

Do our blessed Mother and the Saints motivate me toward perseverance? Does joy characterize my life?

LOVE:

Do I believe God is a God of love?

What are the dimensions of that love? In other words, do I limit my response to God? Do I limit God?

Have I experienced *agape* love, and can I define it in my life?

Can I recognize the Holy Spirit's movement in my life?

Do I ask for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and do I follow the promptings of the spirit to love?

Do I *look for* opportunities to serve? Do I desire the salvation of those I love? Of all around me? Of my enemies? Do I pray for and sacrifice for their salvation?

Do I forgive others readily? Are there any for whom I hold a grudge? Can I forgive those who injure me and seem to get away with it?

Do I pray for those who irate, bother, oppose, frustrate, grate upon me—especially co-workers in the Church?

Do I desire to do God's will? Does "fiat" to God characterize my life choices? Am I disposed to fulfill a vow of obedience, even if I am asked to do something I prefer not to do? Do I love others for their own sake rather than for the comfort. Pleasure, enjoyment they bring me?

Do I fear the loss of any created thing, person, or position more than I do the love of God?

PRUDENCE:

What constitutes a prudent judgment?

Do I make timely judgments? Do I make prayerful judgments?

Do I have any tendency either to rashness or to excessive caution? Do I know what steps I need to take in order to make sound decisions, especially in areas that touch upon some weakness of mine? Can I name my chief weaknesses and besetting sins?

Do I know how to weigh the relative merits of various sources of advice?

Do I welcome and seek out the teaching of the Church as primary source when I am making decisions for myself, others, or do I hide behind ignorance out of pride or fear of change?

Do I fear responsibility?

Am I consistent in my actions and decisions, and do they consistently enable me to love well?

JUSTICE:

Do I give God his due? Am I committed to liturgical and private prayer, and specifically to the Liturgy of the hours?

Do I honor and have recourse to our Blessed Mother?

Am I faithful to almsgiving and fasting?

Do I presume upon any of these in the name of "familiarity"?

Do I pray for the dead? Am I zealous for God's reputation before my own reputation? Do I give each person their due (in time, speech, possessions, attention, prayer), beginning with my family and my fraternal and working relationships?

If married, do I actively lead my family in prayer and conversion, and do I sacrifice for them? Am I impartial in my judgments and assessments of people and circumstances? Or am I swayed by convenience, personal predilections, personality, preconceived ideas and impressions, favors received, the hope of return?

Am I too quick to be critical? Do I rejoice in the accomplishments, gifts, successes of others, or do I envy? Am I generous?

Do I give of my material resources to those in need, even at cost to self? Am I courteous, even with those who oppose me?

Do I understand and fulfill the duties of one in formation? Of citizen? Of employer/employee? Do I conduct myself with proper decorum in liturgy? In public? When "off-duty"?

Am I loyal to the Church, to my family, to my employer, even if I disagree with them? Do I take sufficient care of my health, without being preoccupied for it? Do I aim to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy? (CCC 2447)

Does gratitude mark my prayer, my speech, my initial response to God and others?

FORTITUDE:

What fears do I face? What good do I aspire to? What is the purpose of courage in the Christian life? Do I know how to be firm when necessary, even at cost to myself?

What is the purpose of anger? Can I be appropriately angry? Can I confront weakness in myself or, when appropriate, in others?

Am I patient with the ignorance, foibles, vices, pettiness, quirks of others? Do I persevere in my own struggles with sin and vice?

Do I suffer well?

TEMPERANCE:

Do I live a balanced and integrated life? Do I recognize the signs of imbalance? What is a healthy pace of life for me?

Do I know how to say "no" at the appropriate time? Do simplicity, focus, and recollection characterize my life?

Can I name the things in my life that get the wrong measure?

Do I embrace chastity in my marriage / celibacy? Do I regularly deny myself small, even legitimate pleasures? Can I say "no" to the desire for what is newer, bigger, better, faster, more comfortable, more whatever it is?

