

CHAPTER IV.

CANONICAL ASSIGNMENTS AND BENEFITS

The permanent deacon in the post-Vatican II era, especially one in the United States of America, lives a ministerial life of an unprecedented sort: He, not the Church, is fully responsible for his livelihood and that of his family, deriving his income in nearly all cases from secular employment. By that same token, he is not generally available for a full-time position in the Church in the same way that a priest typically is;¹ yet the permanent deacon is expected at least to be available for and committed to part-time ministry by virtue of his vocation and ordination. Of particular note are the many permanent deacons who retire earlier than normal from their secular occupations and devote themselves full-time to the work of the Church. Finally, there are those who, because of their vocations and their expertise, dedicate themselves to a full-time position in the Church.

The permanent deacon who has been granted faculties by the Archbishop of Santa Fe, whether or not that deacon has been incardinated into the Archdiocese, is canonically assigned by the Archbishop to a parish or to a special ministry, or to both.² In this canonical assignment he ministers either on a full-time or a part-time basis, but he has an important sacramental role 24 hours a day regardless of his assignment, simply by reason of his having received sacred orders. Placed strategically **in** the world without being **of** the world, he has the challenging tasks of ministering in the marketplace, of living out the Gospel in the real world, and of forming new lay-clerical relationships.

Conversely, a permanent deacon who does not have a canonical assignment is effectively prevented from exercising any diaconal functions. Such an unassigned deacon is not entitled to any of the benefits described hereafter.

All permanent deacons are clerics; as such, all are subjects of the canons that state the obligations and rights of clerics. Among these is Canon 281, which grants the right to **just** remuneration (although §3 of that canon specifically restricts that right in the case of a married deacon who has income from his secular occupation and must therefore support his family without assistance from the Church).

All permanent deacons of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe are **required** to attend the annual In-Service Training Day and the annual weekend spiritual retreat for deacons and their wives. The legitimate expenses of attendance by both deacon and spouse at these two gatherings are to be paid by the parish or institution to which the deacon is assigned. Approved programs of continuing education in which the deacon is enrolled, in keeping with the requirements of §V.C of this manual, shall be paid for according to this suggested formula: one-third paid by the Archdiocese,

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one-third by the deacon's parish or institution, and one-third by the deacon himself. Any alternative arrangements for reimbursement for professional education should be specified in the deacon's contract and position description. See §IV.A and §IV.B, following.

Deacons are never entitled to "stipends," because the term "stipend" properly refers only to offerings given to a priest for the celebration of the Eucharist for a particular intention. "Stole fees" are offerings given on the occasion of administering the sacraments (other than the Eucharist) and sacramentals. When a stole fee is given to a deacon on the occasion of a sacrament it is understood to be for the parish. However, if the donor makes a specific gift to the deacon himself, he may keep the gift. (See the Archdiocesan Parish Administrative Manual, Section VI. III.C, Page 11). If the deacon so wishes, his gifts could be sent to the Catholic Foundation's St. Stephen's Fund in the Archdiocese which has been established to provide limited financial assistance for the deacon's continuing education.

A. FULL-TIME MINISTRY

The permanent deacon whose family and financial circumstances will permit full-time ministry should have the opportunity to be employed in those activities of the Church that are especially appropriate to his role as servant-leader and to his personal gifts and qualifications. Among these may be administrative, managerial, custodial, catechetical, liturgical, and sacramental functions. When the Archdiocese is confronted with the need to administer a parish and no priest is available, the Archbishop may appoint a qualified permanent deacon as Parish Life Administrator.³ (Known as Parish Life Coordinator in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe)

The permanent deacon's multiform ministry, enriched by the diversity of his gifts, cannot be defined in a single position description; neither is there a single set of benefits applicable to all permanent deacons engaged full-time in ministry. Hence, it is imperative that a contract and a position description be developed for each permanent deacon employed full-time by the church. Both contract and position description must be approved and then signed by the employer

(Archdiocese, parish, or institution), the Director, and the employed deacon himself. A copy of each contract governing the employment of a full-time deacon must be furnished to the Director, to be placed in the deacon's general personnel file (see §XII.D.1). This contract should address the following kinds of benefits:

1. Salary.

The negotiated salary for a permanent deacon employed full-time in Church work should take into account his personal financial situation, his specific position, his experience, and his education. Justice is the overriding consideration in arriving at an agreed-upon salary. Because of the real possibility that the employing parish or institution may temporarily be unable to pay the deacon's salary, his contract should address possible alternative means of meeting his legitimate short-term financial needs. (See Canon 281, §3)

2. Other Benefits.

Over and above his salary, a permanent deacon engaged full-time in diaconal service is entitled to an equitable schedule of working hours, to sick leave, to personal leave, to a day or days off each week when the workload will permit, and to a yearly vacation; all these personal benefits must be specified in his contract and position description. Further, the full-time deacon is to be reimbursed at the prevailing rate for travel expenses incurred in his sacramental ministry (that is, in those liturgical functions in which the deacon is expected to participate or at which he is the presider). Provisions should also be made for life and disability insurance for the benefit of the deacon's family. Likewise, the deacon (and his family members, when feasible) should be covered by medical and dental insurance.

B. PART-TIME MINISTRY

Those permanent deacons of the archdiocese of Santa Fe who are still committed to their secular positions should never forget that they are ordained ministers always and everywhere, giving due priority to their families, their employment, and their canonical assignments, in that order.

Although permanent deacons, who are committed to part-time ministry by virtue of their canonical assignment, are not entitled to a salary for the support of their family, they are entitled to just compensation for the expenses they incur in the exercise of their ministry. A covenant document, less formal than a contract but clear and comprehensive nonetheless, should be written, by the pastor or supervisor, for every permanent deacon holding a canonical assignment in the archdiocese, delineating his responsibilities, his pastor's or supervisor's expectations of him, and the benefits to which he is entitled.

At least for purposes of budgeting and accounting, a certain sum of money should be specified by his parish or institution for a part-time permanent deacon's services. The deacon, however, if he is not growing more destitute monthly by reason of the time he devotes to his Church, and if he is deriving adequate income from his secular employment for his own and his family's legitimate needs, should voluntarily donate

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back to his parish or institutions the same amount he has been paid, as prototype steward and exemplary servant-leader.

1. *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, Rev. Timothy J. Shugrue, Bishop's Committee on the Permanent Diaconate (Washington, D.C.: National Council of Catholic Bishops, 1988) p. 89.
2. See Chapter IX for a discussion of canonical faculties for deacons of the Archdiocese.
3. Canons 273-289.