



DIACONATE FORMATION
ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

DISCERNMENT

Discernment is the process of discovering God’s will for our lives. It involves a disciplined listening for God in liturgical and private prayer, in conversation with our spouse, family, friends, and spiritual mentors, and in reflection on the movement and direction of our lives.

When we think of “vocations,” we might recall dramatic conversion stories like those of St. Paul. We might call to mind St. Francis hearing Jesus speak from the cross of San Damiano, “Francis, rebuild my Church.” The reality for most people, however, is that our vocations are “heard” in the ordinary and everyday experiences of our lives. God most often speaks to us not from clouds or crosses, but from the mouths of those we love.

When we speak of a vocation to the diaconate, we begin by looking at the context of our lives. Vocations tend to reflect who we are, not what we might become. After all, God comes to us as we are, and He speaks to us in the present moment. The prospective deacon should ask himself, “Has the direction of my life been leading me to a constant willingness and openness to service, even if at times it calls me to make sacrifices?”

On the back of this sheet you will find a series of discernment questions—“talking points”—for you to share with your spouse. The call to the diaconate is restricted to men, but for those who are married, the call to the diaconate and to diaconal living must be seen as an extension of the vocation to marriage.

When we discern the Lord’s will in our lives—the stirring, guiding, comforting presence of the Holy Spirit—we are given the gift of consolation. Consolation is a sense of inner peace, not necessarily without tension or challenges, that assures us that we are on the right track.

As you work through these discernment questions ask yourselves:

- Am I experiencing a deep, interior, spiritual peace or consolation?
- Is this sense of peace reinforced and affirmed within my immediate family?
- What about my community, workplace, and extended family?

If after prayerfully working through these questions with your spouse you feel called to take the next step, contact the permanent diaconate office at (913) 647-0358 or email leons@archkck.org.

DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE DEACONS AND WIVES

Begin each discernment conversation with a prayer for openness to one another and to God's will. Then address one or more of the following questions. End your time together with prayer.

1. What would you say is the state of our marriage today?
2. Will our marriage bear the sacrifices that we must make—weekends of ministry, on-call nights, emergencies in the midst of family events?
3. How do we think that life as a deacon and a deacon's wife will affect our children who are still at home? Our grown children? Grandchildren?
4. When we think of hobbies, mine and ours, can I set them aside, maybe permanently?
5. Do I have the constant disposition and readiness to help others, even when it interrupts my plans?
6. Where do I hear the "voice" of God in the decision to pursue admission to the diaconate?
7. Our greatest hope as a deacon and a deacon's wife would be to . . . ?
8. What are the demands of my job? Will diaconal studies and ministry fit with my work? Do I have the support of my co-workers, team members, boss?
9. How much time do I have each week to commit to ministry? How much time am I willing to share or give up as the wife of a deacon?
10. What is the primary motivation for us individually and as a couple to pursue the diaconate? Why do it?
11. Whose decision is it to enter into the diaconate admissions process?
12. Who in our parish—by name—thinks or would think it's a good idea that I become a deacon? Why?
13. Who in our parish—by name—would object? Why?
14. If I can fundamentally do the same things as a deacon that I can do as a lay person, such as take Communion to the sick or serve the poor, why do I need to become a deacon?
15. Why do I/we believe that it is God's will that we pursue admission to the permanent diaconate formation program?