

SEMINARIANS' APPLICATION PROCESSApplication to Seminary

The person writes a letter of intent either to the bishop or the Director of the Diocesan Office of Vocations.

Pre-requirements:

1. The person is to have lived in the diocese for at least one year.
2. He is to be registered in a parish or affiliated with parent's parish.
3. He must have received Sacraments of Initiation, received First Communion, and been confirmed.
4. He should be attending Sunday Mass regularly.
5. He should be actively involved in his faith.
6. He is neither married nor sexually active and shows an ability to live a celibate lifestyle.
7. He has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Process

Those who apply to the diocese for acceptance as seminarians must complete their application two months prior to the beginning of the semester for which they are applying. This will allow adequate time for consideration by application committees.

Application procedures include:

1. Several interviews with clergy and laity of the diocese in areas of personal history, lifestyle, spirituality, church experience, health, spiritual, psychological and emotional readiness, and talent;
2. Medical exam;
3. Pastor's evaluation and recommendation;
4. Acceptance by a designated seminary or university.

Acceptance

A formal statement of acceptance is sent to the applicant stating the responsibilities and expectations for both the candidate and the diocese.

Programming

1. A tentative outline for a program of formation and studies.

2. The level and which school the seminarian is to attend.
3. The means of financing seminary studies.

Expectations

Prior to ordination to diaconate a candidate must:

1. Demonstrate at least a pastoral grasp of both Spanish and English. This includes the ability to write and read sermons in either language, be able to celebrate all the sacraments and rites of the Church, and be able to handle at least simple conversations in both languages.
2. Demonstrate that he is handling his academic studies responsibly. A seminarian will normally be required to take a full load (15-18 hours) and, except in emergencies, there will be no excuse for not completing the work required by a course during the time allotted. A course may not be dropped without the advice of a seminary director or dean. Likewise, a seminarian is expected to attend all classes.

College Seminarians

College seminarians attend an approved college seminary.

1. Financial Responsibility. When a seminarian or his family is unable to bear seminary education costs (room, board, tuition, fees, books), the diocese will initiate a seminarian loan program with the student. If we are responsible, then there is no obligation to pay us back if he leaves.
2. Students should apply for grants and loans through the school they will attend. If ordained, loans will be repaid by the diocese.

The Diocese of Las Cruces follows these principles for the College Seminarian Loan Policy:

If a seminarian is unable to finance his own seminary education in college or is unable to obtain either adequate financial support from his parents or from a government grant or loan to go to a college level seminary, then the diocese will consider lending such a seminarian, by paying directly to the seminary, funds to provide tuition and room and board fees. It is the obligation of the seminarian to provide for his own clothes, laundry, entertainment, and transportation. The seminarian shall be obligated to sign a note to the diocese and such note shall cover and include not only the initial advances made by the diocese while the seminarian is in the college seminary, but also such subsequent advances which shall be noted on a schedule which is part of the original note, and notice of such shall be mailed to the seminarian.

Interest on such sum shall be computed at the rate of three percent (3%) per month and shall begin to be computed and earned nine (9) months after the seminarian ceases to participate in the seminary program, whether such cessation is during the college period or post-graduate period. Repayment shall be at the rate of not less than \$30.00 per month.

3. Medical insurance is required for the student by the diocese when the family cannot be responsible for possible medical expenses for their son. This insurance is provided through the seminary attended and is paid for by the diocese when he or his family is unable to do so.
4. If a seminarian chooses to own a car he is responsible for its upkeep including insurance and liability.

