

The Deacon in the Worshipping Community

by

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*Dedicated to Deacon Ormonde Plater (1933-2016)
Role model for the diaconate and great liturgist*

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The Deacon in the Worshipping Community

Introduction

The liturgical role is not peripheral to the ministry of the deacon: it is essential. It has been said that “diaconal spirituality originates in the liturgy and points to service in the world.”¹ Yet recently-ordained deacons, and often their priests as well, may be unsure or confused about what they should do in worship. Some parishes are unaware that deacons have a role in the liturgy and may be reluctant to accommodate it – for example, lay people may have read the Gospel in the past (though liturgically they shouldn’t!) and the parish resists allowing the deacon to now do so.

This study describes the diaconal role in the liturgy and the vestments that may be worn. We assume the normal pattern of deacons assisting priests in parishes (and bishops in episcopal liturgies) and so we emphasize the deacon’s role in the Eucharist. We realize, however, that some deacons may find themselves in more isolated situations, presiding at Morning or Evening Prayer, other liturgies of the Word, or, on occasion, communion from the reserved sacrament.

We also assume use of *The Book of Alternative Services* in worship, and so our references will be from that book (and from the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church in the United States). The traditional Canadian *Book of Common Prayer* (1959/ 1962) makes few references to the order of deacons and omits most diaconal functions from the Eucharist altogether. Deacons taking part in Prayer Book services may adapt suggestions in this study as best they can.

Finally, although this study is intended primarily for Anglicans/Episcopalians, we give many references to and comparisons with the diaconate in the Roman Catholic Church, for three reasons:

- (1) The liturgical role and vestments of the deacon in the two traditions are very similar and have identical origins;
- (2) The Anglican Communion owes its revival of the vocational diaconate in large part to the sterling example of the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI; and
- (3) The Anglican Diocese of Qu’Appelle, home of the author, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina entered into a covenantal relationship in 2011. As part of that covenant, and with the support of the two bishops, the deacons of the two dioceses meet and work together.

This study suggests some “best practices” in both liturgy and vestments, without being prescriptive or rigorous. It takes its examples from St. Paul’s Cathedral, Regina (Diocese of Qu’Appelle), which has had a deacon since 1977 and two deacons since 2001. For a full explanation of the diaconal role in Anglican liturgies, see *Deacons in the Liturgy* by a leading Episcopal deacon, the late Ormonde Plater (New York: Church Publishing, 2009). While this book goes into more detail than many deacons will need, it provides all kinds of helpful advice and, as Deacon Susanne Watson Epting says in her Foreword, “points toward the liturgy through a diaconal lens.”²

Roman Catholic equivalents are *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons* by Michael Kwatera, OSB (Liturgical Press, 2005), *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy* by Frederick C. Bauerschmidt (Liturgical Press, 2016), and *The Deacon at Mass: A Theological and Pastoral Guide* by William T. Ditewig (Paulist Press, 2013). While, says Deacon Ditewig, it is “important to know *what* a deacon does at Mass, it is even more important to understand *why* the deacon does it.”³

¹ Stephen F. Miletic, “The Mystery of Jesus as Deacon,” in James Keating, ed., *The Character of the Deacon: Spiritual and Pastoral Foundations* (New York: Paulist Press, 2017), 37.

² *Deacons in the Liturgy*, Second Edition, x.

³ *The Deacon at Mass*, Second Edition, 1.

Chapter 1 The Liturgical Role of the Deacon

Obviously, liturgical customs vary considerably from parish to parish and from diocese to diocese. Liturgies range from the basic and simple to the elaborate and detailed. Some churches, like St. Paul's Cathedral in Regina, enjoy the ministry of children and young people as servers; others may have adult servers or none at all. St. Paul's has sub-deacons to assist the deacons; most parishes do not. In the Anglican tradition, there are few, if any, fixed liturgical rules. In the Roman Catholic Church, by contrast, there are international liturgical norms for rites, vestments, ornaments, posture and gesture.⁴ It is important to keep in mind that there are not "right and wrong ways" in liturgy; there are, rather, recommended ways and varying customs. We should avoid fussiness and stress. The purpose of liturgy is for the community to worship God. We want to do this with joy, dignity and sincerity.

Much liturgical practice will depend on the constraints or opportunities in a particular church building. Some chancels/sanctuaries are small, limiting options for the ministers of the service. Movements such as Gospel processions are dictated by the space available. Sometimes furnishings are moveable; all too often, however, Anglican churches are encumbered by fixed pews, prayer desks and other paraphernalia. At St. Paul's Cathedral, we are fortunate that, over a thirty-year period of evolution, a typically crowded, century-old Anglican chancel was cleared of its prayers desks, choir stalls, communion rails (now moveable), organ and fixed eastward altar, leaving flexible furnishings and open space which we can adapt to the needs of each liturgy. We commend the experience to those who are contemplating church renovations!

The Deacon in the Eucharist

The roles in **bold** and subsequently marked *** are the ones which the deacon, when present, should *always* fulfil. The others are recommended but are optional according to local custom. The deacon...

- Carries the Book of Gospels in the entrance procession.
- **Proclaims the Gospel.**
- Sometimes introduces and concludes the Prayers of the People.
- Sometimes leads the Prayers of the People.
- Gives the invitation to confession.
- At the Peace, invites those present to exchange a sign of peace.
- **Prepares the table at the offertory.**
- Turns pages in the altar book for the presider.
- Raises the cup at the doxology.
- Raises the cup at the invitation to communion.
- Assists in the administration of communion.
- Supervises ablutions.
- Makes closing announcements.
- **Gives the Dismissal.**

Note that the deacon plays an *assisting* or *collaborative* role for the presiding celebrant, whether bishop or priest. Deacons do not normally preside. Deacon and presider function as a team. Indeed, Father Michael Kwatera writes of "the flying duo in the liturgy" in the "complementary ministries of the priest and deacon [...] As deacons minister within the liturgy, they are a clear sign that the liturgy

⁴ See *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Canadian edition (Ottawa: Publications Service, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011).

does not belong to the presiding priest alone.”⁵ Deacon Frederick Bauerschmidt refers to the ancient tradition of “the deacon’s important but subordinate role in the liturgy,” which means that the deacon “is at the service of the presider and the assembly as they put themselves at the service of God.”⁶

It has been well said that

*“we don’t ordain deacons so as to have ‘trained people’ to cover off certain parts of the liturgy. On the contrary, deacons are ordained because they are gifted exemplars of the calling we all share to be servants, heralds and agents of Christ’s vision for the world. The roles we assign deacons in the liturgy are meant as a powerful reminder to the church of our ‘diaconal’ calling.”*⁷

The Entrance Rite

The deacon immediately precedes the presiding celebrant (whether priest or bishop) in procession (another custom is for the deacon to process on the presider’s right if not carrying a Book of Gospels). If the parish has a Book of Gospels⁸ – which is recommended – the deacon carries this in the entrance procession (but *not* at the departure at the end of the service). Why does the deacon do this? “A Deacon carries the Gospel Book in procession – a sign that God is amongst us, and is about to speak a word to our current reality.”⁹

At the entrance, the deacon is advised by Deacon Bauerschmidt to carry Book of Gospels “just above the eyes” so that it “makes the book visible to the assembly without the gesture being ostentatiously gratuitous.” He adds, “It also has the practical benefit of allowing him to see where he is going.” (!)¹⁰ The ministers acknowledge the altar according to the parish’s custom and the deacon places the Book of Gospels on the altar. Henceforth the deacon sits or stands to the presider’s right for the prayers, *Gloria*, readings, sermon, creed and Prayers of the People. In some cases, the presider leads the Liturgy of the Word from the altar, but preferably, and where space and furniture permit, this should be done elsewhere in the chancel.

******Proclaiming the Gospel***

This is the focal point of the Liturgy of the Word and the single most important act performed by the deacon in the Eucharist. Accordingly, in most parishes the Gospel reading is accompanied by some form of ceremonial, ranging from a simple move by the deacon to the place of the reading, to an elaborate Gospel procession with servers and incense. Regardless, the proclaiming of the Gospel should be done with care and be the focus of attention of the assembly.¹¹

⁵ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 14-15.

⁶ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 19.

⁷ Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, Worshipping with The Association of Anglican Deacons in Canada, on the occasion of AADC’s Triennial Conference, July 30, 2017, 4.

⁸ This is a large, specially-bound volume containing the gospel readings for all three years of the liturgical cycle, *The Gospels, Revised Common Lectionary*.

⁹ Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 2.

¹⁰ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 33.

¹¹ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* makes this clear: “The reading of the Gospel constitutes the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches the great reverence that is to be shown to this reading by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honour” (25, no. 60).

i. *Who reads the Gospel?*

If a deacon is present among the ministers of the service, that person *always* reads the Gospel. “In this way, deacons share in the heralding ministry of the angels, which is to bring glad tidings.”¹² *The Book of Alternative Services* is specific: it is “the function of a deacon to read the Gospel” (p. 183). The Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* says “A deacon should read the Gospel” (p. 354).

What happens if, as is often the case, no deacon is available? The *BAS* does not address this, only noting that “lay persons should normally be assigned the readings which precede the Gospel” (p. 183). However, the Episcopal book states that “the Deacon or a Priest reads the Gospel” (p. 357). The generally accepted custom, according to Ormonde Plater, is that “in the absence of a deacon functioning liturgically, the presider or an assisting priest reads the gospel.”¹³

Michael Kwatera, writing from the Roman Catholic perspective, is categorical:

*Only a deacon (or in his absence, a priest) may read the gospel; the deacon (not the priest or a special homilist) is the “first choice” doing so. This special diaconal role is very ancient; St. Jerome witnesses to this practice late in the fourth century, and from the time of Gregory the Great (d.604), deacons read only the gospel lesson at the Eucharist.*¹⁴

Roman Catholic deacon James Keating gives a contemporary view:

*It is the deacon who, even if in the presence of the Pope, is charged to proclaim the gospel during the eucharistic liturgy. This is his irreplaceable liturgical role and hence a key to his identity and mission: his voice must be one with the gospel.*¹⁵

Deacon William Ditewig lists the order of preference for the Gospel reader as first, a deacon, then an assisting priest, and finally, and only in the absence of these ministers, the presiding celebrant.¹⁶ It is not the custom in either the Anglican or the Roman Catholic tradition for lay people to read the Gospel.

ii. *Where does the reading take place?*

The Gospel should be proclaimed from a prominent location in the church. According to *The Book of Alternative Services*, “It is desirable that the readings be read from a lectern or pulpit, and that the Gospel be read from the same lectern or pulpit, or in the midst of the congregation” (p. 183). The lectern (or, in the Roman Catholic tradition, the “ambo”) is an appropriate place for proclaiming the Gospel – and then giving the homily. “Preaching from the ambo, as the place from which the Word has been proclaimed,” says Deacon Bauerschmidt, “shows the homily’s integral connection to the readings.”¹⁷

¹² Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 4.

