



INSTITUTE FOR DIACONAL STUDIES ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Ministry of Liturgy

VI. The Church's Ministry of Liturgy: The Deacon as Sanctifier

33. For the deacon, as for all members of the Church, the liturgy is "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church's power flows."³² For the Church gathered at worship, moreover, the ministry of the deacon is a visible, grace-filled sign of the integral connection between sharing at the Lord's Eucharistic table and serving the many hungers felt so keenly by all God's children. In the deacon's liturgical ministry, as in a mirror, the Church sees a reflection of her own diaconal character and is reminded of her mission to serve as Jesus did. 34. In the context of the Church's public worship, because of its centrality in the life of the believing community, the ministry of the deacon in the threefold diakonia of the word, of the liturgy, and of charity is uniquely concentrated and integrated. "The diaconate is conferred through a special outpouring of the Spirit (*ordination*), which brings about in the one who receives it a specific conformation to Christ, Lord and servant of all."³³ "Strengthened by sacramental grace, they are dedicated to the people of God, in conjunction with the bishop and his body of priests, in a service of the liturgy of the word and of charity."³⁴ 35. During the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, the deacon participates in specific penitential rites as designated in the *Roman Missal*. He properly proclaims the Gospel. He may preach the homily in accord with the provisions of Canon Law. He voices the needs of the people in the General Intercessions, needs with which he should have a particular and personal familiarity from the circumstances of his ministry of charity. The deacon assists the preside and other ministers in accepting the offerings of the people – symbolic of his traditional role in receiving and distributing the resources of the community among those in need – and he helps to prepare the gifts for sacrifice. During the celebration he helps the faithful participate more fully, consciously, in the Eucharistic sacrifice,³⁵ may extend the invitation of peace, and serves as an ordinary minister of Communion. Deacons have a special responsibility for the distribution of the cup. Finally, he dismisses the community at the end of the eucharistic liturgy. Other liturgical roles for which the deacon is authorized include those of solemnly baptizing, witnessing marriages, bringing *viaticum* to the dying, and presiding over funerals and burials. The deacon can preside at the liturgies of the word and communion services in the absence of a priest. He may officiate at celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours and at exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. He can conduct public rites of blessing, offer prayer services for the sick and dying, and administer the Church's sacramentals, as designated in the *Book of Blessings*.³⁶ In the Eastern Catholic Churches, the liturgical ministries of deacons are prescribed by the legislative authority of each particular Church.



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