

## A Brief Overview of the Process for Pursuing Ordination in the Diocese of the Rio Grande

- A confirmed adult communicant in good standing of the Episcopal Church is eligible to seek ordination as a deacon or priest in the Diocese of the Rio Grande.
  - Any communicant under the age of 68 may seek ordination whether as a deacon or as a priest.
  - Any communicant seeking ordination as a priest who is under the age of 50 must pursue an accredited graduate degree in theology at an institution of the Bishop's choosing.
- A person who discerns that he or she may be called to ordained ministry approaches the rector or priest-in-charge of the parish or mission to which s/he belongs to discuss the matter. At this point in the process s/he is called an *aspirant*.
- If the priest determines there is sufficient evidence of a call to warrant doing so, the priest forms a ***Congregational Discernment Committee (CDC)*** to help the aspirant discern his or her call.
- The CDC will meet a total of ten times. At least two hours should be allowed for each meeting. Because considerable work is involved in preparing for each CDC meeting, and because discernment ought not be treated as a quick process, the CDC ought not meet more than twice a month.

Priests are encouraged to commence the discernment process in the spring of the year so that all of the CDC's meetings can occur in a deliberate, calm, and prayerful fashion prior to the end of the year and in time for the aspirant to attend the ***Bishop's Discernment Retreats*** in January and February of the following year.

If the priest and the CDC discern the aspirant to have a call to ordination, the priest informs the Bishop, his assistant, and the Canon for Formation of the fact and forwards all pertinent information and documents to the diocese. If the Bishop accepts the report of the priest and the CDC, he invites the aspirant to attend two Bishop's Discernment Retreats. These retreats are held on a Friday evening and most of a Saturday, once in January and once in February each year. They are staffed by members of the ***Bishop's Advisory Committee on Admission to the Ministry (BACAM)***. If the Bishop and BACAM concur that the aspirant has a vocation to ordained ministry, the Bishop extends an invitation to the aspirant to accept status as a *postulant*. At this point, the postulant enters under the care of the ***Commission on the Ministry of the Baptized (COMB)*** and prepares to enter formation in a theological institution of the Bishop's choosing. Generally s/he will begin to matriculate in the fall of the year s/he accepts appointment as a postulant.

- Discernment is a very serious matter and not to be undertaken lightly. An aspirant will be issued an invitation to accept status as a postulant only if a number of people agree that a call has been discerned (the aspirant him- or herself, the aspirant's priest and the CDC, BACAM and, most importantly, Bishop Vono). The process is intended to be strenuous and postulancy is not guaranteed. However, if an aspirant is granted postulancy, the Bishop and COMB are committed to that person's formation to be the best priest or deacon he or she can be provided she or he consistently exhibits the qualities of character and the requisite skills necessary to be an effective and holy deacon or priest.