¹³ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 8.

¹⁴ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 35-36.

¹⁵ James Keating, *The Heart of the Diaconate: Communion with the Servant Mysteries of Christ* (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 47.

¹⁶ *The Deacon at Mass*, 55. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says that the Gospel is to be read “by the Deacon, or, in his absence, by another priest. If, however, a Deacon or another Priest is not present, the Priest Celebrant himself should read the Gospel” (25, no. 59).

¹⁷ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 38.

The custom, introduced in the Episcopal Church in the 1950s, of processing down the centre aisle of the nave to read the Gospel should be discouraged. It interrupts the flow of the liturgy. As a Roman Catholic cardinal has said, “It is better not to read from the middle of the community because the word comes to us from elsewhere. It is proclaimed; it does not simply arise out of the community.”¹⁸ Episcopal Deacon Ormonde Plater pointed out that if we want the gospeller to be heard and seen, half-way down the nave aisle is the worst possible location! (Admittedly, wireless microphones, if available, resolve the sound problem.)¹⁹ At St. Paul’s Cathedral, we normally proclaim the Gospel, using a wireless microphone, from the top of the chancel steps; at most services, a sub-deacon holds the book during the reading.

iii *Blessing the Gospel reader*

It is customary for the deacon as Gospel reader to receive a blessing from the presiding priest (or the bishop, if present). The deacon bows before the presider and asks for a blessing. Ormonde Plater²⁰ recommended that the presider, making the sign of the cross or laying one or both hands on the deacon’s head, give one of the two following blessings:

*The Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may worthily proclaim his gospel:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*
(from the Roman missal)

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you as you bring good news to the poor.
(paraphrase of Luke 4: 18)

iv *The Gospel Procession.*

The deacon then moves to the altar and takes the Book of Gospels. The most common practice is for two servers bearing processional candles to lead the deacon, carrying the Book of Gospels (preceded by the person who is to hold the book, if such is the case), to the place of proclamation, during a hymn. According to Deacon Plater, “traditionally, a cross is not carried in the procession, since in this proclamation the gospel book is the primary symbol of Christ.”²¹ In some churches there is a practice of singing the final verse of the hymn *after* the Gospel, allowing the procession to return and the preacher to move to where the sermon is delivered. However, this practice is not recommended: nothing should separate the Gospel reading from the homily “so that the preaching would be related directly to the Scripture.”²²

v *Proclaiming the Gospel.*

After placing the Book of Gospels on the lectern/ambo or in the hands of the assistant, the deacon says or sings the Gospel acclamation, “The Lord be with you,” with hands extended. After the response, the deacon says or sings the announcement, “The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

¹⁸ Cardinal Godfried Daneels, “Liturgy Forty Years After the Second Vatican Council,” in Keith Pecklers, SJ, ed., *Liturgy in a Postmodern World* (London & New York: Continuum, 2003), 23.

¹⁹ For a contrary view, see Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service: “Normally, the deacon proclaims the gospel from the midst of the people, demonstrating Christ’s presence among us; and facing the entrance doors of the church, demonstrating that the word being proclaimed is not only the ‘good news’ for the church, but for those outside our doors.” (4)

²⁰ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 38.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² Patrick Malloy, 2011, analysis of article by Marion Hatchett in *Sewanee Theological Review*, 2008.
<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs039/1102067254998/archive/1105586716868.html>

according to ...,” “making a sign of the cross with the right thumb on the opening word of the gospel, forehead, lips, and breast.”²³ (If incense is used, the deacon censes the Book of Gospels at this point.) After the response, “Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ,” the deacon proclaims the Gospel, firmly, clearly, and with expression. The deacon may also *intone* the Gospel. The North American Association for the Diaconate published a booklet by Ormonde Plater which contains tones for the Gospel (and litanies and the Dismissal).²⁴ The Association for Episcopal Deacons provides music for a wide range of specific Gospel readings on its website.²⁵

After the Gospel reading, the deacon says or sings the closing acclamation, “The Gospel of Christ.” The custom in some churches is for the deacon to elevate the Book of Gospels at this point, but it is not necessary. (Another custom in some churches is for the deacon to kiss the opening word of the Gospel passage or, if the bishop is presiding, to bring the book to the bishop to kiss.) Then, closing the book, the deacon may leave it on the lectern/ambo, carry it back to the altar or a side table, or hand it to the assistant to do so.



Proclaiming the Gospel at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Regina, September 2016.

Intercessions/Prayers of the People

*As those whose ministry brings them into close contact with the needs, concerns and hopes of the world, it is especially fitting that deacons should bring before the community the things they have encountered, and bid the community’s prayers. For this reason it is fitting in any liturgy for the deacon to bid the Prayers of the People, and to be responsible for teaching and assisting those who write and lead the prayers.*²⁶

What is the deacon’s role in intercessions? *The Book of Alternative Services* stipulates that deacons or lay people lead the Prayers of the People (pp. 183, 190). Ormonde Plater stated that “a deacon is the ordinary leader of the biddings inviting the people to pray for those in need.” “By leading or participating in leading these prayers,” he said, “deacons fulfill their ordination role as those who interpret to the church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.” He observed that “although deacons are the preferred leaders, it is common for other baptized persons to lead the prayers.”²⁷

²³ Plater, *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 39.

²⁴ North American Association for the Diaconate: *Music and Deacons* (Monograph Series No. 8), 1995.

²⁵ <http://www.episcopaldeacons.org/liturgical-resources-for-deacons.html> Follow the link →chant the gospel.

²⁶ Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 6-7.

²⁷ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 9, 41.

According to Michael Kwatera, in the Roman Catholic rite “the deacon’s ministry inside and outside the liturgy makes him the logical minister to lead these prayers,”²⁸ and he assumes that the deacon will normally do so. In *Preparing the General Intercessions*, Father Kwatera says that the composing of the prayers “belongs to the faithful as well, and especially to the deacon [...] the pre-eminent minister to prepare and speak the intentions.” He notes that “by the end of the fourth century the deacon made the invitation to prayer and spoke the petitions of the litany.”²⁹ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* specifies that the Prayers of the Faithful “are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful.”³⁰

In practice, in both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic traditions the role of the deacon as intercessor is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. It is important, however, that deacons at times lead or participate in the Prayers of the People. There are several ways that this can be done: the deacon takes his or her turn in the roster of intercessors; the deacon introduces and concludes the biddings given by a lay intercessor; the deacon and a lay person alternate biddings; the deacon prepares the intercessions or leads a group preparing them.

At St. Paul’s Cathedral, the deacons are responsible for the intercessions: they may draft and lead the intercessions themselves; or they may draft them and ask a lay person to read them; or they may ask a lay person to draft and read the intercessions. At Solemn Eucharists and other special occasions, the deacon and a sub-deacon or other lay leader may share the intercessions. The deacon begins with a call to prayer; the other leader continues with brief intentions relevant to the occasion (the concerns of the world and the community, the sick and those in need, those who have asked us to pray for them), but *without* responses from the congregation; the deacon then says or sings a litany with congregational responses and concludes with a collect. A sung litany is effective: simple music is found in *The Book of Alternative Services* (pp. 915-917).

The Prayers of the People are a vital part of the liturgy and it is important that they be carefully prepared and delivered, meaningful, relevant, but not wordy or preachy. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the issue, but deacons can play a role by mentoring and instructing intercessors, leading by example, and preparing intercessions. Ormonde Plater provided thoughtful and helpful insights into the Prayers of the People, both in *Deacons in the Liturgy*, pp. 41-46, and in a book devoted to the subject: *Intercession: A Theological and Practical Guide*.³¹

Confession and the Peace

After the intercessions, the deacon may give the invitation to confession and begin the confession, if the presider so wishes, although the *Book of Alternative Services* assigns this role to the celebrant (p. 191). In the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, “the Deacon or Celebrant says Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor” (p. 360). In the Anglican and Roman Catholic rites, the presiding celebrant gives the greeting for the Peace: “The peace of the Lord be always with you” (in the Anglican rite this comes just before the offertory; in the Roman rite it comes after the Great Thanksgiving, before Communion). In the Roman rite, the deacon invites the people to share the Peace: “Let us offer each other the sign of peace.” Deacon Ormonde Plater recommended the same practice for Anglican/Episcopal deacons, using “offer one another a sign of peace” or a similar phrase.³² This is helpful when there are a lot of visitors or at weddings, funerals and baptisms.

²⁸ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 42.

²⁹ Michael Kwatera, *Preparing the General Intercessions* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 5, 7-8.

³⁰ 28, no. 71.

³¹ Boston: Cowley Publications, 1995.

³² *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 47.

******The Preparation of the Table and of the Gifts***

Like the Gospel reading, the preparation of the table at the offertory is clearly the prerogative of the deacon. *The Book of Alternative Services* states that “it is the function of a deacon [...] to make ready the table for the celebration, preparing and placing upon it the bread and cup of wine” (p. 183).

At the preparation of the gifts, “representatives of the people may present the gifts of bread and wine for the eucharist [...] to the deacon or celebrant before the altar” (p. 192). After the Peace, the deacon stands at the table, assisted, depending on local custom, by a sub-deacon and/or servers, while the presiding celebrant moves to the side.

Ormonde Plater specified four steps in the preparation of the table and gifts:³³

i *The deacon prepares the table.* The deacon first ensures that the altar book is in the appropriate place on the altar. He or she then receives chalice, purificator and paten (with priest’s host), pall and corporal, from the servers (some parishes use the traditional burse and veil, the former containing the linens, the latter covering the vessels). The deacon spreads the corporal on the altar, leaving the chalice and paten to the side. Both *The Book of Alternative Services* (p. 184) and the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer* (p. 407) recommend that there be only one chalice on the altar. Cruets or a flagon of wine may be used if required to fill additional chalices at the communion.

ii *The deacon receives the gifts.* In many parishes, representatives of the congregation bring forward the bread, wine and water in an “offertory procession.” (In some parishes, the water is not brought forward and is simply provided by a server.) The deacon (and an assistant) may receive the gifts directly in front of the altar (this is implied by the *BAS*, “before the altar”). The gifts may also be received by servers. If there is not an offertory procession, servers may bring the gifts from the credence table to the deacon. And if there are no servers, the deacon brings the elements to the altar.

iii *The deacon prepares the gifts.* The deacon, perhaps assisted by a sub-deacon or server with a bread-box, first adds or subtracts wafers as required to or from the ciborium, ensuring that there is a priest’s host on the paten. The deacon then pours wine from the wine cruet into the (single) chalice. (At St. Paul’s, we usually have a small wine cruet to be used for a second chalice and, at major services, a large cruet or flagon for filling additional chalices.) The sub-deacon or a second deacon, or in their absence the deacon, adds a little water to the chalice (there is no need to add water to the cruet). There is a custom in some churches for the deacon to bless the water; Ormonde Plater recommended against it, although he suggested a prayer the deacon may say quietly.

iv *The deacon places the gifts.* The deacon now places the gifts on the corporal. The ciborium goes on the left and the chalice on the right, covered with the pall. At St. Paul’s Cathedral, we place the small wine cruet next to them and the paten (with priest’s host) in front of them, close to the celebrant. The collection is then brought forward, received by a server in the alms basin, and placed at the end of the altar. (Customs will vary according to the parish and the preferences of the presiding celebrant.)

