

Diaconal Vocations Program

An Explanation



WHAT IS THE DIACONAL VOCATIONS PROGRAM (DVP)?

- The Diaconal Vocations Program (DVP) is a program of theological study, spiritual and pastoral development, and liturgical training providing preparation for men who may be called to ordination to the Holy Diaconate but who are unable to attend a seminary.
- It is also designed to address specific academic and pastoral issues of non-Orthodox clergy – who may have already earned a theological degree such as an M. Div. – who are seeking entry into the Orthodox Church and may eventually be called to service in the Holy Diaconate.
- The goal of the DVP is to use a process of clergy-guided and clergy-mentored reading and studying to teach candidates a fundamental foundation of Orthodox theology and prepare them for the practical aspects of diaconal service. In addition to mentored study, liturgical practicums and other forms of training are provided.

WHO MAY APPLY?

- A man at least 35 years of age;
- Who has been Orthodox in one parish for at least three years (including his wife);
- Who, if married, has the active support and participation of his wife and family;
- Who has shown stability in personal and parish life; and,
- Who has the blessing and encouragement of his parish priest and diocesan bishop

Candidates younger than 35 years of age may petition for entry into the program, but the final decision is made by the Holy Synod of Bishops. The Holy Synod of Bishops strongly encourages all candidates for the DVP to prayerfully consider the possibility of studying at a Theological Seminary of the Church.

WHAT TRAINING IS OFFERED?

At present, there are two tracks of study:

1. The Basic Track

2. The Accelerated Track

A track is also administered by St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary in the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania.

1. The Basic Track:

Most candidates participate in the Basic Track. Candidates in the Basic Track do not typically have formal graduate-level theological education.

Content: A structured four semester series of weekly topics and reading assignments. The four semesters each focus on a general area of study:

- *Holy Scripture* (first semester)
- *Church History* (second semester)
- *Doctrine and Theology* (third semester)
- *Liturgy* (fourth semester)

How taught: An approved local mentor (usually, but not always the candidate's parish priest) must make a commitment to meet regularly with the candidate for guided discussions on the subject matter. They are also responsible to periodically monitor the progress of their student with quizzes and tests.

Please note: This track is currently being revised by the Board of Theological Education. Participants are encouraged to enroll now and take advantage of revisions as they become available.

Online Course: Participation in an online course entitled "What is a Deacon" is required for all students entering the program beginning 1/1/2010.

Liturgical Practicum: A liturgical track, taught annually and focusing on practical liturgical matters, rounds out the course of study for the candidate by providing needed and valuable practical liturgical training. Attendance is required twice; once near the beginning of a candidate's program and once near the completion or closely following ordination.

Standard Final Exam (SFE): At the conclusion of the track, students are also required to take the SFE provided by the Diaconal Vocations Program and proctored by their mentor. The test is returned to the DVP office and graded by the program coordinator. Any portion of the SFE not deemed sufficient for a passing grade may be returned to the candidate's mentor for retaking and resubmission.

Length: Typically designed to be completed within two-three years.

2. **The Accelerated Track:**

Who is the course for?

Candidates who have graduate-level theological education, or graduate-level education in a related field, or former non-Orthodox clergy who are seeking ordination to the Holy Diaconate.

Note: Decision of track placement is made by the Board of Theological Education in consultation with the candidate, his mentor, and his Diocesan Hierarchy. The Board may reduce or expand the requirements of this Track to account for differences in personal and educational history.

The Accelerated Track takes approximately 9-12 months to complete and is comprised of:

- 1 guided online course (i.e., the next available course being offered that year by the Diaconal Vocations Program)
- 1 week of instruction / practicum at a regional center
- 3 seminary-level papers (Scripture, Dogmatic Theological, Liturgical Theology)
- Successful writing of the standard final examination

In addition to these requirements, the candidate will be assigned a mentor by his Diocesan Hierarchy (usually someone other than the parish priest) and will be assigned additional practicum(s) as needed following ordination, if that is the will of God.

Papers, which are electronically submitted as Word documents upon completion, are graded by qualified readers.

The program typically begins in September, but scheduling may be discussed with the Coordinator of the Diaconal Vocations Program.

HOW TO APPLY:

Potential candidates to the DVP should do the following:

- Firstly, obtain the blessing of your diocesan bishop and parish priest **in writing**;
- Download the application from the website of The Orthodox Church in America at <http://www.oca.org/dbp>
- Collect the requested supporting documentation (such as certificates of sacraments, school transcripts, and health records);
- Include letters of recommendation as noted;
- Enclosed a one time, non-refundable registration fee of \$250

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA - BOARD OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

All candidates requesting entry into The Orthodox Church in America's Diaconal Vocations Program will also be asked to submit to a criminal background check and psychological exam by their dioceses. Refusal to submit to one will constitute immediate grounds for removal of one's name from consideration to any ordination to Holy Orders.

NB:

Every candidate to the DVP **must** understand that **successful completion of the program does not guarantee ordination**. Such a decision is the sole prerogative of the Holy Synod and the candidate's diocesan bishop and is only made subsequent to a review of each candidate's work, character, and calling by the Board of Theological Education upon successful completion of the program and recommendation for ordination.

For further information or for questions regarding the program, please e-mail Archdeacon Kirill Sokolov, Diaconal Vocations Program Coordinator, at: dvdp@oca.org

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA – DIACONAL VOCATIONS PROGRAM

Archdeacon Kirill Sokolov
PO Box 675
Syosset NY 11791-0675
dvdp@oca.org

(Revised June 2010)