

What Is a Deacon and What Does He Do?



The word "deacon" is derived from the Greek words *diakonia*, service, and *diakonos* — variously translated as servant, helper, attendant, or minister. Philippians 1:1 acknowledges the evolving concept of diaconal ministry in the early Church, and 1 Timothy 3:8-10,12-13 lists the necessary qualifications for the office of deacon once it had become more formally established.

Deacons are ordained clergy who are not priests: their special role is to assist priests. The deaconate is conferred by a bishop by the laying on of hands. It is one of the three orders of Holy Orders (deacon, priest and bishop). One of the primary charisms of the diaconate is service.



A deacon assists the priest at Mass:

- He offers the invocations of the Penitential Rite,
- Proclaims the Gospel,
- Preaches the homily occasionally,
- Reads the petitions of the General Intercessions,
- Receives the gifts,
- Dismisses the assembly.



A deacon also assists the priest outside of Mass: he may administer the Sacrament of Baptism; bring Viaticum to the dying (but cannot anoint); preside for prayer services; officiate at wakes, funeral services, and burial services; and witness marriages. Deacons are able to bless religious articles.

As ministers of service, deacons also perform charitable good works: outreach to the poor; visitation of the sick (at home, in nursing homes, or in hospitals); care of inmates in prisons and jails; teaching of sacramental preparation and religious education classes; and various administrative duties, as examples of some of their major roles.

A permanent deacon: must be of an age specified by the diocese, have completed his Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation), been installed as a Lector and an Acolyte, and completed a thorough formation program. If a candidate for the diaconate is married, he must receive the consent of his wife before he enters the formation program. Once ordained, if the deacon's wife should die, the deacon is not eligible for remarriage.







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