

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 principle tracks of study:

1. The Basic Track

2. The Accelerated Track

Tracks are also administered by various dioceses (e.g., St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary in the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania, the St. Macrina Program in the Diocese of the Midwest, an occasional program in the Diocese of the South, etc.). *By decision of the Holy Synod, all candidates for all tracks or programs must fill out the DVP application and must attend the OCA Practicum.* Contact the Director for advice on which track might be appropriate for you.

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.

Online Courses: When possible, the DVP offers portions of the curriculum online to promote deeper engagement in the material and community among the students and instructors.

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 an exam provided by the Diaconal Vocations Program and proctored by their mentors.

Length: Most students complete the program in 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:

- First, obtain the blessing of your diocesan bishop and parish priest **in writing**;
 - In getting the blessing, all candidates must submit to a criminal background check and psychological exam by their dioceses. Contact your diocesan office for instructions.
- Second, download the application from the website of The Orthodox Church in America at <http://www.oca.org/dvp>
- Third, collect the requested supporting documentation (such as certificates of sacraments, school transcripts, and health records); Letters of recommendation may be included or (e)mailed separately.
- Fourth, enclose a one time, non-refundable registration fee of \$300

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
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ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA – DIACONAL VOCATIONS PROGRAM

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