



## INSTITUTE FOR DIACONAL STUDIES

### About Inquiry and Pre-Application ...

**Welcome and thank you** for inquiring about qualifications, initial dialogue and pre-application to the Institute for Diaconal Studies (IDS) of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

This is an exciting time as you listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit regarding a potential vocation. This is also the first-step in opening dialogue and pursuing knowledge about the role of the deacon; the program of formation leading to potential ordination (reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders); and exploring initial eligibility.

As is noted in the section titled “Application” on the IDS web site – all applications are requested and submitted *by your pastor* after a period of ‘inquiry’ – personal time for you to learn about vocation, discernment and eligibility, as well as a period of time to enhance or forge a positive relationship with your sponsoring pastor and parish. This inquiry period is a way for you to further learn about the potential of joining the formation program and a means for those responsible for the application process to review several important and necessary considerations regarding a person’s eligibility to pursue application to the program.

***This initial process is confidential*** and enables you to come to a better understanding of God’s desire for your participation in the mission of the Church and an opportunity for the formation program to verify the necessary freedom an inquirer needs to possess to pursue application to the program that prepares

candidates for the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

### The Inquiry process

**YOU ARE NOT ONLY INQUISITIVE AND** excited at this point of your search but probably also filled with questions about the many things involved with preparing for such a very important and distinct sacrament of the Church. At this juncture you are encouraged to follow an appropriate period of inquiry. It is a process that needs time, prayer and support.

Before pursuing the formal inquiry process, the formation program encourages you to first:

- **Pray and talk with your family** to not only inform them of your vocation interest but to enlist the entire family’s prayer and support;
- **Pray and talk with your pastor.** An applicant needs the formal support of a sponsoring pastor and parish;
- **Pray and talk with deacons in your parish.** Begin to acquire a basic understanding of the role of permanent deacons in the Catholic community;
- If you have a personal spiritual director or spiritual companion, bring this topic into prayer and dialogue. Vocation discernment has many potential tracts – religious, lay, ecclesial or ordained;
- Thoroughly review each of the sidebar buttons and links on the formation program’s web site.



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### The formal process of inquiry

AFTER PRAYING AND TALKING WITH YOUR family, pastor and permanent deacons in the local community as well as reviewing the program's web site - your interest may be increasing. The formation program will now encourage you to become a formal inquirer. There are specific steps at this point:

- Contact IDS [jcozzo@usml.edu](mailto:jcozzo@usml.edu) (847-837-4563) and request a personal visit from a *Vocation Liaison*. The vocation liaison will contact you and set up a personal visitation to begin dialogue. This personal visit will provide insight on several key areas: vocation, discernment, parish/pastor, wife and family support, present and potential future processes, and pre-application. The vocation liaison will also encourage the inquirer to participate in the formation program's on-line discernment retreat;
- Attend an "*Exploring the Permanent Diaconate*" session. The program generally offers these opportunities three times a year. The format includes the celebration of the Eucharist, a formal presentation, dialogue, and Q & A. Wives are asked to attend with their husband (inquirer);
- Continue developing a relationship and dialogue with your sponsoring pastor.

### Pre-Application

WHEN YOU MEET WITH YOUR VOCATION liaison you will be asked to read and complete a pre-application form. This is an important confidential document that provides insight into canonical and extra-canonical issues (application criteria based in the law and Tradition of the Church) as well as other issues important to application that the local Ordinary (bishop) deems applicable. It is another opportunity to continue dialogue and clarify issues about the potential to make application regarding reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. All of the information requested in the pre-application phase will be formally requested during the application phase. The Church takes seriously its obligation to ensure ordained clergy of outstanding moral character, theological understanding and faithful lived-example to Church teaching.

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Some areas explored on the pre-application form include:

- **Place of residence and parish membership** - Applicants are required to live within the Archdiocese of Chicago and be a member of a parish;
- **Age, education level, employment and health** - Archdiocesan application age parameters are currently 31- 62. Ordained ministry is not to be viewed as a second career or a retirement ministry. An ideal would be ten years of ordained ministry. The archbishop deems a minimum of four years of active service as the norm. Also, an applicant must be self-supporting;



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- **Relationship and involvement in parish life and ministry** – *A visible and active presence in a sponsoring parish is foundational for an inquirer. Also, a sponsoring pastor needs adequate knowledge of an applicant's ministerial abilities and potentiality;*
- **Sacramental life** – *Full initiation (must have received Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) and active participation in the Catholic faith is necessary before consideration of the Sacrament of Holy Orders;*
- **Catholic Christian moral life** – *As a potential public minister (visible and transparent to a believing community), an applicant needs to have a history of Christian moral living in compliance to all Church teaching;*
- **Prayer life and spiritual background** – *A well-ordered Christian spirituality with a foundation of varied Catholic disciplines is necessary for ordained clergy;*
- **Commitment and adherence to Church teaching** – *Applicants need a faithful commitment to Papal and local authority;*
- Potential for remedial academic skills in preparation for formal theological academic study and formation – *The program assists those who may need help with reading and writing skills.*

IDS earnestly strives to address any issues that could impede application into formation *before* the formal application process.

This inquiry period and pre-application will offer considerable assistance to both the inquirer and the formation program in assessing the potential for application into formal discernment and study. The Director of Formation will personally contact you after a conversation with the vocation liaison and review of the pre-application form.

### The next step

AFTER COMPLETION OF A PERIOD OF inquiry and pre-application an inquirer's potential is reviewed by formation administration. At this point the Director of Formation will contact the inquirer and clarify potential for application to the program. A successful inquirer could then be encouraged to pursue application through his pastor.