

## LITURGICAL MINISTRY OF DEACONS

### Role and function

A deacon takes his or her appropriate place along with the bishop (when present), the priest, layreaders, other liturgical ministers, and the gathered laity. In the absence of a bishop or priest, layreaders will officiate (and preach) at non-eucharistic liturgies. A deacon at:

#### **The Divine Office** (and other non-eucharistic liturgies)

- a. Shall not normally officiate in the absence of a bishop or priest. A layreader will appropriately be the officiant at the Divine Office (Morning or Evening Prayer). When there is no priest in a parish, the deacon should train and encourage lay persons to assume the role of officiant rather than doing so himself.

#### **The Holy Eucharist**

- b. Proclaims the Gospel (this includes carrying the Gospel book in procession where this is the custom.)
- c. Leads the Prayers of the People (or be significantly and visibly the minister of intercessions) and may deliver the Invitation to Confession.
- d. Prepares the Table for the Eucharist.
- e. Stands to the presider's right during the Great Thanksgiving and raises the Chalice at the conclusion of the prayer and/or the invitation to Communion according to local custom.
- f. Administers the Chalice, assisted by additional administrators when necessary.
- g. Performs the Ablutions, assisted by the server or other administrators when necessary, either after Communion or at the end of the celebration.
- h. Gives the Dismissal to the Church for service in the world.

#### **Holy Baptism**

- i. At the discretion of the Presider, may perform the water rite especially when there has been specific involvement in the preparation of a candidate. A deacon leads the Prayers for the Candidates (also at confirmation and/or reception).
- j. In the absence of a bishop or priest, may perform a public baptism with the permission of the Bishop. Baptism in the context of the Eucharist is to be the norm.

#### **Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage**

- k. May deliver the Charge (impediment or request for reasons not to marry), ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other diaconal functions at the Eucharist when celebrated in the context of a marriage.
- l. If licensed to do so, may preside at the Sacrament of Marriage with the permission of the Bishop provided appropriate changes are made to the nuptial blessing.

#### **Reconciliation of a Penitent**

- m. May hear the confession of a penitent if requested and if a priest is not available. The Reconciliation of a Penitent is normally reserved to a bishop or priest who alone can pronounce absolution. A deacon (or lay person) should follow liturgical rubrics and use the form of the declaration of forgiveness in place of the absolution.

### **Funerals and committals**

- n. May officiate at a funeral or the Burial of the Dead or committal when the services of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained. The Blessing of the people is to be omitted. Deacons normally do not consecrate graves.

### **The Service of Light**

- o. May officiate at the Service of Light in the absence of a bishop or priest. A layreader, if present, is officiant at the Divine Office following.

### **Holy Week liturgies**

- p. In the absence of a bishop or priest, may officiate at the Liturgy of the Palms. If a bishop or priest is present it is the prerogative of a deacon to read the Holy Gospel.
- q. If present, shall lead the Solemn Intercession in the Good Friday Liturgy.
- s. Carries the Paschal Candle in procession and sings (or says) the “Exultet” at the Great Vigil of Easter. When there is a baptism, a deacon carries the Paschal Candle in the procession to the Font and assists in the Baptism. When there is no baptism, a deacon leads the procession to the Font for the Renewal of Baptismal Vows.

In the absence of a deacon, all the above shall be performed by a bishop or priest.

### **Other functions**

- t. Preaching is a part of the ministry of a deacon and should be encouraged if the individual has particular gifts in this area. Deacons are expected to preach regularly, although not necessarily frequently. Preaching, when the opportunity presents itself, should focus on the specific diaconal vision of servanthood and the communication of “the needs, concerns and hopes of the world” in light of the appointed lections. A deacon should take advantage of opportunities for continuing education in this area.
- u. “The Administration of the Reserved Sacrament” as a public service of worship is never the norm. It may only be performed with the specific authorization of the Bishop in extraordinary circumstances at the request of a deacon’s supervisor. Should such a liturgy be authorized, a deacon is to follow instruction for the same exactly.
- v. A deacon may administer the Reserved Sacrament to the sick, shut-in, and others unable to attend the Parish Eucharist (or coordinate the same) when authorized by his or her supervising priest. Ideally the Sacrament is delivered immediately following the Celebration to maintain the connection between the community and the individual making Communion.
- w. Deacons are to be significantly involved in the recruitment, training, and liturgical use of lay administrators of Communion who perform their duties by request of the Parish and with the specific permission of the Bishop by letter.
- x. Deacons should participate in the preparation of candidates for Holy Baptism and Confirmation, especially in regard to the candidate’s intention to promise “to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to strive for justice and peace among all people.”
- y. At all diocesan liturgies deacons are to be given preference over transitional deacons, lay persons, priests, or bishops for those liturgical actions specifically assigned to deacons – reading the Holy Gospel, leading the Prayers of the People, preparing the Table, administering the Chalice, and giving the dismissal.

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