

LITURGICAL ROLE OF A DEACON

The Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Background

The last two decades of the 20th Century saw the rediscovery of the baptismal Ministry of the Whole People of God. A balance of ministries (Bishop, Presbyter, Deacon and Laity) is necessary to the healthy functioning of the Church. While each ministry is unique, it is in working together in mutual support and respect that the work of the Church is accomplished.

The Orders of the Church (Bishop, Priest and Deacon) exist as signs of her nature, life and mission. The Diaconate is the sign of Christ's servanthood within the life and mission of the Church. It does not deprive the people of God of their ministry of service to others, but rather spotlights that ministry, holds up the life of servanthood, and encourages service to happen. It is on the basis of these roots and traditions that the Diaconate is being revitalized, renewed, and reaffirmed.

Guidelines on the Liturgical Role of a Deacon

The following guidelines pertain to the distinctive liturgical ministry of **a person ordained to the Order of Deacon:**

When a Deacon is present at a Parish, Regional or Diocesan celebration of the **Holy Eucharist**, the Deacon:

- Shall read the Gospel ¹
- May lead in the Intercession or Prayers of the People, or work with those who are to lead the Prayers of the People, bringing to their attention the needs, concerns and hopes of the world. ²
- Shall prepare the Table for the Great Thanksgiving. ³
- May assist the Presider, if requested, during the Eucharistic Prayer by uncovering the Elements for the Words of Institution, and elevating the chalice as the Presider elevates the bread at the conclusion of the prayer.
- May assist with the distribution of the Sacrament or tend to those who do.
- Shall do the Ablutions following the Communion of the people or at the conclusion of the Liturgy. This shall normally be done at the Altar, Credence Table or in the Sacristy.
- Shall dismiss the people for their service in the world. ⁴
- Shall take the Sacrament to the sick and shut-in immediately following the Liturgy. In situations where Lay people are authorized for this ministry, a Deacon may co-ordinate this. ⁵

In the absence of a Deacon, the above shall be performed by a Priest.

Holy Baptism

At the discretion of the Presider, a Deacon may conduct the water rite. ⁶

In the absence of a Bishop or a Priest, a Deacon may preside at a public Baptism. ⁷

Marriage

If licensed to do so, a Deacon may celebrate a Marriage, "provided the nuptial blessing and the blessing of the ring(s) are appropriately changed" ⁸.

The Service of Light

If present, the Deacon shall conduct the Service of Light, and it is appropriate that a Lay Reader, if present, be the Officiant at the Divine Office. ⁹

The Liturgy of the Palms

If a Bishop or Priest is not present, a Deacon (or Lay Person) may be the Officiant at the Liturgy of the Palms, but if a Bishop or Priest is present, it is the prerogative of the Deacon, to read the Gospel for the Liturgy. ¹⁰

The Good Friday Liturgy

If present, a Deacons shall lead in the **Solemn Intercessions**, otherwise another person appointed shall do so. ¹¹

The Easter Vigil

It is the prerogative of the Deacon to carry the Paschal Candle to its place, and to chant the Exsultet, and to assist at Baptism and the Holy Eucharist according to Order. If there is no Deacon present, the Presider, or another Priest or a Lay Person may carry the Paschal Candle to its place and chant the Exsultet. ¹²

If there is a Baptism, the Deacon leads the procession to the Font, carrying the Paschal Candle. At the Blessing of Baptismal Water, the Deacon shall pour water into the Font. If no Deacon is present, the Presider, Assisting Minister, or Lay Person may lead the procession.

When a Bishop or Priest is not available, a Deacon or Lay Person may lead in the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word, Renewal of Baptismal Vows, and the Ministry of the Word at the Eucharist, ending with the Prayers of the People, the Lord's Prayer and the Dismissal.

THESE GUIDELINES ARE TO BE OBSERVED WITHIN THE PARISH, THE REGIONS AND THE DIOCESE. IN THE ABSENCE OF A DEACON, THE FOREGOING SHALL NORMALLY BY PERFORMED BY A PRIEST.

¹ - Book of Common Prayer (162) pages 71 & 643; Book of Alternative Services pages 163 & 643

² - Book of Common Prayer (1962) page 75: owe of the Ministers; Book of Alternative Services page 190

³ - Book of Alternative Services pages 192, 643; also the Tradition of the Church

⁴ - Book of Alternative Services pages 215, 249, 666; also the Tradition of the Church

⁵ - Book of Alternative Services page 257

⁶ - Book of Alternative Services page 160

⁷ - Book of Common Prayer (1962) page 641; Book of Alternative Services page 163

⁸ - Book of Alternative Services page 527

⁹ - Book of Alternative Services page 61

¹⁰ - Book of Alternative Services page 299

¹¹ - Book of Alternative Services page 309

¹² - Book of Alternative Services pages 321, 322, 323, 334

A Priest's Handbook, the Ceremonies of the Church. Second Edition, by Dennis G. Michno, page 205.