THE PERMANENT DIACONATE
IN THE DIOCESE OF GREENSBURG

“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” (1 Pt 4:10)

CALLED TO SERVE
MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP

Dear Brothers in Christ:

A permanent deacon is a man, married or single, who is called by God and the church from among its members to be ordained to a life of service and spiritual leadership. He must be a man of faith, one who listens to and prays about the Word of God, and one who in his daily life serves his brothers and sisters in a spirit of unselfishness, exemplifying the love of God through that ministry.

The permanent diaconate was restored by Blessed Pope Paul VI in 1967 and was established in the Diocese of Greensburg by Bishop Lawrence E. Brandt in 2005. There are eight men serving as permanent deacons in our diocese, and I directed one of them, Deacon William J. Hisker, to further develop our educational formation program to meet the needs of candidates in all parts of our diocese, while maintaining the highest standards in the spiritual formation aspect of the program.

We are seeking more men to discern whether they are being called to the permanent diaconate and ordained ministry in service to the Word and love of Jesus Christ. The information in this package provides a brief outline of the permanent diaconate. If you have any questions about the program in the Diocese of Greensburg, please contact Deacon Hisker’s office at 724-552-2598 or bhisker@diocesegreenburg.org.

Yours in service to Christ and his Church,

+ The Most Rev.
Edward C. Malesic
Bishop of Greensburg

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**OUR DEACONS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

**DEACON WILLIAM J. HISKER**
Ordained Aug. 10, 2009, for the Diocese of Greensburg
Diaconal appointment: Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish, Greensburg

When asked how I see diocesan ministry, I often respond with the statement, “Washing the pots and pans.” When I was growing up, we did not have a dishwasher, but there were six kids. Each of us would vie for washing the glasses, plates or silverware — no one wanted to scrub the pots and pans — especially the broiler pan. As a deacon, I am called to do the “pots and pans.”

For me, a deacon’s ministry involves a willingness to do the things no one else wants to do — whether it is in the workplace, our communities, parishes or churches — even among those we may not necessarily like. Guided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a deacon is called to service, but not necessarily the service he finds comfortable or enjoyable. In our ministry, a deacon will often find others already doing those jobs and doing them well.

When a deacon enters any area of ministry, he should look for the things that are not getting done, the things that no one wants to do — the “pots and the pans” — then roll up his sleeves and get to work.

**DEACON F. DANIEL FRESCURA**
Ordained Aug. 10, 2009, for the Diocese of Greensburg
Diaconal appointment: St. Ambrose Parish, Avonmore; St. Matthew Parish, Saltsburg; St. Sylvester Parish, Slipperyville

I have the privilege of serving the church in a wide variety of ways. At ordination, we are told that we serve through liturgy, word and charity. What I have learned in my brief nine years of diaconal ministry is that these three charisms are facets of one reality — to help others on their journey of faith. In practicing charity, we encounter the truth revealed in Sacred Scripture and the real presence of Jesus Christ.

When I am able to help people return to full communion with the Catholic Church through the management of their marriage paperwork, I become especially aware of Christ’s presence. The life of service to those seeking meaning in life becomes a liturgical act that the deacon brings with him into the sanctuary as he assists the celebrant by raising the chalice. The deacon, as minister of the cup, realizes that, like Christ, he is pouring out his blood to help others discover wholeness in their lives. Liturgy is the work of the church.

The work of the church, as Pope Francis reminds us, is how well we love. Like the Eucharist we receive in liturgy, we allow ourselves to be poured out and shared with others.

**DEACON STEPHEN E. BLACK**
Ordained June 13, 2015, for the Diocese of Greensburg
Diaconal appointment: Church of the Resurrection Parish, northern Indiana County

God has given me, his servant, the gift of an association with the people of our parish and diocese. I am involved in many aspects of what a deacon is asked to do. This includes proclaiming the Gospel and sharing a homily, baptizing children, preparing a couple for marriage and celebrating the marriage rite, to the enjoyment of working with youth in the development of their love for the Lord through faith formation and Scouting.

Of course, there are solemn duties for which deacons are responsible, including talking to people who have experienced hardship in their lives. Whether it is an ailing relative or friend, or the death of a beloved person in their lives, a deacon finds a way to empathize and sympathize with them. Presiding at funerals is one of the duties, but one can look at them as the celebration of a good life. There is also interaction with the staff and councils of the parish, and these can be interesting exchanges.

These and other duties, such as supporting other parishes when called upon and visiting the hospital and prison, have all been a blessing to me. My prayer is that many men will respond to God’s call to join the diaconate program to experience the joy it brings.

**DEACON JEFFREY CIESLIEWICZ**
Ordained June 13, 2015, for the Diocese of Greensburg
Diaconal appointment: Immaculate Conception Parish, Irwin; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, North Huntingdon

I was once told there was no need for the permanent deacon in the life of the church, that there was nothing that could not be handled by the priest or a lay person. I have found this to be untrue.

Deacons stand with one foot in the lay world and one in ordained life. They are unique. With one foot in the ordained life, they act as an extension of the pastor liturgically and in the life of the parish. With one foot in the lay world, they have the lived experiences of being in that world. They have the view of theology from the sanctuary and the view of life “from the pew” and can piece them together in a unique way. One of the greatest compliments I receive is when someone tells me, “When I hear you speak, you are like one of us, you get me.” This is a gift of the diaconate.