³³ Ibid., 49-54.



The Offertory: At St. Paul's Cathedral on All Saints' Day, 2011, Deacon Michael Jackson prepares the gifts (step iii), pouring wine into the chalice, assisted by Sub-Deacon Jan Besse, who adds water. Then the deacon will then place the vessels on the corporal (step iv). The presiding celebrant, Dean Michael Sinclair, remains at his place until the table is ready.

At Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria, "it is the Deacon who prays over the gifts of bread, wine and money. This is because these gifts are given, all of them, for the mending of the world – and it is the Deacon above all whose ministry is to ensure that we steward the gifts we bring for the sake of those in need."³⁴ The deacon says the following, taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 2006*:

Deacon O God, we give you thanks
 that you have set before us this feast,
 the body and blood of your Son.
 By your Spirit strengthen us to serve all in need
 and to give ourselves away as bread for the hungry,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

People **Amen.**

After the gifts are ready, the deacon steps aside to the right, indicating to the presider that the altar is now prepared. The presider moves to the centre of the altar, having received the lavabo from a server. (If incense is used, the censuring of the altar and gifts takes place just before the lavabo.)

The Great Thanksgiving

The deacon assumes his or her normal place to the right of the presider. The deacon (and at St. Paul's, the sub-deacon on the presider's left) should turn slightly towards the presider and not directly face the congregation. For the role of the deacon is to focus on and assist the presider, freeing that person to preside without being concerned about logistical details. The deacon always follows the presider's lead in posture and gesture. When the presider bows or makes the sign of the cross, the deacon does so too.

³⁴ Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 6.

The deacon may be asked to turn the pages of the altar book for the presider, having ensured in advance that the pages are marked for the propers of the day, the preface (and its music when used), and the eucharistic prayer. Although often presiders place the book to their left (in fact, Ormonde Plater specified this³⁵), at St. Paul's we deliberately place the book to the presider's *right* so that the deacon can easily turn the pages. On the other hand, if the presider prefers the book to the left, the deacon can move to that side; as Michael Kwatera says, "a deacon is not glued to one spot; he should move anywhere there is need for his assistance."³⁶

After the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, at St. Paul's the deacon removes the pall from the chalice and stopper from the wine cruet, while the sub-deacon removes the lid from the ciborium (parishes will adapt their own practices to the vessels they are using and the people at the altar). During the eucharistic prayer, the deacon makes a profound bow at the words of institution of the bread and the wine. According to the presider's preference, the deacon may raise the chalice at the final doxology while the priest raises the bread. During the *Our Father* (said or sung), it is customary in many churches for the ministers at the altar to extend their hands, palms upwards, in the traditional gesture of prayer (*orans*). After the breaking of the bread and the accompanying sentences, the presider gives the invitation to communion: "The gifts of God for the People of God." At this point, the deacon raises the chalice³⁷ while the priest raises the paten or ciborium. As Frederick Bauerschmidt wittily puts it, the deacon "ought to hold the chalice in two hands, so as not to look as if he is offering a toast." (!)³⁸



***The Invitation to Communion:* the deacon raises the chalice, the presider the paten, and the sub-deacon the ciborium.**

Administration of Communion

After the invitation to communion, the deacon, where required, divides the consecrated wafers between the ciboria or patens and pours consecrated wine from cruet or flagon into additional chalices. The vessels are then given to the communion ministers. A long-standing custom has been that the ministers at the altar receive communion first, then administer it to the faithful – indeed, the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*, like the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, specifies this.

³⁵ Ibid., 54.

³⁶ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 45.

³⁷ "As the chief 'wine steward' (another servant image), the Deacon shares in the elevation/presentation of the sacramental gifts." (Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 9)

³⁸ *The Deacon's Ministry of the Liturgy*, 43.

However, at St. Paul's, the ministers receive communion with or after the congregation. This avoids a distinction between the clergy's communion and the laity's communion; as Episcopal liturgist Marion Hatchett said, "the "Church is *one* Body taking part in *one* Communion in the *one* Lord."³⁹ Deacons are traditionally ministers of the cup. Although it is often customary for the priest to administer the bread, at St. Paul's lay ministers usually do so, for the practical reason that wafers are easier to administer to the communicant than a chalice; the priest and deacon administer the wine.

We normally administer communion from two stations on the floor at the front of the nave; this avoids the awkward logistics, and difficulty for the elderly or disabled, of climbing steps into the chancel. Many parishes, however, retain the traditional practice of administering communion to the people kneeling or standing at the communion rail in the chancel. *Intinction* – the practice of dipping the wafer in the wine – is not authorized in our diocese for health reasons. The deacon may have to tactfully ask communicants to refrain from intinction if they try to do so (they may instead be invited to touch the base of the chalice during the words of administration).

Ablutions

After communion, the ministers return with the vessels and remaining elements. The deacon supervises the ablutions (cleansing of the vessels) which follow. Practices vary greatly from one parish to another, but the key is that ablutions should be discreet and unobtrusive. For this reason we recommend against doing them at the altar. At St. Paul's, the ministers gather after communion in the sacristy to consume the remaining elements (or reserve them in the aumbry) and cleanse the vessels. In some churches it may be practical to do ablutions at the credence table.⁴⁰

******Dismissal***

Like the proclamation of the Gospel and the preparation of the table, the Dismissal is one of the "must-do" functions of the deacon. Just as the presiding priest convenes the assembly at the beginning of the eucharistic celebration, so the deacon adjourns the assembly and sends its members into the world. This act again reflects the ministry of the deacon: "The Deacon 'un-gathers' the community in the same way that the priest gathers it. He or she leads the community back into a world very much in need of the every grace, courage, forgiveness, solace and wisdom we have received."⁴¹ "The deacon," says William Ditewig, "is the normal minister for the dismissal because it is the deacon who is the sacramental sign of the church's own diaconal nature in the world."⁴² According to *The Book of Alternative Services*, "the deacon, or other leader, dismisses the people" (p. 215). The *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer* specifies "the Deacon, or the Celebrant" (p. 366).

The deacon is seen in both the Anglican and Roman Catholic rites as an appropriate minister to make announcements, but this responsibility is often shared with the celebrant or lay persons. Announcements, if any, should be brief, useful, and not a repeat of the Sunday bulletin. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* puts this neatly: "the Deacon makes brief announcements to the people, if indeed any need to be made, unless the Priest prefers to do this himself."⁴³

³⁹ Patrick Malloy, 2011, analysis of article by Marion Hatchett in *Sewanee Theological Review*, 2008. <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs039/1102067254998/archive/1105586716868.html>

⁴⁰ *The Book of Alternative Services* stipulates that "any remaining consecrated bread and wine (unless reserved for the communion of persons not present) is consumed at the end of the distribution or immediately after the service. This is appropriately done at the credence table or in the sacristy." (184)

⁴¹ Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 10.

⁴² *The Deacon at Mass*, 91-92.

⁴³ 48, no. 184.

A blessing by the presiding celebrant is optional in the Canadian Anglican, Episcopal and Roman Catholic rites, but it is a frequent custom. Episcopal liturgical scholar Marion Hatchett considered a final blessing as redundant, “since every person would have just received Communion (the greatest blessing) or would have approached the Altar for a personal blessing.”⁴⁴ It is preferable that the Dismissal be given by the deacon immediately after the blessing (if there is one) as the second part of a single action, but sometimes they are separated by a hymn.

The Book of Alternative Services provides four recommended options for the Dismissal. The deacon may vary these or add brief introductory phrases for special occasions. During the fifty days of Easter, the deacon adds “alleluia, alleluia!” Note that the Dismissal may be sung; tones are found in the *Book of Alternative Services* (p. 924) and Ormonde Plater’s *Music and Deacons*. A hymn sometimes come next, with procession of the ministers and choir (if present). Ormonde Plater said that if a hymn precedes the Dismissal, “with all the liturgical ministers retiring to the front door, the deacon should still remain in front of the people or return to the front to give the dismissal.”⁴⁵ What should be avoided is the “disembodied voice” of the deacon, unseen at the back of the church.

Marion Hatchett, however, noted that his committee, in preparing the 1979 Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*,

*did not mention a closing or recessional hymn because it thought that the rite would be more effective without one. The Postcommunion prayers all suggest an immediate movement into the world. “Send us now into the world,” they say, and “now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do.” Then comes the dismissal, which, by definition, sends the Church forth. [...] The Eucharist sends us out, so the rite should reflect that.*⁴⁶

In other words, *the leaving should come immediately after the Dismissal without further words or songs*. A recommended sequence is: closing prayers, announcements (if any), closing hymn (optional), blessing (optional), Dismissal, and procession out (either to music or in silence).



The author gives the Dismissal at the end of the service. Server Gillian Engen is ready to help lead the procession of ministers immediately afterwards.

⁴⁴ Analysis by Patrick Malloy.

⁴⁵ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 61.

⁴⁶ Analysis by Patrick Malloy.

Communion from the Reserved Sacrament

i. Communion of the Sick/Shut-ins

Deacons are historically ministers of communion to the sick, visiting individuals at home or in hospital, although they are not the only ministers to do this. *The Book of Alternative Services* provides in “Ministry to the Sick” (pp. 551-558) for ministers, ordained or not (in the latter case, when authorized by the bishop), to bring the reserved sacrament to the sick person. Note that the *BAS* also permits the anointing of the sick to be done by “clergy [which of course includes deacons] and those lay persons who have received authorization by the diocesan bishop” (p. 555). The *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer* states that “in cases of necessity, a deacon or lay person may perform the anointing, using oil blessed by a bishop or priest” (p. 456).

