



**Archdiocese of San Antonio**  
**Policy Handbook**  
**For**  
**The Permanent Diaconate**

Revised: August 1, 2015

**NORMS GOVERNING PARTICULAR ASPECTS  
OF THE  
LIFE AND MINISTRY OF DEACONS**

**1. Ministerial Assignments**

1.1. Relationship Between Deacons and the Archbishop

1.1.1. Through Holy Orders the deacon acquires a special relationship to the diocesan bishop. His ministry, like that of the presbyter, is a collaboration in the ministry of the diocesan bishop. Tradition refers to the deacon as “the bishop’s man...the bishop’s ears and eyes.” Their sharing in the Bishop’s ministry of Charity, Word, and Sacrament enables the Church to be a credible sign of the Servant Christ in the world.

1.1.2. Among the priorities that motivated the restoration of the permanent diaconate in the United States were: “to aid in extending needed liturgical and charitable services to the faithful in both large urban and small rural communities” and “to provide an official and sacramental presence of the Church in areas of secular life, as well as in communities within large cities and sparsely settled regions where few or no priests are available.”

1.1.3. The effective ministry of deacons requires from the Church, especially from deacons and their families, from local communities, and from pastors, an availability for ministry and mission that is as large as the archdiocese. (ND #42 and 44)

1.2 The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States (hereinafter “The Directory”) states in Paragraph 93: “A deacon shall receive a decree of appointment from his bishop, which should delineate his specific duties and responsibilities and the designation of his proper pastor or priest supervisor.”

1.3. In the Archdiocese of San Antonio, the Archbishop will generally appoint deacons to an assignment for a period of three years, renewable. Having heard the advice of the Director of Diaconal Ministry and Formation, the Archbishop may appoint a deacon for a shorter or longer term. For a just cause, the Archbishop can remove or reassign a deacon during the term of their assignment.

1.4. Consultation:

1.4.1. The process for recommending a new ministry assignment to the Archbishop will include consultation with the deacon and his wife, with the sponsoring or current pastor, with the intended pastor, with the Deacon Advisory Committee, and with the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation.

1.4.2. The process for recommending the renewal of a current ministry assignment will include a ministerial review by the deacon and his wife, the pastor, the Deacon Advisory Committee, and the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation.

1.4.3. Generally, the recommendation to the Archbishop for a new or renewed assignment is made by the Deacon Advisory Committee, which, with the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation, will be responsible to ensure that all appropriate consultation has taken place prior to the recommendation.

1.5. In addition to the decree of appointment, each deacon will have a ministerial agreement that will specifically address his ministry during the assignment. This agreement will generally be the fruit of a mutual discernment between the Pastor and the Deacon, but either party may approach the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation to assist in the resolution of any concerns.

## 2. Appropriate Attire for Permanent Deacons:

### 2.1 Attire for Liturgical Ministry

2.1.1. Liturgical books clearly specify the liturgical garb of a deacon for various rites and liturgical celebrations. These are to be followed carefully by the deacon.

2.1.2. For the celebration of the Eucharist, the deacon is to wear the alb (with cincture and amice unless, due to the form of the alb, they are not needed), the stole, and the dalmatic. The dalmatic may be omitted either out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, paragraph 119).

2.1.3. For other liturgical celebrations (such as the celebration of a Baptism, of a Marriage outside of Mass, of a Funeral Vigil or Graveside, of a Funeral Liturgy outside of Mass, of a solemn Exposition or Benediction of the blessed Sacrament) the deacon is to wear the alb, (with cincture and amice unless, due to the form of the alb, they are not needed) and the stole.

2.1.4. For non-liturgical prayer services, to include Ecumenical or Inter-faith Prayer Services, the deacon is to wear a coat and tie or other appropriate attire according to the norm of 2.2 below.

### 2.2 Attire or non-Liturgical Formal Clerical Ministry

2.2.1. The Directory states in Paragraph 89: “The Code of Canon Law does not oblige permanent deacons to wear an ecclesiastical garb. Further, because they are prominent and active in secular professions and society, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB] specifies that permanent deacons should resemble the lay faithful in dress and matters of lifestyle. Each diocesan bishop should, however, determine and promulgate any exceptions to this law, as well as specify the appropriate clerical attire if it is to be worn.”

2.2.2. These Norms affirm the USCCB’s specification that Permanent Deacons should resemble the lay faithful in dress and matters of lifestyle, and does not make any exceptions to this law.

