

What is Formation?

Guiding Documents

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Directory of Formation for the Permanent Diaconate and the Vatican Congregations on Education & Clergy Norms and Guidelines for the formation of permanent deacons serve as the guiding documents for the Diocese of Lafayette in Indiana permanent diaconate formation program. The formation program is centered on the four pillars of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. The pillars themselves are tailored to meet the varying needs of the men in the program.

What is Human Formation?

Maturity, leadership, and love for Christ and the Church are among the qualities essential to the permanent diaconate. The goal of the human formation program is to make every participant aware, from the beginning, that the Church requires that he be a well-integrated, balanced, and self-directed person. Human formation is concerned with self-awareness, self-discipline, attitudes, and physical well-being. It encourages the participant's knowledge and acceptance of his personal history and its relationship to the present, and it strives to foster healthy, enriched marriages (for those who are married) and affective maturity, which is a necessary condition for chaste celibacy. Human formation also addresses relationships, friendships, and respect for and collaboration with all persons. It cultivates decision-making characterized by openness to guidance from others combined with confidence in one's own leadership and authority.

What is Spiritual Formation?

Spiritual Formation aims at developing in each participant with a deep relationship with Christ and the Church. The signs of a strong relationship are prayer, pastoral charity, simplicity of life, obedience, healthy family life (or chaste celibacy for those who are single). The program fosters love for the worldwide Church. Every participant (and wife) will also have a Spiritual Director, with whom they meet on a regular basis. Participants will also benefit from annual retreats or days of recollection, spiritual reading, weekend spiritual exercises (communal prayer, sacraments, discernment journals, personal prayer), and the Liturgy of the Hours.

What is Intellectual Formation?

Reaching far beyond the classroom and the fulfillment of academic requirements, intellectual formation seeks to cultivate learning as a lifelong pursuit. Its goal is to empower the participant with the spiritual, philosophical, theological, and practical knowledge needed for effective ministry. Skills in communication, research, and time management are critical for growth in the intellectual life. While academic coursework comprises a large part of intellectual formation, it is enhanced with lectures by a team of highly qualified instructors with doctorates and masters degrees in theology and other disciplines.

What is Pastoral Formation?

The pastoral formation program strives to help the participant see Christ in those to whom he ministers and come to see Christ at work in himself. It promotes ministry that is faithful to Church teaching and is characterized by pastoral charity and love and respect for the faithful, who are diverse in both people and culture. It aims to educate participants about teachings on justice, peace, and the dignity of human life. Pastoral formation promotes continuous growth in seminarians as they seek opportunities to meet the needs of the faithful, strive to improve their own leadership skills, and learn to be an active presence in the Church community.

Utilizing theological reflection, pastoral formation brings to light the relationship of pastoral ministry to the intellectual and spiritual elements of diaconal ministry. Participants will be involved with supervised field internship experience that immerses the man into the realities of day-to-day ministry. Placements are assigned according to abilities, areas for growth, and progress is monitored through evaluations.