

Ordained Ministry of Deacons and Priests

Ordained ministry is complex, challenging, exciting, and fulfilling for those called to it by God. Deacons and priests are often invited into the lives of those they serve in ways that are deeply touching, enriching, and humbling. It is one of God's greatest gifts to be called to such service!

Vocational deacons are called by God to a special ministry of servanthood under the direct authority of their Bishop. One of the deacon's major responsibilities is to bring the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world to the attention of the church—and to bring the church to the attention of the world, especially those in need.

Priests are called by God to preach, to declare God's forgiveness, to share in the administration of the Sacraments, and to pronounce God's blessing. Priests serve as teachers and pastors to those under their care.

Deacons and priests are expected to take their share in the councils of the church along with their Bishop.

- Discernment for ordination includes input from clergy, congregation, Bishop, COM, Board of Examining Chaplains, medical and psychological personnel, and others.
- Each requirement is an important piece of the overall discernment process. These requirements are a measure of the seriousness with which the church takes its responsibility of raising up ministers, lay and ordained.
- Discernment is guided significantly by the specific mission needs of the Diocese.
- No person is guaranteed ordination. Each candidate must have a specific assignment that is satisfactory to the Bishop before being ordained.
- No person is guaranteed placement in a specific congregation or locality. The needs of the church take precedence over individual preference.
- All persons engaged in formal discernment for Holy Orders must be actively involved in regular spiritual direction.

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DIOCESE OF
COLORADO

Ordained
Ministry

and the

Holy

Orders

Process

How Does One Experience a Call from God?

It begins in different ways for different persons. Sometimes it starts with an idea, an image, a life experience, or a dream that won't let us alone. Sometimes it begins with or is reinforced by a word from others. We begin to wonder what God is up to in our lives. Sooner or later we decide whether or not to explore this sense of invitation. The exploration is called discernment and requires a posture of radical openness and availability to the Holy Spirit. Discernment leads one deeper into ministry. Occasionally, it leads to ordained ministry.

We stand in a stream of Christian thought that insists that discernment for ordination is the work of the church, and that it is a communal affair not a solitary or small group task.

It can be helpful to imagine the process of discernment as an expanding spiral:

- It begins with the individual. Each person is encouraged to begin exploration with the help of a Standing Congregational Discernment Group.
- The spiral expands by meeting with one's rector or vicar, and if warranted, entering into a several month journey of prayerful exploration of possible call with that person.
- When warranted, the spiral expands by involving rigorous and intensive discernment with a Congregational Discernment Committee trained by the Commission on Ministry (COM). It also includes work with a spiritual director.
- When warranted, discernment then moves to the diocesan level to involve participation in an annual BACOM (Bishop's Advisory Committee on Ordained Ministry) Conference. At this conference decisions are made regarding candidacy for ordination to the diaconate and postulancy for ordination to the priesthood.
- Admission to candidacy for the diaconate or postulancy for the priesthood represents the church's conclusion that an individual is called to ordained ministry, and the church's commitment to support response to that call.

Resources for further exploration:

- *Holy Orders Booklet** A quick reference about the Holy Orders process in the Diocese of Colorado.
- *Required Forms** All forms required for each stage in the Holy Orders Process.
- *Constitution and Canons 2003* Title III covers the requirements and guidelines for ordination in the Episcopal Church. This is available for download from Church Publishing (www.churchpublishing.org).
- *The Book of Common Prayer* In particular, the Baptismal Covenant (p. 304–305), the ordination liturgies (p. 512–555), and An Outline of the Faith (p. 845–862).

* These resources are available by contacting the Executive Administrator at the Diocesan Office (303) 837-1173, holyorders@coloradiodiocese.org, and will be on the Diocesan web site as soon as possible.

Some Things About Which To Be Clear Regarding Ordained Ministry

The church takes with utmost joy and seriousness its responsibility to help brothers and sisters discern God's call on their lives: "The Bishop, in consultation with the [Commission on Ministry] (COM), shall establish procedures to identify and select persons with evident gifts and fitness for ordination to the Vocational Diaconate (Canon III.6)" and "...to the Priesthood (Canon III.8)"

In the Diocese of Colorado living out the above canonical mandate includes the following understandings:

- Ordained ministry is a call from God through the church not an individual right or entitlement.
- One's sense of call shall be examined through a rigorous process of discernment designed by the COM.
- One must have at least two years of active participation in a faith community within the Diocese and be confirmed at least one year before beginning formal discernment.

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