



**DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN**  
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Office of the Bishop

November 8, 2022

*“Let them be merciful, and zealous, and let them walk according to the truth of the Lord, who became the servant of all.” (St. Polycarp)*

After much prayer and discernment, I am pleased to begin the process of introducing the permanent diaconate in the Diocese of Saint John.

First instituted in apostolic times, the permanent diaconate is a key vocation through which men dedicate their lives to the service of God’s people. Permanent deacons are a great support to the local church through their witness to Christ-like charity. As co-labourers in the mission their unique gifts and talents play an indispensable role in building up the Body of Christ. These ordained ministers of the word, the altar, and of charity, work together with lay people, religious and priests, to support the spiritual and material needs of the people of God.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that, “Deacons share in Christ's mission and grace in a special way. The sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an imprint ("character") which cannot be removed, and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the "deacon" or servant of all. Among other tasks, it is the task of deacons to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and preaching, in presiding over funerals, and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity.” (CCC 1570)

A fruitful use of all seven sacraments, including the permanent diaconate, can be a great aid to our parishes, especially in view of all the challenges we face. A healthy diocese is one that makes use of all the gifts and charisms present in the many vocations, working together as the people of God to bring about his Kingdom in our midst. I believe that now is the time to introduce the permanent diaconate to the diocese and ask your prayers as we open the formation process and begin to accept our first candidates for discernment.

Pope Francis said that, “Deacons remind the Church that what Saint Theresa discovered is true: the Church has a heart enflamed by love...The generosity of a deacon who gives of himself without seeking the front ranks has about him the perfume of the Gospel, he tells of the greatness of God's humility in taking the first step – always, God always takes the first step – to meet even those who have turned their backs on him.” (Pope Francis Address to the Permanent Deacons of the Diocese of Rome, June 19, 2021).

Let us give God permission to move powerfully in our diocese to bring hearts to Jesus, and let us surrender this process to his will, praying that the Lord of the harvest will send an abundance of laborers for the service of the Gospel and the glory of God.

Sincerely yours in Jesus and Mary,

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC  
Bishop of Saint John