



The Episcopal Diocese of New York

Information Regarding the Sponsor's Letter to the Bishop Nominating a person for Postulancy for Ordination to the Diaconate

In nominating a person for Postulancy for the diaconate, the priest sends a letter to:

The Rt. Rev. Matthew F. Heyd, Bishop of New York

Email: bpheyd@diocesenyny.org

Copies of the letter are also sent to the Rev. Canon Charles W. Simmons (csimmons@diocesenyny.org), and Mr. Alito Orsini (aorsini@diocesenyny.org).

The letter should address fully each of the categories listed in this document, giving any additional pertinent information. The Bishop expects that its contents will be kept confidential and not shared directly with the nominee.

While the Commission on Ministry recognizes that there are times when a priest may feel obligated to nominate a parishioner about whom they have major doubts, it strongly urges that those doubts be spelled out clearly, either in the letter itself, or less formally with the Chair of the Commission on Ministry or with the Canon for Ministry. Even for a “probably qualified” person, any questions, reservations, or doubts should be raised at the beginning so that they may be resolved as early as possible.

Please include with your letter a description of the community’s discernment process. Describe the membership of the discernment committee and the way it organized its work. Include such information as the number and frequency of meetings; a description of the content of the program used. Please include a copy of the committee’s written report with the nominating letter.

Priest’s letter nominating a person for the diaconate

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

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE NUMBER(S)

EMAIL ADDRESS(S)

In the letter, please address the following categories:

1. Background Information

Describe the nominee's involvement in the life of the parish, community, and Church. How long have you known them? How long have they been a member of the parish? Do you know them well? In what activities have they been involved and for how long? How would the parishioners describe their ministry in the parish or community? What is your sense of their level of commitment and faithfulness? Please give examples.

2. Spiritual Life

What are your impressions of the nominee's spirituality? Discuss their prayer life, worship, reception of the sacraments. Do they have knowledge of Scripture and the Church? Describe the nominee's articulation of their faith? Is it enthusiastic, coherent and compelling? How does faith ground and center their work in and out of the Church? Does it direct their sense of social responsibility? Please be as descriptive as possible. Do their co-workers know that they are a Christian? What image, story, or biblical passage do they use to describe their sense of call to ministry? What is your impression of their overall spiritual health?

3. Spiritual Maturity

Is the nominee spiritually mature? Do they show the ability to exercise a ministry characterized by a continually enlarging vision?

4. Prophetic Obedience

Among the particularities of the order of deacons is the call to prophetic obedience. How does the nominee speak prophetically to the Church about the needs of the world? Are they courageous and tenacious in raising issues the Church would prefer to ignore? And, at the same time, are they capable of being obedient (to parish authorities, to the rector, to the Bishop)? Can they be a self-starter in recognizing needs in the community and being creative in seeking out proposals to meet those needs?

5. Interpersonal Skills

What is your perception of the nominee's sensitivity to pastoral issues in people's lives? For example, how do they respond to pain in others' lives? What is your sense of their ability to recognize their own fears and conflicts, and in what ways do those fears and conflicts impede or facilitate their sensitivity to others? Is the nominee a good active listener, able to hear the other and be perceptive about what is both spoken and unspoken? Are they open to new ideas and approaches arising from others? Are they good at organizing others to meet needs for mission, and delegating authority to others? Are they capable of organizing an institutional response to an issue or need, not only a one-on-one response to an individual need? Please provide examples of this critically important ability to organize and delegate.

6. Educational Background

While there is no educational prerequisite for ordination to the diaconate, please describe the nominee's academic background. Are they aware of general areas of study which will be necessary in preparation for the ministry of deacons and that the program will offer appropriate flexibility for individual differences? Please give your sense of their facility with language, both spoken and written.

7. Liturgical Function

While the principal focus for the deacon is on servant ministry, the diaconal role as icon of servant ministry is reflected in the liturgy. Is the nominee aware that there are liturgical responsibilities connected to this ministry and that these responsibilities are important signs for the whole Church of the call of all baptized persons to servant ministry? N.B. people who seem to be focused primarily on the liturgy probably are not well suited for this ministry.

8. Ministry in the Church and the World

Describe ways this person is motivated to reach out to people in need in the parish and beyond? Do they recognize needs in the community and are they capable of being a self-starter and creative in seeking out ways to help meet them? Have they participated in local or global opportunities for mission beyond the parish? Please give examples. What experience do they have of the diversity of our Diocese, the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion? How do they view the role of the Church regarding issues of social justice?

9. Character and Mental Health

What is your general impression of the nominee's character and mental health? What is your sense of their level of maturity, judgment, Intelligence, warmth, humor, and ability to make long-term commitments? What is your sense of their life balance? For example, how well do they balance their work or profession with parish and Church involvement, family or social life, interest, or hobbies? How strongly does their family support their vocation?

10. Future Ministry

Have you discussed the prospects for future ministry with the nominee? Do they understand that, although it may not occur immediately after ordination, a deacon should expect to be assigned to a ministry in another place than the sponsoring congregation? Do they understand that at the time the priest leaves a parish and new priest is called, the deacon will be reassigned? Should you request and the Bishop approve the assignment of this person as a deacon in the sponsoring parish, how do you envision their ministry with you and your congregation in the following areas:

Outreach ministries, Pastoral care, Christian Education, and Christian Education

A sponsor is encouraged to supplement the above categories with any additional information about the nominee which they believe would be helpful.