News

An older white man wearing glasses and a white chasuble adjusts the vestments of a bald Bla

Deacon Francis Cuffie is vested by Msgr. Joseph Malagreca during his ordination to the diaconate at St. Joseph Co-Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., May 25, 2019. The estimated number of permanent deacons in active ministry in U.S. was 13,695 in 2022, the lowest amount since 2011, according to results of new CARA survey. (OSV News photo/CNS file, Gregory A. Shemitz)



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Results of an annual survey on the permanent diaconate of the U.S. Catholic Church show the estimated number of deacons in active ministry was 13,695 in 2022, the lowest since 2011.

"While the share of active permanent deacons in the Latin Church is forecasted to remain relatively stable (72%±3% in 2027), this trend is in keeping with the slow decline in the diaconate over the past several years," said a report on the survey results released June 8 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

At the same time "an unusually high number of men (910) were ordained to the permanent diaconate in 2022," it said. "Since 2014, the estimated number of ordinations averaged 642."

The Archdiocese of Chicago had the greatest number of permanent deacons (868) followed by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (361) and the Archdiocese of New

York (350). The dioceses ranking fourth and fifth in number of deacons were the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, which had 322 deacons, and the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York, with 318.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate conducted the survey on behalf of the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. CARA, based at Georgetown University in Washington, conducts social scientific studies for and about the Catholic Church.

Since 2005, CARA has conducted a yearly survey on the diaconate to provide statistics and forecast trends on the state of the permanent diaconate in the U.S.

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The report released by the USCCB is based on a survey conducted in 2023 about 2022. Altogether, dioceses and eparchies that responded to the survey represent an estimated 81% of all permanent deacons in the United States, according to the report.

"Permanent deacons are essential to the Church's ministry of love and service, especially to the poor and vulnerable," Bishop Earl A. Boyea of Lansing, Michigan, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, said in a statement accompanying the report's release.

"By virtue of their ordination, they give witness to Christ the Servant in the daily exercise of their work and ministry," he said. "I invite all the faithful to continue to pray for our deacons that they may remain faithful to their vocation of bringing Christ's presence to all."

The survey also showed that most active deacons are between 60-69 years old (41%) or age 70 or older (36%). Most permanent deacons are white (76%) followed by Hispanic/Latino (18%), Asian/Pacific Islander (3%), African American/Black (3%) and Native American/other (1%), the report said.

"Deacons fill a wide range of ministerial positions in the church," it said. "The most common position is a parish ministerial position, such as a DRE or youth minister (22%), followed by ensuring the pastoral care of one or more parishes (21%), a parish non-ministerial position, such as administration or business (15%), diocesan non-ministerial positions (9%), and hospital ministry (9%)."