

WHAT'S A DEACON?

A deacon is an ordained minister of the Catholic Church, just as much clergy as a bishop and a priest. A deacon (from *diákonos*, Greek for waiter or servant) is a sacramental sign of Christ, the servant-leader who humbly washed the feet of others while on earth.



***“Receive the Gospel of Christ,
whose herald you now are.
Believe what you read, teach what you
believe, and practice what you teach.”***

(Bishops’ charge to deacons at ordination)



BIBLICAL ROOTS

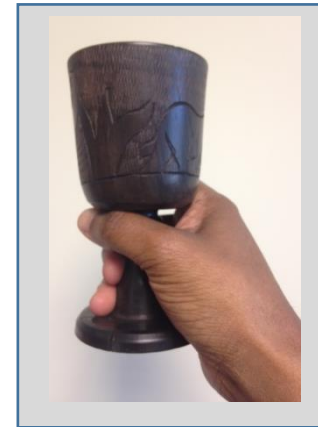
In Acts 6, to counter discrimination and better serve local needs in an increasingly diverse Church, the twelve apostles told the community of disciples to “select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.” The apostles “prayed and laid hands on” the seven, who then not only served their own communities, but -- through preaching, miraculous signs, prophetic witness and even martyrdom – they also brought the Word of God to places like Ethiopia, Samaria, and Greece, greatly increasing the number of disciples.

Today’s deacons continue this legacy of service to the Gospel. Although the permanent diaconate waned some centuries later, it was thankfully restored after Vatican II in 1967 by Pope Paul IV, which then greatly contributed to the growth of African American clergy. Currently, as many as three hundred (2%) of active deacons are African American or Black.

THAT’S COOL, BUT WHAT DO DEACONS DO?

While our ministries may be part-time, there is no such thing as a “part-time” deacon! A deacon is who we ARE, not what we do.

Like all clergy, deacons are ministers of Word, Liturgy and Charity. First, deacons proclaim, preach, and teach the Gospel. Second, as ministers of Liturgy, we baptize, witness marriages, preside at funerals and Eucharistic Adoration, bring communion to the sick, pray daily and lead the faithful in prayer. Third, as ministers of Charity, deacons seek out the needy, direct Church resources to their needs, and lend our prophetic voice to eliminating injustices or inequities that cause such needs.



TELL ME MORE!

All ordained clergy start as -- and forever remain -- deacons; just as all bishops are still priests. “Transitional deacons” aspire to priesthood, but the vocation of “permanent deacons” is to serve Christ as deacons – permanently. Whether we are transitional or permanent, the Church views both of us exactly the same – as deacons.

Ordained persons serve the diocesan Church, including deacons. Bishops assign deacons to a perceived area of need (often within a parish) for which the deacon may have special gifts or talents.

Unlike priests, who take a vow of poverty, deacons must earn a separate living like anyone else; therefore, a bishop will not assign a deacon in ways detrimental to gainful employment.



MAY MARRIED MEN BE ORDAINED DEACONS?

Yes, the permanent diaconate is open to Catholic men over 35 years of age and most permanent deacons in active ministry are married (over 90%). Once ordained, however, if his wife precedes him in death, a deacon may not remarry.

I'M INTERESTED, NOW WHAT?

To find out more, have your pastor put you in touch with the Director of Deacons for your diocese for info about requirements and formation (3-5 years). Also, contact local deacons

or the National Association of Black Catholic Deacons (NABCD) for insight and continuing support.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE DEACON VOCATIONS?

If someone you know is active as a servant leader within their church, family, or community, give them this brochure and ask them to consider the diaconate! Also, offer this prayer for them or others:

Vocations Prayer

O God Most High and Sovereign Lord, who humbly bows to wash the feet of lowly servants and drips your precious blood from a freedom cross to cleanse our souls; Merciful Lord of the Harvest: do not leave us orphans!

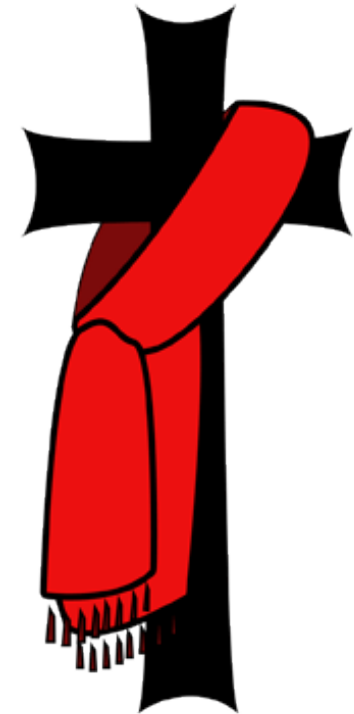
Send your Holy Spirit to make a way out of no way. Bid us to select from among ourselves men according to your heart, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, who -- through this prayer of discernment -- may be raised up to worthily proclaim your Gospel in Word, liturgy and charity; to produce a harvest of salvation from our communities and glory to your most Holy Name. Let the Church say: Amen.

Deacon Mel Tardy, 2017

For info on the National Association of Black Catholic Deacons: www.nabcd.org

For USCCB info on the permanent diaconate: www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/diaconate/faqs.cfm

SHOULD I BECOME A DEACON A CALL FOR VOCATIONS



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**FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
BLACK CATHOLIC DEACONS (NABCD)**