

# Formation for the Permanent Diaconate



*The Didascalia Apostolorum recommends to the deacons of the first century:*

*“As our Savior and Master said in the Gospel: let he who wishes to be great among you, make himself your servant, in the same way as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many, you deacons must do the same, even if that means giving your life for your brothers and sisters, because of the service which you are bound to fulfill.”*

*This invitation is most appropriate also for those who are called today to the diaconate, and urges them to prepare themselves with great dedication for their future ministry.*

*~ Congregation for Catholic Education,  
Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons, 89*



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## Overview

The Catechetical Institute (CI) at Franciscan University is excited to offer formation aspirants and candidates for the permanent diaconate. This document outlines the workshops the CI offers (or will soon offer) to prepare a man for the role of being a deacon. Franciscan University seeks to influence the future of the diaconate and inspire a renewed vision of diaconal service within the Church. As St. Francis himself entered the diaconal vocation as a means to offer his life, so we seek to foster the formation of deacons in our modern day that incorporates men into the diaconal charism of self-offering, in faithfully creative service to the Church and sacrificial service to souls.

### Designed to Address Your Challenges

Since the advent of the *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* and *The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*, diocesan formators have often struggled to put together solid formation programs. While both sources layout the principles and guidelines for formation, and while it is possible to develop a solid curriculum entirely locally, in reality many dioceses struggle to find and consistently engage the right faculty to teach this curriculum in a truly diaconal manner, and to find effective ways to assess and mentor in an ongoing manner the men who come forward in discernment, and those who continue into the candidacy years.

The approach being implemented by Franciscan University's Catechetical Institute (CI) is a developed, pragmatic, spirituality-centered theology of the diaconate in continuity with the tradition. The development team engaged by CI aims at blending academic rigor with spiritual depth, integrating Franciscan's renowned theology, catechetics, philosophy, and counseling expertise with many field experts, all grounded in fidelity to Catholic teaching, and adapted to the specialized needs of diaconal training.

All levels of formation offered are attuned specifically toward the diaconate, rather than a generic version of such content. In other words, the entire collection of offerings is *configured to the diaconate* rather than configuring the diaconate to a standard curriculum. Spanish translations and subtitling are in view as well. The entire collection is designed to be affordable, with flexible, scalable pricing, often benefiting from existing financial arrangements in the 60% of U.S. dioceses with which Franciscan's Catechetical Institute is already partnered.

### Created to Foster Strong Spiritual Growth and Excellent Adult Learning Methodology

This "blended" formation approach, involving the use of synchronous and asynchronous components. Where the synchronous component would be classroom presentations (either live or video), the asynchronous component is available via the Catechetical Institute's learning management platform: [FranciscanAtHome.com](https://FranciscanAtHome.com).

The specific approach being used with all the content is known as the *RIM Vocational Dynamic*, it maintains the focus on Christ the Servant which, according to the *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* is, "The element which most characterizes diaconal spirituality." This is accomplished by asking three fundamental questions throughout the formation process as they relate to all aspects of diaconal formation:

- What does this course reveal about my **relationship** to Christ the Servant?
- What does this course reveal about my **identity** in Christ the Servant?
- What does this course reveal about my **mission** for Christ the Servant?

The *RIM Vocational Dynamic* assumes that intimate communion with Christ the Servant is the source of the deacon's life and ministry. This concerns, as first priority, the cultivation of the interior life. Only in his *relationship to Christ the Servant* can the deacon discover his *identity in Christ the Servant* and only within his identity in Christ the Servant can he hope to exercise his *mission for Christ the Servant*. This progression forms an ongoing dynamic. As the deacon lives out his diaconal mission, he deepens his relationship with Christ. This deepening further strengthens his identity as deacon, and this strengthened identity enables him to realize his mission in a more effective manner.

