



JUBILEE OF DEACONS

22nd – 23rd February 2025

The Jubilee of Deacons has a theme: 'Deacons: Joyful Witnesses of Hope', reminding us that Deacons help bring the hope and love of Christ to a world which has lost hope.

PRAYER FOR DEACONS

Mary, who as teacher of faith, by your obedience to the word of God, has co-operated in a remarkable way with the work of redemption, make the ministry of deacons effective by teaching them to hear the Word and to proclaim it faithfully.

Mary, teacher of charity, who by your total openness to God's call, has co-operated in bringing to birth all the Church's faithful, make the ministry and the life of deacons fruitful by teaching them to give themselves totally to the service of the People of God.

Mary, teacher of prayer, who through your maternal intercession has supported and helped the Church from her beginnings, make deacons always attentive to the needs of the faithful by teaching them to come to know the value of prayer.

Mary, teacher of humility, by constantly knowing yourself to be the servant of the Lord you were filled with the Holy Spirit, make deacons docile instruments in Christ's work of redemption by teaching them the greatness of being the least of all.

Mary, teacher of that service which is hidden, who by your everyday and ordinary life filled with love, knew how to co-operate with the salvific plan of God in an exemplary fashion, make deacons good and faithful servants, by teaching them the joy of serving the Church with an ardent love. **Amen.**

The Ministry of Diaconate

The origins of the ministry of Deacon can be traced back to the days of the New Testament, and were well-established early in the life of the Church. From the earliest decades, ordination by the laying on of hands was conferred on deacons, presbyters and bishops, these orders being three grades of one sacrament of Holy Orders. Over the years, however, as the priesthood grew in prominence, the diaconate declined.

Eventually, in the Latin Church, the diaconate became a mere formality on the path to priesthood. After Vatican II the diaconate was restored as a permanent order and is open to both married and single men.

Ordained to be Ministers of the Gospel, deacons are called to evangelise, to spread the good news of God's saving love, to introduce the entire world to Christ, the Word of God.

Through baptism, all the faithful are called to be evangelists. All are anointed with Christ's Spirit of true servanthood, supremely witnessed by Christ, the original and true deacon. Commissioned by the Father, the Son of God humbled himself, becoming the greatest through the self-emptying gift of himself in service to the people beloved by God.

By virtue of their ordination, deacons are called to give expression to the mystery of Christ's loving gift of himself to the Father for the sake of the world.

The Church's deepest nature, reflected in the integrated, threefold exercise of Word, Sacrament, and Charity (LG 29; Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* 25), is 'sacramentalised' by the ministry of the deacon (Pope John Paul II, 'The Heart of the Diaconate: Servants of the Mysteries of Christ and Servants of Your Brothers and Sisters,' 19 September 1987).

Cardinal Walter Kasper has pointed out that one challenge for the Church after Vatican II has been to emphasise once again that the deacon is the bishop's right-hand man, with a distinct ministry. Such a ministry is primarily directed toward diocesan-wide ministry and groups or special needs within a deanery or parish. His task is to animate the mission of the diocese in collaboration with the bishop.

What do Permanent Deacons Do?

The first responsibility of the deacon is to be an effective visible sign of Christ who came to serve rather than to be served. The deacon is called to be an icon of Christ the servant. The areas of ministry which may be entrusted to deacons fall under three general headings, Charity, Word and Altar:

Charity

- Facilitating the development of lay ministry
- Visiting the sick
- Visiting prisoners
- Visiting the bereaved
- Youth ministry, and the facilitation of peer-ministry among young people
- Promoting awareness of the social teaching of the Church
- The promotion of justice and human rights

Word

- Proclaiming the Gospel at the Liturgy
- Preaching the homily
- Participating in sacramental preparation programmes
- The formation of Ministers of the Word
- Facilitating study of, and prayer with, the scriptures

Altar

- Assisting the priest at the celebration of the Eucharist
- Bringing the Eucharist to the sick at home and in hospitals
- The formation of altar servers and Ministers of the Eucharist
- Presiding at Exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
- The celebration of Baptism
- Celebrating marriages (with the appropriate delegation)
- Presiding at funerals

The Deacon is called to minister in close co-operation with priests and with members of the lay faithful who are entrusted with various ministries.

Collaborative ministry is already a reality in very many parishes, especially with the development of parish pastoral councils, baptism teams, bereavement support groups etc. Deacons are not intended to replace lay ministers. On the contrary, they are called to play a key role in the development and co-ordination of lay ministry. Neither are deacons intended to be 'mini-priests,' making up for a shortage of priestly vocations.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

That faithful men may come forward to be formed and ordained as deacons and bring hope to people both inside and outside of the Church.

Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

That deacons may serve well the ministries of the word, the altar and charity which are inseparably joined together as one in the service of God's redemptive plan.

Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**