



Diocese of LaCrosse Office of Deacon Formation

A Discernment Retreat

For Men Considering the Permanent Diaconate

April 1-2, 2016 ✠ St. Anthony Spirituality Center, Marathon

What is a discernment retreat?

Discernment of a Christian vocation is not like applying for a job. By its very nature, a Christian vocation is a great mystery and a personal call of Jesus Christ to follow and serve him in a particular way. A call to the permanent diaconate is likely to come to a man who may already have committed himself to the vocation of Christian marriage and family life, though not exclusively. There is much to consider – Do I have a call? How will it affect my family? When is the right time to begin formation? What am I committing myself to, and my family? These are some of the typical questions of men experiencing a possible call to the permanent diaconate and needing help with discernment.

Because the diaconate is a call from Jesus Christ to holy orders in the Church, discernment must be done within the context of prayer and reflection. The purpose of the discernment retreat is to provide a proper place and time for prayer and reflection based on a series of conferences centered on the nature and vocation of the permanent diaconate.

What kind of commitment am I making by coming to the retreat?

Attendance at the discernment retreat carries no expectation that you will apply to the Deacon Formation Program. But the retreat is a prerequisite for any man who does wish to apply. This is just a first step to see whether or not you may be experiencing this call from Christ. The discernment retreat is also a prerequisite for men who have temporarily withdrawn from deacon formation and now wish to return.

If I am married, should my wife come on this retreat?

Attendance by your wife is not mandatory; however, discernment cannot take place without her at some point. A call to the permanent diaconate for a man who is married has a direct effect on his wife and family. A wife's presence on the retreat is encouraged and welcomed. Wives of aspirants, candidates, and ordained deacons will lead a special conference just for wives. They will share their own stories and experiences about diaconal formation and ministry from a wives perspective.

How do I register and what does it cost?

To apply for the discernment retreat, contact the Office for Ministries and Social Concerns of the Diocese of La Crosse (608-791-0161 or cruff@diolc.org). The cost is \$75.00 per person (\$125.00 per couple), which includes lodging and meals. You can also visit the diocesan website, www.diolc.org/diaconate, for information on the Permanent Diaconate.