Do I tend to respond to difficult situations with grumbling or complaining rather than with equanimity and patience? Do I find myself preoccupied with what others think of me? Do I have an accurate picture of myself, my limitations, my gifts—that is, as God sees me?

11/19/08-3

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ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE



OFFICE FOR DIACONATE FORMATION

Guide for Personal Discernment

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. You beset me behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it....Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

Psalm 139: 1-6, 23-24

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THREE TOOLS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

General Questions for Discernment



- What aspects of life do I now find most challenging and tiring? What internal dispositions do I have that contribute to the challenge?
- What aspects of life rob me of joy or distract me from God?
- What aspects of life bring true delight and impel me toward God?
- Which characterizes my life now: tension or peace?
- How has my understanding of my personality, my character strengths, and my character weaknesses changed or developed this year? What vices, sins, weaknesses of character seem to stand in the way of living the diaconal vocation? Have I spoken forthrightly about these with my spiritual director/companion?
- How do I pray the Scriptures? What is the tenor of my prayer?
- Do I meet God in prayer, and does He meet me? Am I faithful to the Liturgy of the Hours as diaconal ministry?
- How have relationships with my wife, my children, my extended family, and my co-workers changed or developed this year?
- How has my sense of my work, my interests, and my recreations changed this year?
- What does “being deacon” mean to me now? Do I think, act, choose as deacon, even when “off duty”? When I serve others, do I see Jesus in them, or do I serve because “it’s what I have to do”?

- Can I name those things I am most attached to? How ready am I to forsake things, if need be, for the sake of Christ, of others, of the Church?
- Am I prepared to commit myself to the next step, to the demands of ongoing formation, of service, of responsibility?
- Three things I am most grateful for in life *now* are?

Spiritual Qualities of the Deacon



- Recognition of the action of the Spirit
- Listening to and meditating on the Word of God, especially in daily exercise of *lectio divina*, and study of the Word of God
- Thirst for prayer
- Commitment to service of brothers and sisters, especially the poorest, the suffering, the most needy
- Willingness to make sacrifices
- Having a sense of the Church (an identification with and humility toward the communal reality and toward the authority of the Church; living *ex corde ecclesia*)
- Apostolic zeal (missionary energy)
- Identification with and sharing in the love of Christ the suffering servant (cf. John 5:19-30; John 12:20-59; John 13-15; Servant Songs of Isaiah; Mark 10:45)
- Simplicity of heart
- Total giving of self and disinterest for self; holy detachment
- Choosing a life-style of generosity, even poverty; forsaking ostentatious possessions and attachments
- Constant recourse to Mary (especially recitation of the Rosary as contemplating the Face of Christ)
- Rooting oneself in the frequent participation in the celebration of the Eucharist

- Frequent use of the sacrament of Reconciliation
- Daily praying of the Liturgy of the Hours and behalf of the Church, as diaconal ministry
- Genuine and joyful obedience
- Fraternal identification with the body of the ordained

An Examination of Conscience based on Virtues

FAITH:

Do I trust myself to my Father, revealed in Christ Jesus the Son, known in the Holy Spirit?

Do I love the Truth, and does the Truth motivate my life? Do I love the Word of God in Scripture?

Do I have any hesitation in professing the Creed?

Do I love the Church and her teaching? Do I hesitate toward or dissent from any Church teaching in faith or the moral life?

Does what I know and believe motivate my actions and love for others?

Do I evaluate life circumstances, world events, or issues in the Church or in family or in work mainly in terms of human standards or in light of a heavenly horizon?

Am I willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the Church, to my brothers and sisters in Christ, to those responsible for me?

Do I continue to study and seek to understand Him whom I love?

HOPE:

Am I depressed in the face of my own weakness or sin, or am I motivated toward greater dependence on Father, Son and Spirit?

Do the circumstances of life unduly influence my emotions, my response to God, my ability to love, or am I steadfast, not greatly swayed by either opposition or success?

