

# The Diaconal Vocations Program: An Explanation

The Diaconal Vocations Program of the Orthodox Church in America is a program of theological studies which has been approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops for the purpose of providing academic preparation for senior (35+) candidates who may be called to ordination to the Holy Diaconate, but unable to attend a seminary. Candidates younger than 35 years of age may petition for entry into the program, but the final decision with regards to admission is up to the Holy Synod of Bishops.

Candidates must have been Orthodox for at least three years prior to applying to the program, a member of the same parish during that time, and their wife (if married) must also be an Orthodox Christian.

At present, there are two tracks of study:

## **1. THE BASIC COURSE:**

**For who:** Candidates with no formal theological training in either undergraduate or graduate work.

**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.

**Length:** Typically designed to be completed within two years.

## **2. THE ADVANCED COURSE:**

**For who:** Candidates who have done college or graduate level studies with perhaps some theological background, or former heterodox clergy who are seeking ordination to the Holy Diaconate.

**Content:** Six seminary-level research papers:

- *Scripture* (two)
- *Dogmatic Theology* (two)
- *New Testament Doctrine* (one)
- *Liturgical Theology* (one)

Papers, which can be electronically submitted as Word documents upon completion, are graded by designated seminary professors from St. Tikhon's or St. Vladimir's.

**How taught:** Independent study. It is less dependant on mentoring than the Basic Course (although mentors are assigned) and therefore more suited to situations where candidates and mentors may have difficulty meeting weekly.

**Length:** Typically designed to be completed within twelve to eighteen months.

### **FURTHER NOTES:**

**Liturgical Practicum:** In addition to the period of study noted for either track, a liturgical track, taught annually at the St. Vladimir's Summer Institute in June and focusing on practical liturgical matters, rounds out the course of study for the candidate by providing needed and valuable practical liturgical training and is highly recommended.

**Standard Final Exam (SFE):** At the conclusion of either 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.

### **APPLYING:**

In order to enter the national program, an application should be completed and submitted to the DVP (this application may be downloaded from the OCA's website) along with requested supporting documentation (such as certificates of sacraments, school transcripts, and health records) and a one time, non-refundable registration fee of \$250.

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. Refusal to submit to one will constitute immediate grounds for removal of one's name from consideration to any ordination to Holy Orders.

Finally, it **must** be understood 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 by the Board of Theological Education upon successful completion of the program and consequent recommendation for ordination.

*For further information or for questions regarding the program, please e-mail the Diaconal Vocations Program at: [dvp@oca.org](mailto:dvp@oca.org)*

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