



Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Office of the Archbishop
222 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299

February 13, 2013

Dear Brother Priests and Deacons,

An important part of the life and work of the Church in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is the service of our permanent deacons. Since becoming your Archbishop, I have discussed several topics I consider important for the permanent diaconate within our local Church. These include especially witnessing marriages, clerical attire, and the age of admission for formation. I have recently approved changes regarding these areas and others after consultation with many, including the Council of Priests. All of these changes will take effect on Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, March 24, 2013.

First, all deacons with the faculties of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia will now be delegated to assist at (witness) marriages. Liturgical norms are clear that at marriages within Mass the priest celebrant witnesses the marriage. Please see attached decree.

Second, in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia permanent deacons will now wear clerical attire, a gray clerical shirt with a white collar, in the exercise of their diaconal ministry. When a permanent deacon is not exercising his ministry, his attire is that of the lay faithful. Please see attached decree.

Third, the ordinary age for admission to permanent diaconate formation will be raised from 50 to 55 years of age.

In addition to these changes, I want you to know that deacons are always welcome to vest and be seated together at all archdiocesan liturgies.

Also, the responsibilities of the Office for the Permanent Diaconate will be divided come July. Formation for candidates for the permanent diaconate will move to the Permanent Diaconate Division of Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary. Ongoing formation and any personnel related matters will move to the Office for Clergy.

I thank all of you, priests and deacons, for your dedicated ministry to the people of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

May the Lord give you every peace and blessing.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Charles J. Chaput, *ofc. ep.*

Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
Archbishop of Philadelphia