

Diocese of Shreveport

LEARNING AGREEMENT

The Diaconate is not a prerogative of any individual or couple. IT IS A VOCATION GIVEN BY **GOD** AND DISCERNED BY THE CHURCH, A DISCERNMENT THAT ACTIVELY INVOLVES THE BISHOP AND THE DIOCESAN DISCERNMENT TEAM, THE PASTOR AND THE PARISH AND THE DISCERNING INDIVIDUAL AND COUPLE.

I (We) commit myself to participate in the program on a year-to-year basis, reserving the right to withdraw at the end of each year or at any time when, in my personal discernment, I determine that I am not called to the Diaconate. IT IS MY DESIRE TO SEEK GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE IN REGARDS TO THE ORDAINED MINISTRY AND TO SEEK THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH. I FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS DEACON FORMATION PROGRAM DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A COMMITMENT TO MY ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE. In entering this program, I agree to join my parish and the Diocese of Shreveport in pressing the question more directly, "Lord, are you calling me to serve you as a Deacon?"

I (We) also understand that TILE PARISH AND THE DIOCESE OF SHREVEPORT WILL DISCERN THE QUESTION OF MY HAVING A VOCATION TO THE DIACONATE at the end of each program year. I MAY OR MAY NOT BE INVITED TO CONTINUE IN MY FORMATION AND DISCERNMENT DEPENDING ON THESE YEARLY EVALUATION AND DISCERNMENT PROCEDURES.

The criteria for discerning a vocation to the Diaconate are dear to me (us). It is rooted in the person's natural gifts, this being THE DIACONAL CHARACTER as outlined in the appended document Meeting the INSTITUTIONAL QUALIFICATIONS in the appended document is essential to the discernment of a diaconal vocation. Of particular importance are the general skills, which are necessary for a deacon to function:

- a) Pastoral care and listening
- b) Proclaiming the Word of God
- c) Serving at the Altar
- d) Explaining the Church's teachings in homilies and other catechetical settings.

Having met these criteria is not enough. I (We) understand that the most critical of the criteria listed is the one regarding **CALL**. IS GOD CALLING ME TO THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON? To determine this, there must be a consensus between the discerning individual or couple, the parish, the diocesan discernment team, which includes the Bishop of the diocese. Ultimately, the vocation or call of God to ordained ministry becomes clear when the Bishop of the diocese extends it to the candidate. The Deacon Formation Program of the Diocese of Shreveport will deepen my understanding of the Diaconate as a sacrament of the Servant Christ.

It will relate this identity to the functions of a deacon within the ministries of CHARITY, WORD, AND LITURGY (which includes sacramental ministries).

The Deacon Formation Program will slowly introduce me to the deacon community and the clergy of our diocese at large, thereby giving me a chance to question, “AM I CALLED TO JOIN THESE PEOPLE IN A COVENANT OF MINISTRY THAT IS PERMANENT, PUBLIC AND ORIENTED TO SERVICE?”

The Deacon Formation Program also gives the clergy of the diocese a chance to meet me and to address the same question from their perspective: ‘IS THIS BROTHER A GOOD CANDIDATE TO JOIN US IN A VOCATION OF MINISTRY TO GOD’S PEOPLE?’”

Having reviewed this program and carefully considered its implications for my life, I (We) agree to participate wholeheartedly and to the best of my ability; and my wife will attend as many classes as possible, but at least one day of classes a month. We will trust God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in its outcome.

Applicant’s signature

Date

Spouse’s signature

Date

Director of Deacon Formation

Date