



## Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations

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# Memorandum

To: All Bishops

From: Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson  
Chairman, Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations

Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio  
Chairman, Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance

Date: January 31, 2012

Re: Married Permanent Deacons and the Canonical Obligation to Observe Perfect and Perpetual Continence

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Your Eminence/Excellency,

In recent months, published opinions have appeared in scholarly journals and on Internet blogs that have raised questions about the observance of diaconal continence by married permanent deacons in the Latin Catholic Church. The opinions have suggested that the clerical obligation to observe “perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (c. 277, §1 CIC) remains binding upon married permanent deacons, despite the dispensation provided to them in canon law from the obligation to observe celibacy (c. 1042, 1° CIC).

In response to repeated requests for an authoritative clarification on this matter, the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations and the Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance requested the assistance of the USCCB President in seeking a clarification from the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts.

Earlier this week, we were informed that Cardinal-designate Francesco Coccopalmerio, President of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, with Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta, Secretary, has forwarded to Cardinal-designate Timothy M. Dolan the Pontifical Council’s observations on the matter (Prot. N. 13095/2011). The observations, which were formulated in consultation with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, clarify that married permanent deacons are not bound to observe perfect and perpetual continence, as long as their marriage lasts.

Should you have any questions about this response, please contact Reverend W. Shawn McKnight, Executive Director of the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations. In addition, please feel free to share this response with those within your diocesan curia who will find it helpful.

Encl.