### Suited to Respect and Support Your Local Circumstances

This new formation approach from Franciscan University respects the principle of subsidiarity and enables dioceses to pay for only what they use. These offerings are created as a blended learning approach that seeks to *supplement and not supplant* the local diocesan learning community so necessary for formation. The content available from Franciscan allows field-level workshops and BA-level and/or MA-level courses to be taken at any time during the year, enabling greater integration into existing formation programs using different delivery approaches. This rich array of options, mapped onto the four dimensions of clerical formation, is provided to diocesan diaconal directors in the manner of a smorgasbord: the diocese selects what content is needed from our offerings, when it is applied in the diocese's curriculum, and at what level or depth a given topic is needed by that diocese's candidates.

## ***Catechetical Institute Workshops for Aspirants/Candidates for the Permanent Diaconate***

Each workshop contains about an hour of video content and two hours of tasks/assessment. The following workshops are categorized within the four dimensions of formation required for the permanent diaconate: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.

However, even though a workshop might have an emphasis on one dimension, they often refer to the others. “The four dimensions in formation should be so interrelated as to achieve a continual integration of their objectives in the life of each participant and in his exercise of ministry.” (National Directory for the Formation of Permanent Deacons, 113)

### ***The Human Dimension of Formation***

1. The Human Person
2. The Human Person in God’s Loving Plan
3. Pedagogy of Revelation and the Response of Faith
4. Our Life in Christ: The Basics of Catholic Morality
5. A Foundational Vision: The Role of the Laity
6. A Foundational Vision: The Community of the Family
7. A Foundational Vision: Theology of the Body
8. Catholic Social Teaching
9. Building the Mentoring Relationship: Asking Good Questions
10. Building the Mentoring Relationship: Empathic Listening
11. Personal Vocation and the Mentoring Relationship
12. Principles of Intercultural Communication
13. Dealing with Crisis and Conflict from a Christian Perspective

### ***The Spiritual Dimension of Formation***

1. Spirituality of the Diaconate
2. Theology of the Diaconate 1
3. Theology of the Diaconate 2
4. The Universal Call to Holiness
5. Praying with Scripture: Lectio Divina
6. Entrance into Christ and Participation in God’s Life
7. The Theological Virtue of Faith
8. The Theological Virtue of Hope
9. The Theological Virtue of Love
10. Reality: Epistemology for Catechists
11. Conversion in Modern Culture
12. Being Guided and Guiding Souls
13. An Introduction to Spiritual Combat
14. Spiritual Accountability

### ***The Intellectual Dimension of Formation***

1. The Deposit of Faith: An Introduction to the Catechism
2. Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Part 1
3. Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Part 2
4. Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Part 3

5. Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Part 4
6. The Father: Origin and Desire of All
7. Christ: His Person and Works
8. Following Jesus: The Challenge of Discipleship
9. Jesus: The Christocentricity of Catechesis
10. Holy Spirit, Converter of Hearts
11. The Kerygma: Delivering the Gospel Proclamation
12. The Church: Dispenser of the Mysteries and Guardian of the Deposit of Faith
13. The Four Last Things
14. Understanding the Liturgy
15. Introduction to the Sacraments
16. The Sacrament of Baptism
17. The Sacrament of Confirmation
18. The Sacrament of Eucharist
19. The Sacrament of Marriage
20. The Sacrament of Holy Orders
21. The Sacrament of Reconciliation
22. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick
23. Sacramentals in the Life of the Church
24. The Blessed Virgin Mary
25. Theology of the Family
26. Family: Domestic Church and School of Holiness

### ***The Pastoral Dimension of Formation***

1. The Catechumenal Process: A Modern Restoration of an Ancient Practice
2. Three Approaches to the OCIA Process
3. Forming Souls Through Small Groups
4. Philosophical Foundations of Catechetics
5. Catechesis: Echoing what God has Revealed
6. Essential Link Between Liturgy and Catechesis
7. The Catechist: Witness to the Truth
8. Teaching Catechesis for Conversion
9. Giving Counsel and Pastoral Care
10. The Parish as a Workplace: Maintaining Healthy Relationships
11. Adult Catechetical Methodologies and Learning Styles
12. Discipling Adults
13. The Family as the Context of Catechesis
14. Developing an Evangelizing and Welcoming Parish
15. Foundational Principles of Marriage Ministry

## ***A Proposed Interrelated Curriculum for Formation for the Permanent Diaconate***

It is up to each diocese to create their own curriculums for those to be ordained to the permanent diaconate according to the norms set forth in the *National Directory*. Those curriculums could include either all or some of what the Catechetical Institute offers (as field-level workshops or BA/MA academic courses), as well as adding other topics.