The Book of Alternative Services, in “Communion under Special Circumstances For those not present at the celebration” (pp. 256-260), extends the practice to “those who because of work schedules or physical or other types of limitations cannot be present at a public celebration of the eucharist.” It notes that “Justin Martyr, in one of the earliest existing accounts of the Sunday eucharist, tells us that deacons left after the celebration to bring communion to the sick, to the imprisoned, and to those who for any reason were unable to be present at the community eucharist” (p. 256). The service “may be conducted by a priest, or by a deacon or lay person authorized by the diocesan bishop” (p. 257).⁴⁷

ii. Communion in Institutions

Deacons may be called upon to preside at services of communion from the reserved sacrament in care homes, hospitals and seniors’ residences. Deacons must take care to ensure that the liturgy does not give the appearance of a eucharistic celebration minus the words of institution. It should be made clear that the consecrated sacrament has been brought from a church where the Eucharist has been previously celebrated.

The Diocese of Qu’Appelle has issued *An Order for the Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament* in both BCP language and BAS language versions.⁴⁸ This simple, brief service form is flexible and adaptable to different circumstances. It provides for the gathering; one, two or three readings; a “short reflection by the leader;” Prayers of the People; confession and assurance of pardon; the Peace; distribution of Holy Communion from the reserved sacrament; and the closing.

In this rite, before the distribution of communion, the leader says:

The Church of Christ of which we are members has taken this bread and wine and given thanks according to the Lord’s command. We now share in the Communion of Jesus’ Body and Blood.

or

This Holy Communion was consecrated at the altar of (*name the Church*) and we share it with you as fellow members of the Body of Christ.

This clarifies the rationale and safeguards the integrity of the ministry of the reserved sacrament.

⁴⁷ The equivalent in the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer* is “Communion under Special Circumstances” (pp. 396-399) – “The Celebrant, whether priest or deacon...”

⁴⁸ Authorized by the Bishop for use in the Diocese of Qu’Appelle, October 2016.

iii. *Reserved Sacrament in a Church*

On occasion, deacons may preside at a service of the Word and Holy Communion from the reserved sacrament in a church. This, however, should only take place in certain circumstances. One example is when a priest is not available in a church where Sunday communion is the norm and people are reluctant to have a liturgy of the Word such as Morning Prayer as the main service. Another example is a mid-week service of Holy Communion, where Morning Prayer does not correspond to the expectations of those attending. Still another example is an isolated church where the sacraments are rarely celebrated.⁴⁹ Bishops are reluctant to authorize such services without good reason. The need to clarify and safeguard the integrity of the communion ministry applies here just as much here, if not more so, as to services in institutional settings.

The Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (pp. 408-409) makes provision for such a service and gives guidelines for the liturgy: “When the services of a priest cannot be obtained, the bishop may, at discretion, authorize a deacon to distribute Holy Communion to the congregation from the reserved Sacrament...” There is no similar provision in *The Book of Alternative Services*. However, soon after its introduction in 1985, the Anglican Church of Canada issued a form of service for such occasions.

Entitled *Public Distribution of Holy Communion by Deacons and Lay Persons*,⁵⁰ the form emphasizes that “the distribution of holy communion outside of the eucharist is not a substitute for a celebration of the eucharist [...] but it is an opportunity for the eucharist to reach into a context where the required conditions cannot, for the moment, be met.” It notes that “there should be a full celebration of the word [...] i.e., everything in the eucharistic rite down to the Prayers of the People...” (p. 3). The service carefully omits the Prayer over the Gifts, the Proper Preface, the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, and the Breaking of the Bread. The Peace is immediately followed by the placing of the Gifts on the holy table, the *Our Father*, the invitation to communion, and the distribution of communion.

Authors on liturgy offer varied perspectives on communion services with the reserved sacrament. Episcopal deacon Ormonde Plater dealt with it only briefly and reluctantly, decrying the erroneous term “deacon’s mass,” considering the service as “intended for use in an emergency,” and cautioning against its regular use.⁵¹ Roman Catholic writers are more accepting. Frederick Bauerschmidt, in “Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest,” outlines the appropriate form of service, referring to two documents issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.⁵² Michael Kwatera discusses “Holy Communion outside Mass” in some detail. He does not consider this to be in any way a “a poor substitute for the Mass” but a valid if temporary alternative, in the absence of a priest, for the “ideal form of Sunday worship.”⁵³

Services of the Word with communion from the reserved sacrament in churches can be spiritually meaningful and pastorally effective on condition that (a) the deacon presiding is trained and well prepared, (b) the exceptional nature of the liturgy is explained at the beginning of the service, and (c) the liturgy carefully follows the pattern given above. Communion from the reserved sacrament may thus be considered a legitimate form of diaconal ministry.

⁴⁹ Whereas communion in churches from the reserved sacrament is infrequent in the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church faces a different situation because of the shortage of priests in many locations. For the problems this poses for a eucharistic Church, see Keith F. Pecklers, SJ, *Worship: A Primer in Christian Ritual* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 200-202.

⁵⁰ Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1987.

⁵¹ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 63-64.

⁵² *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 72-76.

⁵³ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 71-77.

Other Services

We have dealt so far with the Eucharist and Holy Communion, which incorporate the most frequent diaconal functions in liturgy. However, deacons have roles in other liturgies:

- Deacons may officiate at *Morning and Evening Prayer* and other Liturgies of the Word.
- They assist the bishop in *episcopal liturgies*: ordination, confirmation, blessing of the oils. It is recommended that at least one deacon, and if possible more, attend the bishop at such liturgies. They assist the bishop with the pastoral staff and mitre and hold books where required. When the bishop is the eucharistic presider, the deacon or deacons fulfil their customary assisting roles. Deacons can be helpful in various other ways at ordinations, such as master of ceremonies, litanist, presenters, communion ministers and general assistants.
- Reflecting their involvement in “the world,” deacons have a role in *pastoral liturgies* – baptisms, marriages and funerals, paying special attention to occasional worshippers. Deacons fulfil their normal assisting and collaborative functions in such liturgies, particularly if the Eucharist is part of the service. On occasion, and if authorized by the parish incumbent or the bishop, deacons may preside at baptisms, marriages and funerals (they must have a civil licence for marriages). This may occur in the absence of the priest, or if there is a personal connection with the deacon.



Assisting at a baptism: Deacon Michael Jackson (left) leads the Prayers of the People.

- *Seasonal liturgies*: The liturgies of Holy Week and Easter in *The Book of Alternative Services* assign major duties to the deacon:
 - on *Palm Sunday*, reading the Gospel of the Liturgy of the Palms (p. 298);
 - on *Good Friday*, leading the Solemn Intercession (p. 309); and
 - at the *Easter Vigil*, carrying the paschal candle and singing the *Exsultet* (pp. 322-323).



At the 2017 Easter Vigil at St. Paul's Cathedral, Deacon Michael Jackson holds the paschal candle (being prepared by Dean Michael Sinclair) prior to leading the procession and singing the *Exsultet*.

Deacons may also provide assistance on:

- *Ash Wednesday* in the imposition of ashes;
- *Maundy Thursday* in the foot-washing, in reserving the sacrament, and in supervising the stripping of the altar and furnishings; and
- *Good Friday* in the procession and veneration of the cross and in the distribution of communion from the reserved sacrament.

Blessings

There is a long-standing custom that, while bishops and priests may bless people, deacons may only bless objects, for example, as we have seen, the water at the eucharistic offertory. Ormonde Plater noted that “there is no restriction on informal blessings, which any person may give” and that there has been “a trend to extend blessings to deacons in circumstances of need.” He added that “deacons (and other eucharistic ministers) sometimes bless children and others who do not receive communion,” bless people in diaconal ministry in prisons and other institutions, and bless animals and objects, “mainly when no priest is available or when there is a need for additional ministers.”⁵⁴

The Book of Alternative Services gives mixed messages on blessings by deacons. At baptisms, it states that deacons may preside “if the ministry of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained” (p. 163). There is no restriction on the deacon blessing the water or on making the sign of the cross (with chrism if desired) on the newly-baptized, for, in both cases, the *BAS* specifically says that *the celebrant*, who may be a deacon, performs these acts (p. 156, p. 160).

In the marriage service, however, *The Book of Alternative Services* states (p. 527) that if a marriage is performed by a deacon, “the nuptial blessing and the blessing on the ring(s) shall be appropriately changed.” While one could appreciate the former, one questions the need to change the form of blessing the rings. In any case, the *BAS* uses the term “celebrant” throughout the service. The

⁵⁴ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 23-24.

Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, on the other hand, says that if a deacon presides at a marriage, the nuptial blessing should be omitted (p. 422). It also specifies that “the Priest may ask God’s blessing on a ring or rings” (p. 427).

In the Roman Catholic rite, Michael Kwatera seems to have no problem with a deacon giving either nuptial or ring blessing at a marriage. Indeed, he says that, for the nuptial blessing, “it is fitting that the deacon lay his hands on the bride’s head, on the groom’s, and over both bride and groom, thus matching this gesture of blessing to the parts of the prayer.”⁵⁵ Interestingly, Frederick Bauerschmidt, in describing the liturgy for communion from the reserved sacrament, says that at the end of the service the deacon “blesses the people.”⁵⁶

The customs with respect to blessings by deacons are ambiguous. We recommend following Ormonde Plater’s advice: “Since their use of blessings may cause offence and lead to controversy, deacons need to exercise caution and seek advice from the bishop or priest in charge.”⁵⁷

Master of Ceremonies

The 3rd century Syrian document *Didascalia* “points to the role of the deacon in keeping order in the liturgical assembly,” notes Frederick Bauerschmidt, who describes the deacon of ancient times as a “liturgical ‘enforcer’.”⁵⁸ Fortunately, this rather harsh approach has been superseded by a more benign function! The deacon often serves as “master of ceremonies” or liturgical coordinator, liaising with other clergy, lay ministers such as readers and communion ministers, servers, and musicians to facilitate the participation of the assembly – and allow the presider to focus on presiding. This can be particularly helpful at major occasions like baptisms, Christmas, Holy Week and Easter celebrations, diocesan events, or episcopal services such as ordinations and confirmations.

The image of the master of ceremonies in the liturgy serves as a good analogy of what the ministry of the deacon should look like in the Church [...] When a deacon performs this role in the liturgy ... he is exercising a liturgical function that matches his sacramental character.

