



Archdeacon and Deacon Director's Conference Spring 2013 Open Space Notes

"CARE AND FEEDING" OF DECLINED CANDIDATES

After Candidates have been affirmed in their parish, submitted their application form and met with the diaconal screening committee, their names are submitted to the College of (5) Bishops. There have recently been a couple of cases the bishops have declined a candidacy.

To quote the Acting Coordinator of the Community of Deacons, "as a whole diocese and as a community, we have not yet been able to do a good job of supporting self-declared candidates especially those who the Bishops turn down as not having the calling the candidate thought s/he did."

One of the issues complicating this is that the bishops do not (and are not obliged to) give reasons for their rejection of candidacies, which leaves us (the community leaders) in a difficult place when it comes to explaining the rejection, which we are required to do.

There are also cases where a self-declared candidate does not receive the affirmation/support of the parish, and we have had one case in recent years of a man who literally moved from denomination to denomination in search of ordination.

How do we:

- a. Reinforce the theology that a perceived call needs to be tested and affirmed in community
- b. Provide pastoral support to those who fail/refuse to understand and accept a)
- c. Help the declined candidates understand that this is not a "dead end" but rather a fork in the road where one fork is barred to them but the other (i.e. continued lay ministry) is still open to them.
- d. Help them to work through the feelings of perceived rejection/unworthiness and realize that they are still called to a ministry of service, just not in holy orders, and that their ministry is by no means devalued or negated.

POTENTIAL ANSWERS FROM GROUP

PDC – how to sort out what candidates are called to, not just whether they are called at all.

Identify and resist sense of entitlement – these people are deaf.

Inhumane system –could be rejected at any point in it – more thorough PDC work and availability throughout.

Define call more exactly – God, you, community, church.

Follow-up after being told not going forward – discernment group to deepen call.

NOT ABOUT ME – it's about God and his church and my place in it.

Get in front of problem – make it clear still involved in helping identify call (PDC).

PDC long term commitment beyond naming to parish – prayer, support, conversation about ministry and progress – ongoing group.

Ministry does not have to wear a collar

Example – candidate thought he had call, other deacons pushed it at him. Perceived as call when it was really a “social” comment.

Two phase discernment – a) congregation members for gifts, calls etc.; b) identified call to orders – new group, both groups and vestry have to sign off. Then name goes to bishop.

Integrity/honesty of discernment committee

Existing diaconal ministry before even considering ordination.

Grieving process for dream needs to run its course, then the person is ready to look ahead. Be present, let them know you are there.