



# **Called to Ministry**

## **Section 3: Holy Orders**

### **Doc 3A: General Information**

**Guidelines for Ministry of all the Baptized,  
Lay Licensed Ministries, and Holy Orders**

**for the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe**

#### **Commission on the Ministry of the Baptized**

The Commission on the Ministry of the Baptized serves to guide and empower all baptized people in discerning their ministries.

**European Institute for Christian studies**

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# **Holy Orders: General Information**

## **Holy Orders**

### **Ordained ministry in The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe**

The Episcopal Church has maintained the threefold order of ordained ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons which has characterized Christ's One, Holy and Apostolic Church since its earliest days. This section contains information common to the process towards ordination for both the Diaconate and the Priesthood.

### **Preliminary evaluations required for ordination both to the Diaconate and to the Priesthood**

Several evaluations or checks are required early in the process, after the Applicant has been admitted to Postulancy. These are a psychological/psychiatric evaluation, a medical exam, and a background check. They help the Bishop in discernment, to determine if there are any impediments to ordination, or any areas that need to be addressed prior to ordination. More information on each is given below. Because these exams must be completed within 36 months of ordination to the Priesthood, anyone preparing for the Priesthood will end up completing the exams twice: once at the beginning of Postulancy, and again before ordination to either the Diaconate or Priesthood.

#### **Psychiatric Evaluation**

The psychiatric evaluation consists of two parts, a set-form and a narrative evaluation, in keeping with the prescribed forms of the Canons [see Canons III.6.1, III.6.5.(j)(2), III.8.1., and III.8.6.5 (j)(2)]. Both become the property of the Diocese and will not be released to the candidate; the narrative is available only to the Ecclesiastical Authority. The Standing Committee sees only a certificate that the exam has been completed. Examinations are conducted by practitioners chosen by the Bishop for this purpose.

#### **Medical Examination**

The Applicant pays for the medical examination, which is available to her/him for review. The Applicant may go to any physician of her/his choosing, as long as the physician completes a particular form, which the Applicant may attain from the Office of the Bishop.

#### **Background Check**

The background check is conducted by an outside company contracted for that purpose by the Diocese. The Office of the Bishop will send the Applicant's name and address to the company, which will send the appropriate forms to the Applicant. The background check includes employment history, educational institutions, churches

with which one has been affiliated, criminal record, traffic violations, and credit history.

## **Outline of the Ordination Process**

This is a synopsis of the ordination process as required by the Canons. Much detail has been omitted, in the interest of giving a general outline. Be sure to check Document 3B, “Holy Orders: Diaconate”; Document 3D “Holy Orders: Priesthood”; the Canons of Title III, and Document 3E “From Aspirant to Candidate: Ordained Ministry” for more details.

### **1. Discernment**

- This process happens in the local congregation or other community of faith.

### **2. Applicant**

- Application/nomination to Bishop: See Canon III.6.2.(b) and Canon III.8.2.(b) for what needs to be included in nomination
- Bishop then:
  - Confirms that the Nominee is a confirmed adult communicant in good standing
  - Meets with the Nominee in person
  - Consults Nominee regarding financial resources during formation
  - Notifies the COMB whether process may proceed.

### **3. Nominee**

- If Bishop approves the Nominee, then COMB:
  - meets with the Applicant
  - reviews the application
  - prepares an evaluation of the nominee’s qualifications to pursue course of preparation, and
  - presents evaluation and recommendations to the Bishop.

### **4. Postulant**

- If the Bishop admits Nominee as Postulant, then the Bishop:
  - notifies all concerned, and
  - records the individual’s name in a Register kept for that purpose.
- COMB assigns COMB mentor to Postulant
  - COMB refers Postulant to EICS for Academic advising and Bishop’s Office forwards a copy of the personal statement, CV and spiritual journey.

- EICS assigns Academic Advisor to Postulant and informs COMB
  - Academic Advisor develops program of formation and training following Canons III.6 and III.8 and the Ordinand Training Guidelines (may include formal seminary or training programs designed for in situ learning)
- Postulant
  - enters into a continuing relationship with a Spiritual Director reporting this to COMB mentor
  - Postulant follows EICS-directed training program
  - Postulant writes quarterly Ember Day letters to Bishop
- EICS Academic Advisor monitors progress on formation and training quarterly
- Postulant liaises with COMB mentor (quarterly)
- EICS Academic Advisor and COMB mentor communicate regularly on progress
- Postulant and COMB continue to communicate via face-to-face or internet interview at least once per year
- EICS reports results of formation to Bishop and COMB once per year (progress report) in written form
- Bishop's Office checks if medical and psychiatric evaluations are up to date or need renewal
- Postulant applies to Bishop to be admitted as a Candidate
- Postulant interviews with COMB regarding Candidacy
- COMB shares evaluation with Bishop
- Bishop evaluates and refers proposition of Candidacy to Council of Advice
- Council of Advice concurs on acceptance of Postulant as Candidate and informs Bishop
- Bishop makes Postulant a Candidate for Orders

## **5. Candidate**

- Candidate takes GOEs or equivalent
- At completion of formation, EICS reports in writing to Bishop and COMB
- Candidate writes letter to Bishop requesting ordination
- Bishop requests canonical certificate from Council
- Bishop receives certificate for Ordination (if issued)
- Bishop proceeds to Ordination.

## **Ember Day Letters**

Once a Nominee has been admitted as a Postulant, the Postulant or Candidate is required to communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter four times a year in the Ember Weeks. These are called “Ember Day Letters,” and they are taken very seriously. In these letters or communications, the Candidate should reflect on his/her academic, vocational, human, spiritual, and practical development. Ember Day letters are required of all Postulants and Candidates in the Diocese. The Ember Days are the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following the Third Sunday of Advent, the First Sunday in Lent, Pentecost, and Holy Cross Day (September 14).

## **Process to the Diaconate and the Priesthood**

Because ordained ministries, whether the vocational Diaconate or the Priesthood, are primarily to serve the Church in the widest sense of the term, all persons called to Holy Orders are first ordained as deacons. Deacons are called to a ministry of service outside the walls of the Church, but also to one of empowerment of the laypeople within the Church. They embody the people of God as servants in the image of Christ, “who came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). While transitional deacons go on to be ordained as priests (and perhaps eventually bishops), they remain deacons for the rest of their lives.

Both vocational and transitional deacons follow a process that first requires support of a congregation, then approval by the Council of Advice on the recommendation of COMB, and finally approval by the Bishop and ordination. Normally, a candidate to the Priesthood serves as a transitional deacon for a year before ordination to the Priesthood, although the Bishop may choose to shorten this to a minimum of six months.

For more information on the Diaconate please refer to Documents 3B, “Holy Orders: Diaconate” and 3C, “Article on the Diaconate”; and on the Priesthood, please refer to Document 3D “Holy Orders: Priesthood”, as well as the Canons of Title III, and Document 3E “Flow Chart: Aspirant to Candidate for Ordination”.