*[The deacon] prepares, anticipates, directs, encourages, and helps the entire assembly to fulfill their functions with grace. He is the designated worrier for the assembly, which relies upon him when the unexpected occurs.*⁵⁹

Liturgy is by nature dramatic. It deserves careful preparation and direction. The deacon, aptly called “the designated worrier,” may act as a combination of producer, stage manager, and prompter. To again quote Frederick Bauerschmidt,

*As the liturgy’s principal servant, the deacon needs to cultivate a keen sense of “situational awareness,” knowing at all times who should be doing what – whether this be the presider, readers, altar servers or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion – and helping them to do what they are supposed to do without appearing in any way to usurp their ministries.*⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 64.

⁵⁶ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 75.

⁵⁷ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 24.

⁵⁸ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 5-6.

⁵⁹ W. Shawn McKnight, “The Uniqueness of the Deacon,” in James Keating, ed. *The Character of the Deacon*, 79-80.

⁶⁰ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 20.

Conclusion

Why all this attention to the role of deacons in the liturgy? Have we not been able to without them for a long time – and in many cases, still do? While there are many responses to this question, one cannot do better than to cite again the late Ormonde Plater, leading Episcopal deacon and great liturgist:

*In liturgy, deacons always perform in relationship with others. [...] Deacons enhance the liturgy [and] help all Christians – bishops, priests, deacons, and all the baptized – express baptismal ministry in the life and worship of the church. [...] Deacons are the principal assistants, the most active of all who serve in liturgy. They are heralds of the word, servants of the church, and agents of the bishop. Deacons act for the good of others by setting them free for worship of God and action in the world. [...] they enlist and involve other baptized persons in proper liturgical roles, as in ministries of mercy and justice.*⁶¹

Deacons are an asset to liturgy. They bring to it collegiality and diversity. They draw on the talents of others in the assembly. They help presiders to preside and assistants to assist. Through their ancient office they link us to worship in the earliest centuries of the church. “Deaconless” liturgies are, of course, frequent, even the norm, in many churches. However, they lack a historic and valuable dimension of the worship of the church. When deacons are available, they should, without question or hesitation, perform their roles in the liturgy. As Deacon Plater put it in his inimitable way, “My motto: When in doubt, do it!”⁶²

⁶¹ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 4-7.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 5.

Chapter 2 Vestments for the Deacon⁶³

Introduction

What should deacons wear? The question may seem trivial. After all, ministry is about ministering, not about appearances. And yet many religious traditions have dress codes for their adherents – for example, the *yarmulke* (skull cap) worn by Jewish men or the *hijab* (head scarf) worn by Muslim women. Ordained ministers – rabbis, imams, Christian clergy – often wear some form of distinctive dress, both during worship (liturgical vestments) and outside of worship (street dress). The clerical collar is the best known identifier for Christian clergy for the majority of denominations. Robes such as cassocks and headdress are street wear for clergy in many Orthodox countries. Religious orders have traditionally had some form of “habit.” What deacons may or should wear is therefore of interest. Dress *outside* of the liturgy is easily dealt with. *Liturgical* dress, on the other hand, is more complex.

Street Dress

Should deacons wear clerical collars and if so, when? The use of clerical collars *at all* by deacons, like the title “reverend,” has been questioned. The Anglican custom has been that ordained ministers wear clerical collars when “on duty,” both liturgically and non-liturgically – and this has included deacons. On the other hand, deacons used to be such rare birds that the question hardly arose for them. With the revival of the diaconate as a distinct order, attuned to the “secular” world outside the church institution, wearing clerical garb has been challenged as detracting from the deacon’s identity. James Barnett, for example, said that “round collars and ‘the Reverend’ are actually counter-symbols of the new diaconate, implying as they do a false distinction between the deacon and the laity, implying that the ordained person is somehow more sacred or holy than others.”⁶⁴ While the title “reverend” is less and less used for deacons, in favour of “deacon” (Deacon John or Jane Smith), clerical collars are frequently worn – but normally for liturgy and for specifically-identified forms of diaconal ministry.

William Ditewig, Roman Catholic deacon in the United States, notes the variety of practices in his own Church. Some dioceses, he says, discourage the wearing of the collar by deacons “because they are afraid people might confuse deacons with priests. [...] In other dioceses, deacons may wear the collar at their discretion whenever they are involved in public ministry,” such as prison ministry. “Some deacons are concerned that, without some easily recognizable garb that identifies them as clerics, people will not know that they are deacons and available to serve [...] Other deacons and their bishops find that wearing a clerical collar puts too much distance between the deacon and the people he is to serve.”⁶⁵ This sums up the pros and cons of distinctive clerical garb for deacons.

Practice at St. Paul’s Cathedral follows a middle course. Deacons wear the clerical collar, but only when (a) functioning liturgically and (b) exercising a specific diaconal ministry outside the church community, such as hospital visiting, services in seniors’ and special care homes, and officiating at public events such as Remembrance Day.

⁶³ “Vestments for the Deacon,” was first published in *Diakoneo*, publication of the Association for Episcopal Deacons, Vol. 34, #5 (2012).

⁶⁴ James Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, 169.

⁶⁵ William T. Ditewig, *101 Questions and Answers on Deacons* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 56-57.

Liturgical Vestments for the Deacon⁶⁶

Anglican deacons usually vest for sacramental liturgies in one of two ways: *cassock, surplice and stole*; or *alb and stole*. For Morning and Evening Prayer, Anglican deacons wear the black preaching scarf over surplice and cassock; this, of course, makes them indistinguishable from priests – which was of such concern to the Roman Catholic dioceses cited by William Ditewig! Historically, however, the most distinctive vesture of the deacon has been the *dalmatic*, a knee-length tunic with wide sleeves, in liturgical colours.

Historical Note

In the early church there was no distinctive dress for the clergy: in the Roman Empire they wore the same “classical” garments as others, which included the alb, cope, chasuble and dalmatic. By about the sixth century, however, Roman dress had evolved into different forms, while clergy retained the traditional classical dress. “Christian vestments are then derived primarily from the customary dress of the people of the late Roman Empire.”⁶⁷

The alb is the basic liturgical robe, originating from the *tunica alba* (white tunic), an indoor garment worn in the ancient world. In church use, the alb symbolized the white robe given to new Christians at baptism. It was and is worn under vestments like the chasuble, dalmatic and cope. In some traditions it is worn over the cassock; indeed, the surplice is simply an abbreviated alb. In many cases, the “cassock-alb” has replaced cassock and surplice.

The stole also has ancient origins. Some think it came from “a scarf worn over the tunic and chasuble in ancient Rome by senators and consuls as an insignia of their status.”⁶⁸ Others suggest it was “a long scarf worn by such official persons as messengers,”⁶⁹ which made it an appropriate garment for deacons as messengers of the Gospel. The wearing of the stole by deacons appears as early as the fifth and sixth centuries in the East, although it was not prevalent in the West and Rome until the ninth or tenth centuries. Priests, as today, wore the stole as a scarf hanging vertically from the neck in the front on both sides and under the chasuble (if used).

However, in the East the diaconal stole (*orarion* in Greek, *orarium* in Latin – from *oro*, “to pray”) was worn over the left shoulder, *over* the tunic (*sticharion*), and straight down front and back – as it still is in many of the Orthodox Churches. (The Council of Toledo in 613 directed that the stole be worn this way so that the deacon’s right hand and arm were left free for service.) When the *orarium*, or stole (from *stolas*, for “towel” in Greek), was finally adopted in Rome and the West for deacons, it was originally worn *over* the dalmatic, which was the western equivalent of the *sticharion*. Thus the eastern stole and western dalmatic together became the diaconal vestments. Eventually, the diaconal stole was placed *under* the dalmatic; it was then worn crossways and tied under the right arm – which is still the case in most western rite churches.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Helpful summaries of the historical and current uses of diaconal vestments are found in the following:

Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 29.

William T. Ditewig, *The Deacon at Mass*, Second Edition, 34-38, 97-99.

Michael Kwatera, *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, Second Edition, 18-21.

Ormonde Plater, *Deacons in the Liturgy*, Second Edition, 15-19.

More detailed information is provided in James Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, 168-170, 219-225.

⁶⁷ James Barnett, *The Diaconate*, 220.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁶⁹ Michael Kwatera, *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 18.

⁷⁰ See Ormonde Plater, *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 17-18.

The dalmatic is “an ancient vestment associated with a servant”⁷¹ and “appears to have originated as a garment of ordinary dress in the province of Dalmatia, being made from the fine wool for which the province was noted.”⁷² Its use as an ecclesiastical vestment seems to have become general by the fifth century in Rome, where it was worn by both bishops and deacons. Eventually the custom of the deacon wearing the dalmatic spread across the western church. (The Roman rite still provides for bishops to wear the dalmatic under the chasuble at such occasions as ordinations.) Originally, dalmatics were decorated with two vertical stripes on either side reaching from top to bottom, front and back, and with two circular stripes on the sleeves. Although this pattern is still found, dalmatics evolved like other vestments and were decorated in a variety of ways. In the traditional “high mass,” the deacon wore a dalmatic with two horizontal stripes, while the sub-deacon wore a very similar garment, the *tunicle*, differentiated from the dalmatic by having only one stripe.



Traditional vestments: the deacon’s dalmatic worn by the author (left) has two horizontal stripes; the sub-deacon’s tunicle, worn by Tannis Patterson (right), has one. Dean Michael Sinclair wears the chasuble. This set, designed and made by Merrilyn Dubreuil, parishioner at St. Paul’s Cathedral, was inaugurated on All Saints’ Day, 2015.

The Church of England

We find references to the alb in the First Prayer Book of King Edward VI (1549). At “The Supper of the Lorde and the Holy Communion, commonly called the Masse,” the priest is to wear “the vesture appointed for that ministracion, that is to saye: a white Albe plain, with a vestement or Cope.” Assisting priests and deacons are to wear “likewise the vestures appointed for their ministry, that is to say, Albes with tunacles” (the dalmatic is not mentioned). In the ordinal of 1550, the rubric specifies for the Ordering of Deacons “every one of them, that are presented, hauing upon hym a playne Albe.” A similar phrase is found in the Ordering of Priests. For the consecration of bishops, the ordinal states that the bishop-elect and presenting bishops wear surplice and cope.

⁷¹ William Ditewig, *The Deacon at Mass*, 34-35.

⁷² James Barnett, *The Diaconate*, 223.

These references were omitted from the Second Prayer Book of 1552; indeed, these vestments were prohibited – priests and deacons were “to have and wear a surplice only” and bishops were to wear a rochet. The ordinal of 1552 deletes all references to vestments. However, in the slightly revised Elizabethan prayer book of 1559, we find the following statement: “such Ornaments of the Church, and of the Ministers thereof at all times of their Ministration, shall be retained and be in use, as were in this Church of England by the Authority of Parliament, in the Second Year of the Reign of King Edward the Sixth” – that is, 1549. We are back full circle to the First Prayer Book. However, with some exceptions, albs, copes (and mitres), chasubles, dalmatics and tunics did not return to use in the Church of England until the catholic revival of the 19th century.