It is a gift given to certain men who are willing to spend quiet time with God sincerely discerning his call and, if they hear that call, willing to take the first step and contact their pastor. And if they continue to feel called, be willing to take that step of faith by contacting the Office for the Permanent Diaconate to see where God leads. My prayers are with you as you discern that calling.
OUR DEACONS, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

DEACON WILLIAM M. NEWHOUSE
Diaconal appointment: Ascension Parish, Sacred Heart Parish, Jeannette; assistant episcopal master of ceremonies

By our baptism, we are all called to share in the priestly, prophetical and kingly office of the church. All of us are called to offer worship, to proclaim God’s word in what we say and how we live and to make God’s kingdom more present on earth. Thus, it is the deacon’s task, as a representative of the bishop and in conjunction with the parish priests, to help the faith community appreciate and live out this calling.

Each permanent deacon is unique. Some may be married, others single; some may be retired, others still working; some may have young children, while others may have no children or children who are now grown. All these factors, along with our own individual gifts, make up who we are and what we might bring to our ministry.

For those of us who are married, one needs to understand that in serving this diaconal mission, the one given us through the sacrament of holy orders, we must not forget about the one sacrament that we must not forget about as deacons: the sacrament of holy orders, one given us through the laying on of hands by a bishop. In serving the faith community, introducing the word in what we say and how we live and to make God’s kingdom more present on earth. Thus, it is the deacon’s task, as a representative of the bishop and in conjunction with the parish priests, to help the faith community appreciate and live out this calling.

Why be a deacon? Oswald Chambers once wrote, “We have to exercise ourselves in order that the Son of God may be manifested in our mortal flesh. God never has Museums.” God’s will for us is to love and serve all of his children. What better way for me to act than as a permanent deacon?

Because of our baptism, we are all called to serve. A deacon serves his parish, community, and diocese in a special way by being a connection to all people in the community. When the bishop placed his hands on my head at ordination, I felt Jesus saying, “Now go and reach out to all my people!” Since my ordination, it has been my mission to serve others; care for parishioners, friends, and strangers; and communicate God’s love to everyone I meet.

As a deacon, I have experienced love administered the sacraments and blessings and providing service to the parish community. Bishop Maleisic has blessed me by assigning me to St. Barbara Parish. I have been welcomed there with enthusiasm and love, which I return to the parishioners every day of my assignment. I love administering the sacraments and blessings and providing service to the parish community.

Bishop Maleisic is very supportive of the diocese’s diaconate community and includes the deacons in diocesan programs and activities. Of the four dioceses in which I have served, the Diocese of Greensburg is the most supportive.

In 1978, when a priest asked me if I had ever considered becoming a deacon, I asked him what a deacon is. When he explained, I told him that I was not “one of those people.” It took two years for me to realize that I was being called to the diaconate because God saw something in me that I could not see. Saying “yes” to this calling was one of my best decisions ever.

In well over 28 years as a permanent deacon, I have come to know how significant this part of my life is to who I am. The love I have for people has grown tremendously, and I have experienced love through diaconal ministry to others.

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A deacon’s life-style is anchored in the messianic mission of Christ as servant. As a way of expanding Christ’s mission, he is called to commit his entire life to the service of individuals and institutions. Deacons promise to lead, whether in a formal position or not, by encouraging collaboration, trust, foresight, listening and the ethical use of power.

In God’s kingdom, power, privilege, and status are never used to diminish, but to build up and promote growth and development of people and institutional structures. Diaconal spirituality begins with a feeling deep within oneself that he is being called to serve — to serve first before all else. Through prayer and formation, this urge to serve becomes a conscious choice and a daily habit.

A deacon can expect to be asked by Jesus: “Did those you served grow as persons; did they become healthier, wiser, freeer, more self-reliant, more likely themselves to become servants? Did those you served come closer to Me? How did you deal with the widows, orphans, aliens, and those less privileged in society of your day?”

— By Deacon William J. Hisker, director, Office for the Permanent Diaconate

THE DEACON AS SERVANT LEADER

A deacon’s life-style is anchored in the messianic mission of Christ as servant. As a way of expanding Christ’s mission, he is called to commit his entire life to the service of individuals and institutions. Deacons promise to lead, whether in a formal position or not, by encouraging collaboration, trust, foresight, listening and the ethical use of power.

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— By Deacon William J. Hisker, director, Office for the Permanent Diaconate
Permanent deacons serve the church by proclaiming the Word, serving at the altar and extending service to others. Sacramentally, deacons do not celebrate Mass or hear confessions, but they can baptize, and they can officiate at weddings and lead funeral services where there is no Mass. They receive their appointments from the diocesan bishop and work in conjunction with the priests of the diocese as a complement to the presbyterate. Service is at the core of the diocesan program. “A deacon’s lifestyle is anchored in the mission of Christ as a servant,” Deacon William J. Hisker, director of the Office for the Permanent Diaconate said. “The deacon is called to commit his entire life to service. The deacon must be a man of faith who daily serves his brothers and sisters in a spirit of unselfishness, exemplifying the love of God through that ministry.”

One of the major features of the Diocese of Greensburg’s revised academic curriculum is the addition of online seminary courses for men who cannot travel to Greensburg for all of their classes. The academic program has two tracks: one for men who already have a college degree and one for those who do not have a college degree.

**OVERVIEW OF FORMATION PROGRAM**

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*Applicant is recognized as officially part of the permanent diaconate program.

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