“In each stage, the four dimensions or specific areas in formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral — are always essential.” (National Directory for the Formation of Permanent Deacons, 112). This curriculum proposes an interrelated approach so that an aspirant or candidate might gradually become more deeply immersed in the areas of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. The following topics are presented in that order, according to the aspirancy stage (which is two years) and the three years of candidate formation.

### ***ASPIRANCY***

#### *Human Formation*

Christian Anthropology 1

Our Life in Christ: The Basics of Catholic Morality

#### *Spiritual Formation*

Spirituality and Theology of the Diaconate, Parts 1-7

Entrance into Christ and Participation in God's Life

#### *Intellectual Formation*

The Deposit of Faith: An Introduction to the Catechism

Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism of the

Catholic Church: Part 1

Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism of the

Catholic Church: Part 2

Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism of the

Catholic Church: Part 3

Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism of the

Catholic Church: Part 4

Faith and Reason 1

Faith and Reason 2

Mary, Mother of the Diaconate

#### *Pastoral Formation*

Homiletics 1

The Diaconate and Married Life

The Catechist: Witness to the Truth

### ***CANDIDACY, YEAR 1***

#### *Human Formation*

The Human Person

The Human Person in God's Loving Plan

Pedagogy of Revelation and the Response of Faith

Principles of Intercultural Communication

#### *Spiritual Formation*

The Universal Call to Holiness

Praying with Scripture: Lectio Divina

An Introduction to Spiritual Combat

Conversion in Modern Culture

Reality: Epistemology for Catechists

#### *Intellectual Formation*

Trinity: Development of Doctrine

Trinity: The Central Mystery of Faith

The Father: Origin and Desire of All

Christ: His Person and Works

Christological Heresies

Soteriology

Following Jesus: The Challenge of Discipleship

Jesus: The Christocentricity of Catechesis

Holy Spirit, Converter of Hearts

The Mission of the Church

Understanding Evangelization

The Kerygma: Delivering the Gospel Proclamation

Scripture: The Living Word of God

Scripture: Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium

Scripture: The Story

Scripture: The Pentateuch

Scripture: Historical Books

Scripture: Wisdom Literature

Scripture: The Prophets

Liturgy, Parts 1-3

#### *Pastoral Formation*

Homiletics 2

Philosophical Foundations of Catechetics

Catechesis: Echoing what God has Revealed

Teaching Catechesis for Conversion

The Catechumenal Process: A Modern Restoration of an

Ancient Practice

Three Approaches to the OCIA Process

## **CANDIDACY, YEAR 2**

### *Human Formation*

A Foundational Vision: The Role of the Laity  
A Foundational Vision: The Community of the Family  
A Foundational Vision: Theology of the Body  
Catholic Social Teaching  
Dealing with Crisis and Conflict from a Christian Perspective

### *Spiritual Formation*

The Theological Virtue of Faith  
The Theological Virtue of Hope  
The Theological Virtue of Love

### *Intellectual Formation*

Scripture: Matthew and Mark  
Scripture: Luke and Acts  
Scripture: The Gospel of John  
Scripture: The Pauline Epistles  
Scripture: The Catholic Epistles/Revelation  
Moral Theology, Parts 1-4  
The Blessed Virgin Mary  
Theology of the Family  
The Church: Dispenser of the Mysteries and Guardian of the Deposit of Faith  
Theology of Church, Parts 1-3  
The Four Last Things  
Canon Law: General Principles  
Canon Law: Issues in Marriage  
Canon Law for the Diaconate