Contemporary Vestments for the Deacon

The deacon’s stole should, first of all, not be a priest’s stole tied sideways! This was often the case when deacons were few and far between and vestment makers did not produce specifically diaconal stoles. The situation has changed and genuine deacons’ stoles are now readily available. These stoles are normally wide, appear in the traditional liturgical colours, and are decorated with various symbols. The “Latin” stole is worn crossways over the left shoulder and under the right arm. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* specifies that the stole “is worn by the Deacon over the left shoulder and drawn diagonally across the chest to the right, where it is fastened.”⁷³ Episcopal deacon Ormonde Plater gave three options for wearing the diaconal stole, all over the left shoulder:⁷⁴

1. The **Latin style**, tied or attached under the right arm – the most frequent western usage.
2. The **Eastern style orarion**, hanging straight down from the left shoulder, used in many Orthodox churches.
3. The **“Byzantine” style**, a long stole (in effect a double *orarion*) worn crossways under the right arm like the Latin stole but with the ends hanging vertically front and back from the left shoulder like the *orarion*. This is the usage in some Orthodox churches and increasingly among Anglican deacons.

The dalmatic, historically *the* deacon’s vestment, was worn in the 19th and 20th centuries by the deacon in the Anglo-Catholic “high mass” tradition and at the Roman Catholic solemn high mass (the sub-deacon wore a tunic). After Vatican II, the solemn high mass was eliminated from the Roman missal. So was the order of sub-deacons. As was the case for deacons’ stoles, vestment makers stopped making dalmatics (and tunics). The revival of the diaconate has resulted in them being made again.

The dalmatic has tended to be reserved for special occasions in both the Anglican and Roman Catholic rites. This, maintains Roman Catholic deacon William Ditewig, is regrettable: in his view, the deacon should wear the dalmatic whenever the priest wears a chasuble.⁷⁵ His colleague Frederick Bauerschmidt agrees: “the dalmatic is for the deacon the equivalent of the priest’s chasuble.”⁷⁶ Episcopal deacon Ormonde Plater added that deacons should also wear the dalmatic when the priest wears a cope, for example at Solemn Evensong. He noted, however, that “[i]n practice, the dalmatic is often reserved for occasions of great solemnity.”⁷⁷ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*

⁷³ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 71, no. 340.

⁷⁴ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 17-18.

⁷⁵ *The Deacon at Mass*, 35-36.

⁷⁶ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 29.

⁷⁷ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 17.

states that “the vestment proper to the deacon is the dalmatic, worn over the alb and stole; however, the dalmatic may be omitted out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity.”⁷⁸



Wearing the dalmatic at a non-sacramental liturgy, the deacon presides at the Service of Light, Lent 2016, at St. Paul’s Cathedral. The priest wears a cope and the sub-deacon a tunic.

Vestments like dalmatics can be expensive and this may be an obstacle for individual deacons; so parishes where there is a deacon should provide matching sets of chasubles and dalmatics – and stoles.

One practice should be vigorously discouraged: vesting other people as deacons, whether priests, for example reading the Gospel in the absence of a deacon, or lay persons – the so-called “liturgical deacons” found in some parishes. It would be unthinkable to vest as priests those who are not. The same should apply to the diaconate.

A Case Study: St. Paul’s Cathedral, Regina

At St. Paul’s Cathedral, the deacons generally follow the guidelines given by Deacons Plater and Ditewig: when the presiding celebrant wears chasuble or cope, the deacon wears the dalmatic, unless one is not available. We have four complete sets of vestments (cope, chasuble, dalmatic, tunicle and stoles), in white, red, green and purple. There are both Latin stoles and Byzantine double *orarions* in our four sets of vestments. One of our two deacons prefers the Latin, the other the Byzantine, so both styles are in regular use.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ 71, no. 338.

⁷⁹ Michael Kwatera states that “[l]iturgical authenticity requires that only a deacon of an Eastern rite should wear an Eastern-style *orarion*” (*The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 19), but we do not see this restriction applying to the Byzantine stole (double *orarion*).

We wear our stoles *over* the dalmatic. Admittedly, this is a rare practice. We do so because, as noted above, this was the most ancient tradition, and also because lay sub-deacons assist at most of our eucharistic celebrations. Since in some of the vestment sets the tunics are identical to the dalmatics, the stole is the distinguishing feature for the deacon. On an antiquarian note, James Barnett tells us: “The Council of Braga, 563, directs the deacons to wear the stole over the shoulder and outside the tunic (dalmatic), so that they will not be confused with the subdeacons.”⁸⁰ However, Deacon Ormonde Plater asserted that it is

*confusing for anyone to vest as a subdeacon, a minor order abolished in the Church of England in 1550 and in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church in 1972; an exception may be made for Anglo-Catholic masses using three sacred ministers.*⁸¹



Deacons Winna Martin and Michael Jackson wear respectively a Latin stole and a Byzantine stole (double *orarion*) at St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Whether we are antiquarian or innovative in this respect at St. Paul’s is open for discussion. We like to think the latter! Our cadre of sub-deacons has been in place since the 1980s and we find this a valuable form of lay liturgical and other ministry.

⁸⁰ *The Diaconate*, 223.

⁸¹ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 19.



Modelling the green vestments at St. Paul's Cathedral – made by Thomas Roach of Vancouver, depicting the Saskatchewan prairie landscape – are, from the left, Deacon Winna Martin, wearing the Latin diaconal stole *over* the dalmatic; Dean Michael Sinclair in the chasuble; and sub-deacon Shelly Hawes in the tunic.



The award-winning white vestment set at St. Paul's Cathedral, made by Saskatchewan artist Martha Cole and depicting the water of baptism. From left to right: Deacon Michael Jackson, wearing the Byzantine stole *over* the dalmatic; Dean Michael Sinclair in the chasuble; and Sub-Deacon Jan Besse in the tunic.



Deacon Winna Martin and Sub-Deacon Elvira Beday model the dalmatic and tunicle of contemporary-style purple vestments created by Merrilyn Dubreuil for St. Paul's Cathedral in 2014.

Conclusion

For the diaconate, vestments *do* matter. Indeed, all liturgical vestments have a purpose beyond mere ornamentation. Deacon William Ditewig explains this well for his own Roman Catholic tradition; it applies equally to the Anglican tradition:

[W]e are a church that makes rich use of outward signs and other aids to religious imagination and expression. Vestments do many things, including offering a link to our religious heritage. The alb, for example, is a sign and reminder of the white garment of baptism. The stole and dalmatic of the deacon express his servanthood as well as the servanthood of the entire church in the servanthood of Christ, just as the priest's vestments signal the priesthood of the priest and the church in the High Priesthood of Christ. The partnership of priest and deacon thus demonstrates to the assembly the link between priesthood and service; between worship of God and care of neighbor; between Word, sacrament and charity.⁸²

Amen!

⁸² *The Deacon at Mass*, 37.

Chapter 3 The Diaconate in Liturgical Texts

Let us see how the deacon's liturgical roles are prescribed – or not prescribed – in some Anglican books of worship: the First Prayer Book of King Edward VI (1549); the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Anglican Church of Canada (1959/1962); the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church in the United States (1979); *The Book of Alternative Services* of the Anglican Church of Canada (1985); *Common Worship* of the Church of England (2000); and also in the 2011 version of the Roman Missal for the Roman Catholic Church.

The First Prayer Book of King Edward VI, 1549

The first Book of Common Prayer continues the mediaeval assumptions about the diaconate, but at least includes a vestige of the liturgical role of the deacon.

The Supper of the Lorde and the Holy Communion, commonly called The Masse

Decons [...] shall have upon them [...] the vestures appointed for their ministry,
that is to saye, Albes with tunacles. (212)

The priest or deacon shall then reade the Gospel. (214)

If there be a Deacon or other Priest, then shal he folow with the Chalice. (226)

Note: these references are omitted in the Second Prayer Book of 1552.

The Ordering of Deacons

Then one of them appoynted by the Bisshop, shal reade the Gospel of that daye. (301)

The Book of Common Prayer, Canada, 1959/62

Four hundred years later, the Canadian Book of Common Prayer registers no change in the liturgical function of the deacon. References to the diaconate are cursory.

All Priests and Deacons, unless prevented by sickness or other urgent cause, are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer. (lvi)

In Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall all receive the Communion with the Priest every Sunday at the least, except they have a reasonable cause to the contrary. (66)

Eucharist

the Deacon or Priest who reads [the Gospel] (71)

[the Priest shall] proceed to deliver [the Communion] to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons (84)

If there be no Communion, the Priest or Deacon may say... (87)

Baptism

In the absence of a Priest, it is lawful for a Deacon to baptize children. (522)

Note: there is no reference to this "lawful" diaconal act in the baptism of adults.

Ordination – of Deacons

Then one of them, appointed by the Bishop, shall read The Gospel. (643)

And here it must be declared unto the Deacon, that he must continue in that office of a Deacon the space of a whole year (except for reasonable causes it shall otherwise seem good unto the Bishop) to the intent that he may be perfect, and well expert in the things appertaining to the Ecclesiastical Administration. If he has been found faithful and diligent, and has satisfied the Bishop that he is sufficiently experienced in the things belonging to the Ministry, he may be admitted by his Diocesan to the Order of Priesthood... (644)

These references in the ordination rite are taken virtually verbatim from the First and Second Prayer Books of King Edward VI. The Canadian revisers of the mid-20th century were scarcely innovators!

The Book of Common Prayer of The Episcopal Church in the United States, 1979

This book, reflecting the early revival of the diaconate in the Episcopal Church, pays considerable attention to the liturgical role of the deacon.

Concerning the Service of the Church

In all services, the entire Christian assembly participates in such a way that the members of each order within the Church, lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons, fulfil the functions proper to their respective orders, as set forth in the rubrical directions for each service. (13)

The leader of worship in a Christian assembly is normally a bishop or priest. Deacons by virtue of their order do not exercise a presiding function; but, like lay persons, may officiate at the Liturgy of the Word [...] Under exceptional circumstances, when the services of a priest cannot be obtained, the bishop may, at discretion, authorize a deacon to preside at other rites also... (13-14)

Proper Liturgies for Special Days

Provision is made for a deacon or lay reader to officiate at the Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday rites. In the Palm Sunday rite, a Deacon or other person appointed reads the Gospel of the Palms and the deacon starts the procession with Let us go forth in peace. In the Good Friday service, a Deacon or other person appointed leads the Solemn Collects. (264-277)

For the Easter Vigil, we find the following:

It is the prerogative of a deacon to carry the Paschal Candle to its place, and to chant the Exsultet. Deacons likewise assist at Baptism and the Eucharist according to their order. A deacon may also, when the services of a priest cannot be obtained, and with the authorization of the bishop, officiate at public Baptism; and may administer Easter Communion from the Sacrament previously consecrated. (284)

Baptism

If... the ministry of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained, the bishop may specially authorize a deacon to preside. In that case, the deacon omits the prayer over the candidates... and the formula and action which follow. (312)

This is more restrictive of the deacon's role in baptism than in the Canadian Book of Alternative Services.