2.2.3. When exercising Formal Clerical ministry outside of a liturgical setting, the deacon is to wear clothing that is neat, clean, modest, dignified, and appropriate to the occasion.

2.2.4. The deacon is not to dress in a manner that would reasonably lead the laity to misidentify him as a bishop, priest, or religious.

2.1.5. The deacon may wear a lapel pin, cross or diaconal symbol that is modest in size and design. This symbol may also be embroidered on his clothing.

## 3. Compensation for the Ministry of Permanent Deacons

3.1. Permanent deacons are to take care of their own and their family’s needs using income derived from their full-time employment, retirement, or other passive income. ***Under no circumstances are deacons to be compensated for the ministry they are assigned to, or exercise, as deacons.***

3.2. Reimbursement of expenses incurred for ministry:

3.2.1. Deacons shall be reimbursed for all expenses incurred in carrying out their assigned duties. These shall include, but are not limited to, mileage and incidental travel expenses, meals, required materials, telephone, postage, and expenses for attending meetings or seminars previously approved by appropriate authority.

3.2.2. Reimbursements may only be made with appropriate documentation, to include receipts and documented mileage. No reimbursements may be made in the form of a monthly allowance.

3.3 Permanent deacons employed by the Church

3.3.1. Permanent deacons who are employed by the diocese, by a parish, or by an agency may only be employed to do work that is not specific to their diaconate ministry. ***Deacons may not be employed by***

*the parish or agency to which they have been assigned to minister as deacon.* Any past practices to the contrary are specifically prohibited and must be resolved in communication with the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation on or before the date that these norms take effect.

3.3.2. Permanent deacons employed by the diocese, by a parish, or by an agency are to receive remuneration commensurate with the salaries and benefits provided to the lay men and women on staff for that particular occupation.

3.4. Deacons may retain any personal gifts that are given to them by the faithful in connection with their diaconal service.

3.4.1. Such gifts must be freely given and may not be solicited.

3.4.2. Such gifts must be clearly intended for the deacon's personal use. If there is any question as to whether the payment was intended to be a donation to the parish or a personal gift to the deacon, the deacon must pass on the payment to the parish.

#### **4. Specific Topics in Diaconate Formation and Life**

4.1. Time away from ministry

4.1.1. Permanent deacons are entitled to one weekend each month free from ministerial responsibilities allowing them time to worship with family and to attend family functions.

4.1.2. Permanent deacons are entitled to two weeks each year of vacation from their ministerial responsibilities.

4.1.3. "Permanent deacons may be temporarily absent themselves from their place of assignment with the permission of their proper pastor or priest supervisor" (Directory, 92). In the case of temporary leaves of absence longer than two weeks, the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation is to be informed.

4.2. Language Requirement

4.2.1. All those ordained to the diaconate must be able to effectively minister in both English and Spanish.

4.2.2. For a just cause, the Archbishop may exempt a candidate for the diaconate from this requirement. This deficiency will be considered in determining an appropriate assignment.

4.2.3. Deacons who are not able to minister effectively in both English and Spanish must be working to improve their language skills through a program approved by the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation. (ND #162 and 163)

#### **5. Appointments**

5.1. "The bishop appoints the deacon to a specific assignment normally by means of an official letter of appointment. The principal criteria for assignment are the pastoral needs of the diocesan Church and the personal qualifications of the deacon, as these have been discerned in his previous experiences and the course of his formation. The assignment also acknowledges the deacon's family and occupational responsibilities" (#42 ND). "Although the wife of a married deacon has already given her permission before her husband's ordination to the demands of the diaconal ministry, nevertheless, she should be 'duly informed of (her husband's) activities in order to arrive at a harmonious balance between family, professional and ecclesial responsibilities'" (#44 ND).

5.1.2. Notification of Appointment: "Until the letter of appointment is signed by the bishop and publicly announced by the bishop's office, all parties are bound to confidentiality" (#44 ND).