### *Pastoral Formation*

Homiletics 3  
The Parish as a Workplace: Maintaining Healthy Relationships  
The Relationship of Priest and Deacon  
Celibacy and the Diaconate  
Extra-parochial Ministry  
Forming Souls Through Small Groups  
The Family as the Context of Catechesis  
Adult Catechetical Methodologies and Learning Styles  
Discipling Adults  
Developing an Evangelizing and Welcoming Parish

## **CANDIDACY, YEAR 3**

### *Human Formation*

Building the Mentoring Relationship: Asking Good Questions  
Building the Mentoring Relationship: Empathic Listening  
Personal Vocation and the Mentoring Relationship

### *Spiritual Formation*

Spiritual Accountability  
Being Guided and Guiding Souls

### *Intellectual Formation*

Introduction to the Sacraments  
The Sacrament of Baptism  
The Sacrament of Confirmation  
The Sacrament of Eucharist  
The Sacrament of Marriage  
The Sacrament of Holy Orders  
Marriage and the Diaconate  
The Sacrament of Reconciliation  
The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick  
Sacramentals in the Life of the Church  
Family: Domestic Church and School of Holiness  
Ecumenism  
Interreligious Dialogue  
Church History: The Early Church  
Church History: The Age of the Fathers  
Church History: The Middle Ages  
Church History: Reformations (Trent)  
Church History: Modern Age  
Church History: Vatican II to Today

### *Pastoral Formation*

Homiletics 4  
Essential Link Between Liturgy and Catechesis  
Giving Counsel and Pastoral Care  
Foundational Principles of Marriage Ministry  
How to Baptize a Baby  
How to Give Blessings  
How to Officiate a Marriage  
How to Officiate at a Funeral  
How to Set the Altar  
How to Use a Thurible  
How to Lead the Penitential Rite  
How to Give the Dismissal  
The Easter Vigil, and How to Proclaim the Exultet

## ***Receiving Academic Credit for Diaconate Formation***

Aspirants and Candidates who use the workshops offered through the Catechetical Institute may be able to get academic credit on the undergraduate or graduate level.

This would involve:

- Applying and being accepted into one of Franciscan University of Steubenville's academic degree programs (such as an online Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Master of Arts in Theology and Christian Ministry, or Master of Arts in Catechetics and Evangelization).
- Additional course material and assignments.
- A graded final paper, project, or exam (depending on the subject).
- An additional fee per course.

Based on the proposed curriculum, a diaconal aspirant or candidate may receive credit for the following courses. A student may get credit in either an undergraduate course or a graduate course, but not both. The additional course material, workload, and assignments are more rigorous on the graduate level.

### ***Undergraduate (3 credits each)***

- THE 101 Foundations of Catholicism
- THE 110 Word of God: Scripture and Tradition
- THE 115 Christian Moral Principles
- THE 211 Principles of Biblical Study 1 (Old Testament)
- THE 211 Principles of Biblical Study 2 (New Testament)
- THE 213 Trinity and Christology
- THE 214 Theology of the Church
- THE 314 The Sacraments
- CAT 120 The Catechist and Missionary Evangelization
- CAT 204 The Church's Vision of Catechesis
- CAT 301 Catechetical Content and Curriculum
- CAT 302 Scriptural Foundations of Catechetics
- CAT 303 Catechetical Saints: Evangelizing Culture
- Special Topics: The Spirituality and Theology of the Diaconate

### ***Graduate (3 credits each)***

- THE 606 Dogmatic Theology I: Trinity, Christology, and Soteriology
- THE 607 Dogmatic Theology II: Church, Sacraments
- THE 608 Dogmatic Theology III: Christian Anthropology, Eschatology, Mariology
- THE 611 Interpreting the Old Testament
- THE 612 Interpreting the New Testament
- THE 613 The Church from Christ to the Council of Trent
- THE 614 The Church from Trent to the Third Millennium
- THE 615 Moral Theology
- THE 6XX The Spirituality and Theology of the Diaconate
- THE 6XX Homiletics
- CAT 600 Evangelization and the Liturgy
- CAT 601 Scripture, Heart of Catechetics
- CAT 602 Deposit of Faith