The Holy Eucharist

A deacon should read the Gospel and may lead the Prayers of the People. Deacons should also serve at the Lord's Table, preparing and placing on it the offerings of bread and wine, and assisting in the ministration of the Sacrament to the people. *In the absence of a deacon* [our emphasis], these duties may be performed by an assisting priest. (322 and 354)

In both Rites I and II, the Deacon or Celebrant says the invitation to Confession and gives the Dismissal. The Episcopal book prescribes how a deacon may, at the bishop's discretion, administer communion from the reserved sacrament. (408-409)

Marriage

A deacon, or an assisting priest, may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist.

Where it is permitted by civil law that deacons may perform marriages, and no priest or bishop is available, a deacon may use the service which follows, omitting the nuptial blessing which follows The Prayers. (422)

Ordination

- of a Bishop

A Deacon or Priest reads the Gospel... (516)

Deacons prepare the Table (522)

A Deacon dismisses the people. (523)

- of a Priest

the Deacon, or, if no deacon is present, a Priest reads the Gospel. (528)

the Deacon, or a Priest if no deacon is present, dismisses the people. (535)

- of a Deacon

After receiving the Holy Communion, the new deacon assists in the distribution of the Sacrament, ministering either the Bread or the Wine, or both. (536)

A Priest and a Lay Person, and additional presenters if desired, standing before the bishop, present the ordinand. (*Note: curiously, there is no reference to a deacon being one of the presenters.*) (538)

the Deacon, or, if no deacon is present, a Priest reads the Gospel. (540)

The newly-ordained Deacon prepares the bread, pours sufficient wine (and a little water) into the chalice, and places the vessels on the Lord's Table. (546)

The Bishop blesses the people, after which the new Deacon dismisses them. (547)

After participating in the Peace, the deacons go to the Altar for the Offertory. If there are many deacons, some assist in the Offertory and others administer Holy Communion. One, appointed by the bishop, is to say the dismissal. (554)

When desired, deacons may be appointed to carry the Sacrament and minister Holy Communion to those communicants who, because of sickness or other grave cause, could not be present at the ordination.

If the remaining Elements are not required for the Communion of the absent, it is appropriate for the deacons to remove the vessels from the Altar, consume the remaining Elements, and cleanse the vessels in some convenient place. (555)

Celebration of a New Ministry

The new Minister, if a deacon, should read the Gospel, prepare the elements at the Offertory, assist the celebrant at the Altar, and dismiss the congregation. (558)

The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada, 1985

The Book of Alternative Services is surprisingly progressive as far as the diaconate is concerned — progressive in that deacons are given appropriate roles in almost all liturgies; surprisingly, because in the early 1980s the diaconal movement had not yet gathered as much momentum as in the Episcopal Church in the USA and deacons were few and far between. The compilers of the Book were ahead of their time and Canadian deacons should be grateful.

Morning Prayer

A deacon or lay member of the community may lead the intercessions and thanksgivings. (53)
(The same phrase is found in Evening Prayer – 70)

The Service of Light

Deacon, other assistant, or the officiant: *(opening response)*

Thanksgiving

A deacon, or other assistant, or the officiant sings or says, *(response)* (61)

Baptism

It is appropriate that the Gospel be read by a deacon.

If the ministry of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained, a deacon may preside at a public baptism. (163)

Reconciliation of a Penitent

If a deacon or lay person hears a confession, a declaration of forgiveness may be made in the form provided. (166)

Eucharist

A deacon or lay person, *rather than the priest* [our emphasis], is the appropriate minister to lead the Prayers of the People. (176)

It is the function of a deacon [our emphasis] to read the Gospel and to make ready the table for the celebration, preparing and placing upon it the bread and cup of wine. The deacon may also lead the Prayers of the People. (183)

A deacon or member of the community leads the Prayers of the People... (190)

...may lead... (235)

Dismissal

The celebrant may bless the people. The deacon, or other leader, dismisses the people, saying in these or similar words. (215)

Then the deacon or the celebrant says, (249)

Palm Sunday

Then a deacon, a priest, or some other appointed person shall read one of the following. [Gospel of the Liturgy of the Palms] (298)

In the absence of a bishop or a priest, the preceding service may be led by a deacon or lay person. (299)

Good Friday

Solemn Intercession ... the deacon or other person appointed says to the people... (309)

The biddings may be read by a deacon or other person appointed. (310)

Easter Vigil

It is the prerogative of a deacon [our emphasis] to carry the paschal candle to its place, and to chant the Exsultet. Deacons likewise assist at baptism and the eucharist according to their order. [...] In the absence of a bishop or priest, a deacon or lay reader may lead the first two parts of the service... (321)

The deacon (a priest *if there is no deacon* [our emphasis]) takes the paschal candle, lifts it high, and sings, *The Light of Christ*. [...] The procession enters the church, led by the deacon with the paschal candle. At a suitable place, the deacon lifts the candle high and sings a second time, *The Light of Christ*. [...] The procession continues until the deacon arrives before the altar. Turning to face the people, the deacon sings a third time, *The Light of Christ*.

The deacon, or other person appointed, standing near the candle, sings or says the Exsultet. (322-323)

In the absence of a deacon [our emphasis], the Exsultet may be sung by a priest or by a lay person. (334)

Marriage

When the form of service on page 541 is celebrated by a deacon, the nuptial blessing and the blessing of the ring(s) shall be appropriately changed. (527)

Note: this does not reflect the long-standing tradition that deacons may bless objects, although not people.

Funerals

There are brief references to possible roles for a deacon in Form I: as celebrant (571), leading the Prayers of the People (579), giving the Dismissal (586). Forms II and III do not mention the deacon for the Prayers (593) or the Dismissal (596, 597, 600). Form III stipulates, however, that

The celebrant may be a bishop, priest, deacon, or lay person. (598)

Ordination

- of a Bishop

Representatives of the presbyterate, diaconate and laity for which the new bishop is to be consecrated, are assigned appropriate duties in the service. (632)

The Presentation ...representatives of the diocese and province (priests, deacons, and lay persons), standing before the archbishop, present the bishop-elect... (634)

The Dismissal A deacon dismisses the people with these words. (641)

Note: the same reference is found in the ordinations of priests (650) and of deacons (658).

- of a Deacon

The Presentation A priest and a lay person, and additional presenters if desired, standing before the bishop, present the ordinand... (653)

The liturgy continues with the offertory. The newly ordained deacon prepares the elements and places the vessels on the Lord's Table. The bishop, joined (if possible) by presbyters, presides at the celebration of the eucharist. (657)

Note: It is bizarre that in its rite for ordination of deacons, the deacon-friendly BAS, like the Episcopal BCP, does not provide for deacons as presenters, whereas it does for episcopal ordinations! Nor does it suggest that deacons might join the presiding celebrant at the table.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, 2000

The Church of England's liturgical texts reflect its lack of enthusiasm for the diaconate. The Alternative Services Book of 1980 virtually ignored the deacon, who is not mentioned in the eucharistic rites at all (in fact, Rite B specifies that the priest gives the dismissal). In the 1980 ordinal, the declaration states that "a deacon assists the priest under whom he serves... It is his general duty to do such pastoral work as is entrusted to him." (p. 344). Deacons are given no role in the diaconal ordination service.

One would have hoped that twenty years later the Church of England's attitude towards deacons had evolved, especially in the light of the Canadian Anglican and American Episcopal (and Roman Catholic) liturgical texts. Alas, this was not the case. Common Worship (2000) ignores the deacon almost as much as did its 1980 predecessor. The General Notes for the Eucharist (pp. 158-159) demonstrate the ambivalence of the Church of England towards the diaconate:

In some traditions the ministry of the deacon at Holy Communion has included some of the following elements: the bringing in of the Book of the Gospels, the invitation to confession, the reading of the Gospel, the preaching of the sermon when licensed to do so, a part in the prayers of intercession, the preparation of the table and the gifts, a part in the distribution, the ablutions and the dismissal.

The deacon's liturgical ministry provides an appropriate model for the ministry of an assisting priest, a reader, or another episcopally authorized minister in a leadership ministry that complements that of the president.

When appropriate, the president may [...] delegate the leadership of all or parts of the Gathering and the Liturgy of the Word to a deacon, Reader or other authorized lay person.

In the absence of a priest for the first part of the service, a deacon, Reader or other authorized lay person may lead the entire Gathering and Liturgy of the Word.

Although Common Worship well summarizes the liturgical role of the deacon in the Eucharist, it clearly does not view this as any kind of norm: it is followed "in some traditions," it may provide "an appropriate model" for other ministers, and it is seen as much like that of the Reader.

The Roman Missal, 2011

The Roman Catholic Church, with its centralized authority, is very different indeed from the Anglican Communion, which is decentralized not only among but within its component national provinces. The Holy See gives specific liturgical directions, not only for rites (the texts), as do Anglican prayer books, but for ceremonies – movement, posture, gesture, vestments, ornaments and furnishings – which Anglican formularies since the 16th century have only rarely attempted to do and even then, unsuccessfully. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*⁸³ provides comprehensive commentaries and detailed directions for the eucharistic celebration. While such a publication is inconceivable for Anglicans, it provides valuable insights into liturgical practice.

Roman Catholics do not have the equivalent of *The Book of Common Prayer* or *The Book of Alternative Services*. The Roman Missal itself is the presider's book. Books like the *Catholic Book of Worship* or the *Sunday Missal* usually include the text of the eucharistic rite, or at least the parts of it needed by the

⁸³ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Canadian edition (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011).

congregation; in some cases, the propers (collects, other prayers, readings, psalms); and in others, music and hymns. Some of these books are published in annual editions. For purposes of this study, we refer to the Canadian *Celebrate in Song*⁸⁴ as well as to *The General Instruction for the Roman Missal*.

The General Instruction for the Roman Missal

Reflecting both the prescriptive nature of the Roman rite and the greater prevalence of deacons in the Roman Catholic Church, references to deacons abound in *The General Instruction* and it would be pointless to reproduce them all here. References are to the relevant numbered sections in *The General Instruction*.

