



## THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NEW YORK

### ***Information Regarding the Sponsor's Letter to the Bishop Recommending an Aspirant for Postulancy for Ordination to the Priesthood***

In the Episcopal Diocese of New York, a letter of recommendation to the Bishop from an aspirant's rector or immediate pastor initiates the application process for Holy Orders. At a bare minimum, an aspirant must have been confirmed in the Episcopal Church and have been a communicant in good standing in the sponsoring parish for at least one year prior to beginning the process. However, given the priest's critical role of discernment in this process, the recommendation should occur only after a focused period of inquiry, service and exploration, lasting several months to a year or more, which results in the priest's belief, shared with the parish community, that the aspirant possesses apt gifts and character for ordained ministry. While the Commission on Ministry recognizes that there are times when a sponsor may feel obligated, for a variety of reasons, to recommend an aspirant about whom s/he feels major doubts, it strongly urges that those doubts be spelled out clearly, either in the letter of recommendation itself, or less formally with the Chair of the Commission or with the Canon for Ministry. Even as to a "probably qualified" aspirant, any questions, reservations, or doubts should be raised so that they may be resolved as early in the process as possible.

When the priest and aspirant agree that it is appropriate to begin the application process, the priest must send a formal letter sponsoring the aspirant for Postulancy for ordination to the priesthood to The Bishop.

#### **This letter should be sent by both email and hard copy to:**

The Rt. Rev. Andrew ML Dietsche  
The Episcopal Diocese of New York  
1047 Amsterdam Avenue  
New York, NY 10025  
Email: [bpdietsche@diocesenyc.org](mailto:bpdietsche@diocesenyc.org)

**Also send a copy to the Rev. Canon Charles W. Simmons, Canon for Ministry.**

The Rev. Canon Charles W. Simmons  
Canon for Ministry  
E-mail: [csimmons@diocesenyc.org](mailto:csimmons@diocesenyc.org)  
Phone: 212-316-7416

The letter should address each of the categories listed below as they apply to the aspirant. Please be as specific as possible noting that a generalized letter of support will not serve the aspirant well. If the period of discernment has been less than one year for an aspirant, briefly describe the factors which resulted in a determination that a lesser period of time was appropriate in this instance.

Please include with your letter a description of your parish Committee on Ministry or Discernment Committee. Discuss the membership and the way the work of the committee is organized as it meets with persons seeking the parish's nomination to the Bishop as applicants for Holy Orders. Include such information as the number and frequency of meetings with an aspirant; a description of the content of the program used over a period of time which allows for reasonable observation, involvement, and discernment

### ***Priest's letter recommending an aspirant for the priesthood***

At the beginning of your letter, please indicate that this is a recommendation for the priesthood and include the following information:

**NAME**  
**ADDRESS**  
**PHONE NUMBER(S)**  
**EMAIL ADDRESS(S)**

In the letter, please address the following categories:

#### **1. Background Information**

First, provide the aspirant's name, address, phone number, and, if applicable, e-mail address. Then describe the aspirant's involvement in the life of the parish, community, and Church. How long has s/he been a member of the parish? How long have you known the aspirant? Do you know the aspirant well? In what activities has s/he been involved and for what period of time? How would the parishioners describe this person's current ministry in the parish or community? What is your sense of the aspirant's level of commitment and faithfulness in connection with parish or Church work taken on? Please give examples.

#### **2. Spirituality**

Give your impressions of the aspirant's spirituality with specific reference to her/his prayer life, worship, reception of the sacraments? Discuss his/her knowledge of Scripture and the Church. Do you have confidence in the application's articulation of his/her own faith? Is that articulation enthusiastic, coherent and compelling? Does faith ground and center the aspirant's work in and out of the Church? Does it direct the

aspirant's sense of social responsibility? Please be as descriptive as possible. Do the aspirant's co-workers know that s/he is Christian? What image, story, or passage of scripture does the aspirant use to describe her or his sense of call to ministry? What is your impression of the aspirant's overall spiritual health?

### **3. Leadership**

What is your perception of the aspirant's leadership style? Be as expansive as possible. In what ways has the aspirant exercised leadership in the sponsoring parish? What responsibilities has s/he assumed? Is s/he respected and relied upon by other parishioners or co-workers in Church or parish activities? by outreach or pastoral clients? by you? What problems has the aspirant confronted in his/her involvement in parish or Church activities and how were they resolved? Has the aspirant initiated ministry and in what ways?

### **4. Pastoral Abilities**

What is her/his pastoral style and how have you seen it demonstrated? Does the aspirant exercise a pastoral ministry now? What is your perception of the aspirant's sensitivity to pastoral issues in people's lives, e.g., how does s/he respond to pain and joy and complexity in others' lives? Is the aspirant able to claim his or her strengths? What is your sense of the aspirant's ability to recognize her/his own fears and conflicts? How do they impede or facilitate the aspirant's sensitivity or responses to other people and to situations of conflict?

### **5. Gifts and Strengths**

What special strengths and talents has the aspirant demonstrated which you believe would enhance his/her ordained ministry? Based upon your own knowledge and observation of the aspirant, in what particular area do you see him/her ministering as a priest or deacon? In what particular area or areas would you not see the aspirant ministering? In both cases, why? Please give examples.

### **6. Growth and Discipline**

In what areas does the aspirant need further growth or discipline? personally, spiritually, intellectually? Does the aspirant agree? What is or has been the aspirant's major area of struggle? How is it resolving?

### **7. Character and Mental Health**

What are your impressions of the aspirant's character and mental health generally? What is your sense of the aspirant's level of maturity and judgment? intelligence? warmth and humor? ability to make long-term commitments to people or projects? What is your sense of the balance in this aspirant's life, e.g., how and how well does the aspirant balance her/his work or profession with parish and Church involvement? with family or social life? with avocational interests or hobbies?

## **8. Motivation for Ministry**

What do you believe has led the aspirant to pursue ordination? Please offer your reflections on how the aspirant, should he/she be ordained, will function as part of a college of presbyters, within a diocesan structure, and within the larger church. What are the aspirant's thoughts and attitudes about the vows required at ordination?

**A sponsor is encouraged to supplement the above categories with any additional information about the aspirant which he or she believes would be helpful.**