## **6. Dimensions of Formation in the Post Ordination Path**

6.1. Program for the Newly Ordained: “There are particular matters relevant to the newly ordained. In the early phase of their ministry, ongoing education will largely reinforce the basic training and its application in ministerial practice (#251 ND). The components should include: “demands made upon the deacons by their pastoral ministry, distances to be traveled, the frequency of gatherings, their time commitments to their families and secular employment. The use of distance-learning modules also should be explored, especially when travel is a hardship.” (#253 ND)

6.2. “The post-ordination path should provide the deacon with ample opportunities to continue to develop and integrate the dimension of formation into his life and ministry. In this way, the quality of life and ministry will be ensured, avoiding the risk of ministerial burnout.” (#242 ND)

6.3. Two Distinct Levels of Formation: “Should take into consideration two distinct but closely related levels of formation: the diocesan level in reference to the bishop...and the community level in which the deacon exercises his own ministry, in reference to the parish priest.” (#242 ND)

## **7. Retirement and Resignation**

7.1 Retirement for diaconal ministry are based on age, health and other matters that need to be considered regarding a deacon’s request for retirement and/or resignation. The recommended age for retirement is 75.

7.2. The intent to retire, for reasons other than age, must be discussed with the pastor, after which a formal letter is sent to the Archbishop, with a copy to the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation, stating the purpose for the request for retirement. Upon reaching the age of 75, a deacon is required to send a letter to the Archbishop requesting retirement.

7.3. Neither early retirement nor normal retirement shall cause faculties to be revoked, unless otherwise stated. The deacon will retain the faculties granted to him, and continue his ministry in his parish of assignment and may exercise faculties related to baptism, preaching, and witnessing marriage only when specific permission/delegation from his pastor.

7.4. A request for resignation must be discussed with the deacon’s pastor, after which a letter is to be sent to the Archbishop, with a copy to the Director of the Office of Diaconate Ministry and Formation. If a request for resignation is approved, the deacon will not retain his faculties. Should he wish to be reinstated, a letter must be submitted to the Archbishop for readmission to ministry. After review by the Deacon Advisory Committee, the Director, Diaconate Ministry and formation, and a recommendation to the Archbishop, a written notice will be sent with a final decision.

## **8. Retreats**

8.1. An annual retreat is canonically required for each deacon in active ministry. It is recommended that retired deacons attend to maintain their fellowship with their brother deacons. Further, wives of deacons in active ministry, are asked to attend the annual retreat, while wives of retired deacons are invited to attend.

- 8.2. The annual retreat is normally held in the month of October. A retreat for deacons only may be held with a separate retreat for deacons and their wives at another time. A date for the annual retreat(s) will be sent and/or posted on the archdiocesan website in a timely manner.
- 8.3. The cost of the retreat is the responsibility of the parish in which each deacon is assigned, unless the deacon agrees to bear the expense for himself and his wife.

Please see the Addendum: **Archdiocese of San Antonio PERMANENT DIACONATE MINISTERIAL AGREEMENT**

# ADDENDUM 1

## To the

### Archdiocese of San Antonio Policy Handbook for the Permanent Diaconate

#### Archdiocese of San Antonio PERMANENT DIACONATE MINISTERIAL AGREEMENT

This document is used for the purpose of agreement and understanding among the archdiocese, the pastor/administrator/supervisor of a permanent deacon, and the deacon; and for the understanding between a permanent deacon and his wife, if married, concerning the expectations of the above for her husband during the period and in the place of this assignment.

Deacon's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Ministry: \_\_\_\_\_

Effective Dates: from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_

The undersigned acknowledges that the Permanent Deacon is an ordained minister of the Roman Catholic Church who has received the Sacrament of Holy Orders and who has been vested by the Church to perform his ministry according to the will of the Archbishop of San Antonio according to the needs of the archdiocese, as determined by the Archbishop, and in particular through this Ministerial Agreement, in the place of ministry listed above.

Permanent Deacons, in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, are, in most cases, married men with secular occupations and, therefore, their main concerns are for their family, job and ministry. Since family holds priority over ministry for married deacons, the deacon's wife is recognized as an integral partner in her husband's service to the faith community.

This ministerial Agreement becomes effective upon approval of the Director of Diaconate Ministry and Formation for the Archdiocese of San Antonio. It will be reviewed annually by the deacon, the deacon's spouse, if married, and the pastor/administrator/supervisor of assignment, or under any of the following circumstances:

- The assignment of a new pastor/administrator/supervisor
- Change in family or job circumstances which would prevent the deacon from fulfilling this agreement without undue adverse effect upon his or his family's well-being, or
- Upon request of any of the parties involved

The Deacon will be involved in: (for a minimum of 20 hours per month)

1. Liturgical Ministry  Yes  No for \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

2. Pastoral Ministry  Yes  No for \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

Note: The particular parts of Liturgical and Pastoral ministry with which the Deacon is expected to participate are listed below.

