

Rector's Careful Inquiry Guidelines

The formal process of discerning a call to ordination begins with the Rector's Careful Inquiry – a series of 3 (or more) conversations between a rector (or a priest appointed by the rector) and the person exploring ordination.

At least one of these conversations should include the prospective ordinand's spouse or fiancé(e), if applicable. Beyond the general willingness and support of the spouse, which is vital, it is also important to know if the marriage is strong and growing and that the spouse feels a sense of agency in this life trajectory. Does the couple express positive mutual regard for one another? What do they do for fun together? How do they support one another in times of stress? Does the spouse joyfully embrace the life their spouse's call might necessitate? We strongly recommend, though do not require, the [Prepare/Enrich Marriage Assessment](#).

At the end of these conversations, the rector must be comfortable encouraging the individual to pursue further discernment.

If this is the case, the rector completes the online form, along with a detailed, 2-3 page written report of those conversations, and sends it to the Bishop's Office. If the rector is not comfortable proceeding, that fact and the reasons for it should be communicated to the person. **Rectors, please consult the Canon to the Ordinary if you have questions about the Careful Inquiry or if you need help determining how to proceed with a person.** This is important and holy work. Please undertake it with a prayerful heart, and do not hesitate to ask for help from the Bishop's Office.

The following are suggestions for the conversations in and written (narrative) report of the Rector's Careful Inquiry.

Conversation 1

Discuss who or what has shaped him or her as a person; what things have contributed to his or her spiritual growth; his or her personal spiritual disciplines; growing edges in his or her spiritual and emotional life; and family and relational history. This initial conversation about call should include what has brought this person to seek ordination: What gifts seem to fit or not to fit such a call? Suggest some things to think about in preparation for the next conversation. Discuss the process of writing the Essay on Personal Life, Call, and Ministry, which will be required before meeting with the Bishop.

Conversation 2

Discussion the ordination process – for example, you could look at the ordination service in the prayer book and discuss. Discussion of Essay on Personal Life, Call, and Ministry, if written. What was interesting or helpful? What questions or concerns does the essay raise? Discuss the ways in which the shape, challenges, and demands of ordained ministry fit the person’s personality, gifts, and skills. Include the spouse or fiancé(e) in this conversation and ask for his or her input. Discuss his or her thoughts and about this direction. Discuss the expected impact of ordination on the family. Suggest some things to think about in preparation for the next conversation.

Conversation 3

Follow up on issues, questions, and thoughts raised in earlier conversations. Have a frank conversation about insights, hopes, and concerns regarding this person’s pursuit of ordination with as much specificity as possible. Include directions about the next steps in the ordination process (see [Ordination Discernment Manual](#)).

Conclusion

The rector should note the following characteristics in a person seeking ordination, all of which should be addressed in detail in the written (narrative) report.

- Deep, growing personal faith that can be easily expressed and shared with others (Has the individual led anyone to Christ?)
- Clear sense of call that is connected to gifts
- Some understanding and experience of the nature of the Church and the place of ordained ministry within it
- Demonstrated ability in areas of leadership, discipleship, mission, and pastoral care seen through at least 100 hours of observed ministry
- Emotional and physical health – including healthy family relationships
- Intellectual and academic ability; curious, life-long learner
- If married, spouse is supportive of move to ordination
- If married, the couple shows signs of health, joy, and strength in their relationship

Please complete the Rector’s Careful Inquiry Form on the [ADP website](#).