Summer

1. College seminarians are expected to seek full-time employment during summer months. This employment may be any work to the seminarians liking and consonant with the vocation.
2. The seminarian may choose to live either at home or away from home during the summer. He may choose to live at the local rectory if circumstances are favorable. If he arranges to live at the rectory with other employment, the seminarian should volunteer hours of service to the parish to cover the cost of room and board.
3. If a seminarian is hired full-time by a parish for the summer, he should be paid at least minimum wage and be provided room and board. A simple job description is to be drawn up indicating types of ministry, hours, and stipend agreed upon. If the seminarian uses his own car for ministry, car allowance should also be provided. Vacation time, days off, etc. need to be clarified at the time of hiring.
4. The diocese holds the right to ask for an evaluation of the seminarian by the pastor and designated parish staff during the time of employment at the parish.

Theology Seminarians

Theology seminarians attend a particular seminary assigned by the bishop.

1. Financial responsibility. When a student or his family is not able to provide it, room, board, tuition, fees, and books are paid for by the diocese. Since a student attends theology seminary away from the diocese, his fare to and from the diocese for vacation is provided twice during the year. Likewise, theology students will be provided a small stipend for living expenses each month of the school year when families are unable to offer this personal support. When diocesan support is needed, a theology student is to prepare a budget of anticipated personal expenses and income so that the diocese can provide an appropriate stipend each month of the school year. Of course, a student or his family should provide whatever part of the total education expenses and personal support when able to do so.
2. Medical insurance is required for the student and will be paid for by the diocese when he or his family is unable to do so. (The insurance policy is provided by the seminary which the student attends.)
3. Academics and Formation. Students of theology are to use their summers with guidance from the seminary and vocation director to round out their educational and ministerial experiences. Theology seminarians will often be required to study Spanish or take a CPE

program during the summer. These will be arranged in conjunction with and paid for by the diocese. Otherwise, seminarians should minister in a parish within the diocese where they will not only be provided room and board, but also minimum wage.

4. Theology programs are to include a six month to one year internship prior to diaconate ordination. During the time of internship the seminarian will:
 - A. live in an assigned parish;
 - B. develop and work with a job description;
 - C. attend monthly evaluations with the pastor and a parish evaluation team (Format and process to follow are provided by the seminary.);
 - D. meet with the vocation director once a month (The vocation director is to sit in on at least every other evaluation meeting in the parish);
 - E. be provided by the parish with room and board, car allowance, and \$350.00 per month stipend during the time of internship.

Ministries

1. The ministries of Acolyte and Reader are usually conferred in ceremonies at the seminary. Each seminarian is to send a letter of request to the bishop with a copy to the Vocation Office. Records of the reception of orders are kept in the seminarian file at the Vocation Office.
2. Candidacy may be conferred at the seminary or by the bishop in the diocese, depending upon the convenience of scheduling for the bishop and seminarian. The request and record of conferral are kept in the seminarian file at the Vocation Office.

Transitional Diaconate

1. An extensive evaluation of readiness is to be held six months prior to diaconate ordination. Any areas of concern will be re-evaluated before a date of ordination is finalized. The evaluation is to include the feedback from the seminary, the pastor or representative of the pastoral internship, diocesan personnel working with the seminarian in supervised ministries and persons seen as appropriate by the vocation director and the bishop.
2. Appropriate letters of request, intent, and promise are to be signed and filed in the candidates file at the Diocesan Vocation Office.
3. The candidate preparing for diaconate ordination is to make a retreat of at least 5 full days within the month prior to ordination. This is to be a directed retreat.
4. The celebration of ordination to the diaconate may take place in the candidate's home parish or in the parish where he served as intern.

5. Compensation:
 - A. salary of \$500.00 monthly (compensation is made by the parish where the deacon is ministering, or by the diocese when he spends his diaconate in the seminary);
 - B. auto depreciation of \$380.00 monthly, auto insurance, maintenance, and normal repairs (when the deacon is ministering in the diocese);
 - C. medical insurance;
 - D. stole fees (cf. Policy for Priests);
 - E. room and board, laundry, dry cleaning and ordinary living expenses.
 - F. retreat (cf. Policy for Priests).
6. A man must be a deacon at least 6 months before ordination to the presbyterate.
7. Ordination to the presbyterate is to take place in the diocesan cathedral.