| <b>LITURGICAL MINISTRY</b>                                |  |
|---|--|
| a) Assist at the Eucharist                                | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| b) Preach the Homily at Eucharist _____ weeks per month   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| c) Celebrate the Liturgy of the Word and Communion        | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| d) Distribute Holy Communion outside of Mass and Viaticum | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| e) Baptize  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| f) Preside at Benediction                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| g) Preside at Funeral Rites (Vigil, Graveside)            | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| h) Witness Marriages                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| i) Other (specify)  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

| <b>PASTORAL MINISTRY</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| a) Ministry to the sick in hospitals, including Viaticum              | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| b) Ministry to the aged, infirmed, and homebound                      | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| c) Accomplish pre-marriage documentation                              | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| d) Assist with/provide formation for the Sacrament of Marriage        | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| e) Provide pre-baptismal instruction                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| f) Assist with/provide guidance for R.C.I.A./Children's Catechumenate | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| g) To provide/make bible studies available to parishioners            | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| h) To provide guidance for/assist with Adult Faith Formation          | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| i) To provide guidance to the poor                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| j) Other: (specify)   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

**ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS**

To be spiritually, intellectually, and pastorally able to be of optimum service to the faith community, the deacon and his wife are expected to participate in the enrichment programs that the Office of Diaconate Ministry and Formation sponsors. In addition to the Office of Diaconate Ministry and Formation programs, the permanent deacon and his wife are highly encouraged to participate in other continuing education programs.

**MINISTERIAL REVIEWS**

Every three (3) years, the deacon, his wife, and the pastor/administrator/supervisor will enter into a ministerial agreement to ensure open communication and effective collaboration. This ministerial agreement also assists the Archbishop and the Director, Office of Diaconate Ministry and Formation, in their ministry. This review process will precede preparation of a ministerial agreement and/or the reassignment of a permanent deacon; and it will be reviewed annually.

**ROLE OF PARISH/PLACE OF MINISTRY**

Since a permanent deacon's ministry is one which is not considered a parish-compensated staff position, in accordance with guideline #119 of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Permanent Diaconate and the policy established by the Archdiocese of San Antonio, the following conditions will be provided by the place of ministry to which a permanent deacon is assigned.

\* Provision for release from ministerial obligations for deacons to have one (1) weekend each month free from ministerial responsibilities allowing each deacon time to worship with family and to participate in family functions.



- \* Provision for release from parish ministerial obligations to participate in required Archdiocesan enrichment programs.
- \* Provision for release from parish ministerial obligations to attend the annual Archdiocesan deacon and, when provided, deacon and wives retreat
- \* Provision for release from ministerial obligations for other times that will require time away from the parish are to be worked out between the pastor and deacon.
- \* Provision for a designated area in which the permanent deacon can minister and use as his office
- \* All supplies needed to carry out the ministry of the permanent deacon (not to include liturgical vestments).
- \* Provide an annual \$350.00 Archdiocesan assessment fee to the Archdiocesan Director of the Office of Diaconate Ministry and Formation for the various enrichment programs for the permanent deacon and his wife.

**CONCLUSION**

- The terms of this agreement are effective once this ministerial agreement is approved by the Archdiocesan Director, Diaconate Ministry and Formation and remains in effect for three (3) years, unless otherwise indicated.
- A notice of a desire to adjust or terminate this agreement must be given in writing to all parties of this agreement and to the Archdiocesan Director, Office of Diaconate Ministry and Formation.
- This agreement can be reviewed if changes in family or job circumstances significantly affect the ability of the permanent deacon to perform the ministerial agreement described above or when there is a change of pastor or administrator/supervisor.

Asking God’s blessing, we, the undersigned, freely join together in this formal ministerial agreement, we pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us in the ministry for the greater glory of God and for the salvation of souls.

\_\_\_\_\_

Pastor or Administrator/Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Deacon

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Deacon’s Wife

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Director, Office of Diaconate Ministry and Formation

**RETURN SIGNED ORIGINAL to the Office of Diaconal Ministry and Formation NO LATER THAN THREE (3) DAYS after being signed by all parties to this agreement FOR APPROVAL by the DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF DIACONAL MINISTRY AND FORMATION.**

Original of this document will be returned to the parish, with a copy to the deacon and a copy kept in the deacon’s file at the Office of Diaconal Ministry and Formation.