represented in the preceding guidelines. In addition to the present members of the Committee on the Permanent Diaconate, I would like to thank Bishop Harold Perry, member during 1968-69, and Bishop James A. Hickey who during that same year attended our meetings as liaison with the Committee on Priestly Formation, of which he was then chairman.

I am particularly grateful to the Committee's consultants and advisors, who participated in the meetings and helped us in all of our work. They include Sister Jane Edward Schutz, O.P., Monsignor Aloysius Welsh, Fathers Edward Baldwin, Albert Benavides, Charles Burns, S.V.D., Leo Croghan, Paul Downey, S.S.J., Anthony Kosnik, James La Chapelle, S.V.D., James A. Laubacher, S.S., Eugene A. Marino, S.S.J., Edwin B. Neill, Kieran Nolan, O.S.B., Alfred Prado, O.M.I., and Frank Ruff. Sister Anne E. Patrick, S.N.J.M., Monsignor Ernest Fiedler, and Fathers Thomas Allen, Reynaldo Flores, O.F.M., John Ring, and Duane Weiland added their help with the drafting of these guidelines.

Other bishops, priests, sisters, laywomen, and laymen—including deacon candidates—have spoken with the Committee during its nearly three years of existence. They have communicated plans for ministry developed all across the country; they have convinced us that the experience represented in these guidelines is only a beginning of something that is the work of the Spirit.

Ernest L. Unterkoefer
Chairman

