

Sixty men seeking to be deacons begin their formation

written by Malea Hargett |



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Sixty men began a five-year journey in August toward becoming ordained deacons for the Diocese of Little Rock.

The men and their wives meet monthly at St. John Center in Little Rock for weekend classes led by local priests, deacons and laypeople. They are scheduled to be ordained in June 2028.

Like previous classes, the men come from a variety of backgrounds.

The English-speaking class includes 37 aspirants from 24 parishes. Four of them work in education, five in healthcare and one works full-time for his parish. Only four of them are retired.

Charles Dwyer, a member of Our Lady of the Ozarks Shrine in Winslow, said, "I would like to become a deacon because I feel I have a lot to offer the Church and the parish. I have the heart of a volunteer and am the president for a local nonprofit in my small town. I believe I have

good leadership skills and am a former mayor of my town as well. I will bring my leadership skills, organizing and fairness to serve the Church.”

William Campbell of St. Bernard Church in Bella Vista said he was inspired to apply for the diaconate formation because of other deacons he knows.

“Deacons have been lights in my life leading me to Christ, and I would be honored to serve his people as a deacon,” he said.

The Spanish-speaking class has 23 aspirants from 14 parishes. They work in a variety of professions, including construction, welding, auto repair and truck driving.

Jose Guzman of St. Theresa Church in Little Rock said service to the Church is his main reason for entering formation.

“Firstly, because the service of the diaconate comes from my heart, and secondly, I want to serve the Church and the community in the areas of evangelization and in all the needs of the Church.”

Formation director Deacon Mark Verkamp said classes for the first year focus on spirituality.

“The next four years the study requirements are intense so we have to have the spirituality for the base,” he said.

Since 1981, when the Diocese of Little Rock’s first diaconate formation class was ordained, more than 150 men have served the state.