Chapter II. The Structure of the Mass, Its Elements and Its Parts

Gestures and Bodily Posture

42 Among gestures are included also actions and processions, by which the Priest, with the Deacon and ministers, goes to the altar; the Deacon carries the Evangeliary or *Book of Gospels* to the ambo before the proclamation of the Gospel.

The Biblical Readings

#59 The function of proclaiming the readings is by tradition not presidential but ministerial. Therefore the readings are to be read by a reader, but the Gospel by the Deacon, or, in his absence, by another Priest.

The Homily

#66 The Homily should ordinarily be given by the Priest Celebrant himself or be entrusted by him to a concelebrating Priest, or from time to time and, if appropriate, to the Deacon, but never to a lay person. (*Note: the Roman rite, unlike the contemporary Anglican books, clearly provides for occasional preaching by deacons.*)

The Universal Prayer

#71 [The intentions] are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful.00

The Fraction of the Bread

#83 The Priest breaks the Eucharistic Bread, with the assistance, if the case requires, of the Deacon or a concelebrant.

(*Note: there is no such reference in Anglican prayer books.*)

Chapter III. Duties and Ministries in the Mass

The Duties of Those in Holy Orders

#94. After the Priest, the Deacon, in virtue of the sacred Ordination he has received, holds first place among those who minister in the celebration of the Eucharist. For the sacred Order of the Diaconate has been held in high honour in the Church even from the early times of the Apostles. At Mass the Deacon has his own part in proclaiming the Gospel, from time to time in preaching God's Word, in announcing the intentions of the Universal Prayer, in ministering to the Priest, in preparing the altar and in serving the celebration of the Sacrifice, in distributing the Eucharist to the faithful, especially under the species of wine, and from time to time in giving instructions regarding the people's gestures and postures,

⁸⁴ *Celebrate in Song*, pew edition (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011).

(Note: this is both a succinct and a complete description of the deacon's role at the Eucharist. One could only wish that something similar appeared in Anglican prayer books!)

Chapter IV. The Different Forms of Celebrating Mass

Mass with the People

#116. If at any celebration of Mass a Deacon is present, he should exercise his function. *(note: well said!)* This section includes sub-sections A) Mass without a Deacon, and B) Mass with a Deacon. The latter is so significant that we reproduce it in its entirety.

B) Mass with a Deacon

171. When he is present at the celebration of the Eucharist, a Deacon should exercise his ministry, wearing sacred vestments. In fact, the Deacon:

- a) assists the Priest and walks at his side;
- b) ministers at the altar, both as regards the chalice and the book;
- c) proclaims the Gospel and may, at the direction of the Priest Celebrant, give the Homily (d. no. 66);
- d) guides the faithful people by giving appropriate instructions, and announces the intentions of the Universal Prayer;
- e) assists the Priest Celebrant in distributing Communion, and purifies and arranges the sacred vessels;
- f) carries out the duties of other ministers himself, if necessary, when none of them is present.

The Introductory Rites

172. Carrying the *Book of Gospels* slightly elevated, the Deacon precedes the Priest as he approaches the altar or else walks at the Priest's side.

173. When he reaches the altar, if he is carrying the *Book of Gospels*, he omits the sign of reverence and goes up to the altar. It is a praiseworthy practice for him to place the *Book of Gospels* on the altar, after which, together with the Priest, he venerates the altar with a kiss.

If, however, he is not carrying the *Book of Gospels*, he makes a profound bow to the altar with the Priest in the customary way and with him venerates the altar with a kiss.

Lastly, if incense is being used, he assists the Priest in putting some into the thurible and in incensing the cross and the altar.

174. Once the altar has been incensed, the Deacon goes to the chair together with the Priest and there stands at the Priest's side and assists him as necessary.

The Liturgy of the Word

175. During the singing of the *Alleluia* or other chant, if incense is being used, the Deacon ministers to the Priest as he puts incense into the thurible. Then, bowing profoundly before the Priest, he asks for the blessing, saying in a low voice, *Your blessing, Father*. The Priest blesses him, saying, *May the Lord be in your heart*. The Deacon

signs himself with the Sign of the Cross and replies, *Amen*. Having bowed to the altar, he then takes up the *Book of Gospels* which was placed on it and proceeds to the ambo, carrying the book slightly elevated. He is preceded by a thurifer carrying a smoking thurible and by ministers with lighted candles. At the ambo the Deacon greets the people, with hands joined, saying, *The Lord be with you*. After this, at the words *A reading from the holy Gospel*, he signs with his thumb the book and then himself on his forehead, mouth, and breast. He incenses the book and proclaims the Gospel reading. When this is done, he acclaims, *The Gospel of the Lord*, and all reply, *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*. He then venerates the book with a kiss, saying quietly the formula *Per evangelica dicta* (*Through the words of the Gospel*); and returns to the Priest's side.

When the Deacon is assisting the Bishop, he carries the book to him to be kissed, or else kisses it himself, saying quietly the formula *Per evangelica dicta* (*Through the words of the Gospel*). In more solemn celebrations, if appropriate, the Bishop may impart a blessing to the people with the *Book of Gospels*.

Lastly, the Deacon may carry the *Book of Gospels* to the credence table or to another suitable and dignified place.

176. Moreover, if there is no other suitable reader present, the Deacon should proclaim the other readings as well.

177. After the introduction by the Priest, it is the Deacon himself who announces the intentions of the Universal Prayer, usually from the ambo.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

178. After the Universal Prayer, while the Priest remains at the chair, the Deacon prepares the altar, assisted by the acolyte, but it is the Deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels himself. He also assists the Priest in receiving the people's gifts. After this, he hands the Priest the paten with the bread to be consecrated, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly, *By the mystery of this water*, etc. and after this presents the chalice to the Priest. He may also carry out the preparation of the chalice at the credence table. If incense is being used, the Deacon assists the Priest during the incensation of the offerings, the cross, and the altar; and after this the Deacon himself or the acolyte incenses the Priest and the people.

179. During the Eucharistic Prayer, the Deacon stands near the Priest, but slightly behind him, so that when necessary he may assist the Priest with the chalice or the Missal.

From the epiclesis until the Priest shows the chalice, the Deacon usually remains kneeling. If several Deacons are present, one of them may place incense in the thurible for the Consecration and incense the host and the chalice at the elevation.

180. At the concluding doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Deacon stands next to the Priest, and holds the chalice elevated while the Priest elevates the paten with the host, until the people have acclaimed, *Amen*.

181. After the Priest has said the prayer for the Rite of Peace and the greeting *The peace of the Lord be with you always* and the people have replied, *And with your spirit*, the Deacon, if appropriate, says the invitation to the Sign of Peace. With hands joined, he faces the people and says, *Let us offer each other the sign of peace*. Then he himself receives the Sign of Peace from the Priest and may offer it to those other ministers who are nearest to him.

182. After the Priest's Communion, the Deacon receives Communion under both kinds from the Priest himself and then assists the Priest in distributing Communion to the people. If Communion is given under both kinds, the Deacon himself administers the chalice to the communicants; and, when the distribution is over, standing at the altar, he immediately and reverently consumes all of the Blood of Christ that remains, assisted, if the case requires, by other Deacons and Priests.

183. When the distribution of Communion is over, the Deacon returns to the altar with the Priest, collects the fragments, should any remain, and then carries the chalice and other sacred vessels to the credence table, where he purifies them and arranges them as usual, while the Priest returns to the chair. Nevertheless, it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified on a corporal, suitably covered, on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass, following the Dismissal of the people.

The Concluding Rites

184. Once the Prayer after Communion has been said, the Deacon makes brief announcements to the people, if indeed any need to be made, unless the Priest prefers to do this himself.

185. If a Prayer over the People or a formula of Solemn Blessing is used, the Deacon says, *Bow down for the blessing*. After the Priest's blessing, the Deacon, with hands joined and facing the people, dismisses the people, saying, *Ite, missa est* (*Go forth, the Mass is ended*).

186. Then, together with the Priest, the Deacon venerates the altar with a kiss, makes a profound bow, and withdraws in a manner similar to the Entrance Procession.

“Celebrate in Song”

The “pew edition” of this book is the nearest equivalent to the Anglican *Book of Alternative Services* for the eucharistic rite. It gives the text of the liturgy, music and hymns for the mass, and eucharistic prayers. References to the deacon are as follows:

Penitential Act

(11)

The Priest, or a Deacon or another minister, then says the following or other invocations with *Kyrie, eleison* (*Lord, have mercy*):

The Liturgy of the Word

The directions for the deacon are specific:

Gospel Acclamation

(14-15)

There follows the Alleluia or another chant laid down by the rubrics, as the liturgical time requires. Meanwhile, if incense is used, the Priest puts some into the thurible. After this, the Deacon who is to proclaim the Gospel, bowing profoundly before the Priest, asks for the blessing, saying in a low voice:
Your blessing, Father.

The Priest says in a low voice:

May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may proclaim his Gospel worthily and well, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit.

The Deacon signs himself with the Sign of the Cross and replies: Amen.

[Here follow instructions for the priest in the absence of a deacon.]

The Deacon, or the Priest, then proceeds to the ambo, accompanied, if appropriate, by ministers with incense and candles. There he says:

The Lord be with you.

The people reply:

And with your spirit.

Gospel

(15-16)

The Deacon, or the Priest:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to *N*.

And, at the same time, he makes the Sign of the Cross on the book and on his forehead, lips, and breast.

The people acclaim:

Glory to you, O Lord.

Then the Deacon, or the Priest, incenses the book, if incense is used, and proclaims the Gospel. At the end of the Gospel, the Deacon, or the Priest, acclaim: The Gospel of the Lord.

All reply: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The he kisses the book, saying quietly:

Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away.

Homily

(16)

The follows the Homily, which is to be preached by a Priest or Deacon on all Sundays and Holydays of Obligation; on other days, it is recommended.

(Note: the deacon is shown here as a normal preacher.)

Preparation of the Gifts

(19)

The Deacon, or the Priest, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly:

By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ
Who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

(Note: despite the direction given in The General Instruction, #178, there is no mention here of the deacon preparing the altar.)

Sign of Peace

(25)

Then, if appropriate, the Deacon, or the Priest, adds:

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

And all offer one another a sign, in keeping with local customs, that expresses peace, communion, and charity. The Priest gives the sign of peace to a Deacon or minister.

The Concluding Rites

(30)

Then the Deacon, or the Priest himself, with hands joined and facing the people, says:

Go forth, the Mass is ended.

Or:

Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

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