

The Diocese of Chicago Customary for Deacons

Introduction

This customary sets out guidelines for the role of deacons in liturgies, both in the local parish or mission, and in diocesan liturgies, e.g. ordinations and confirmations. These should be considered norms for the liturgy. The Customary was created by the Deacons' Council. It has been approved by Bishop Lee and by the Council for use in the diocese.

The Deacon in the Liturgy – General Guidelines

The Book of Common Prayer clearly establishes three distinct functions of a deacon in the liturgy:

- Proclamation of the Gospel
- Preparation of the Eucharistic Table
- The Dismissal

If there is a deacon in a parish, the deacon should carry out these functions in the Sunday liturgies and all major feasts and celebrations. The deacon is expected to serve in weekday liturgies as her/his schedule permits.

The Prayer Book also indicates additional functions, which may be assigned to the deacon, e.g. bidding the Confession. In some parishes the deacon also bids the Creed and is responsible for The Prayers of the People, either leading them or supporting lay ministers who have that role. The assignment of these latter roles is to be negotiated by the priest and the deacon. Practices may vary among congregations. However, the deacon should always proclaim the Gospel, prepare the table, and give the Dismissal. If a parish has more than one deacon, the deacons and the priest should decide how the roles are to be assigned.

Vestments

The usual vestments for a deacon in celebrations of the Holy Eucharist are alb, dalmatic, and deacon's stole in the appropriate liturgical color. If the parish/mission has dalmatics that match its chasubles, the deacon wears that dalmatic. If the parish does not have matching vestments, a plain ivory or white dalmatic with the stole worn on the outside is appropriate.

In liturgies without a Eucharist, the deacon may wear an alb with deacon's stole, or a cassock, surplice, and deacon's stole. If the deacon is officiating at Morning or Evening Prayer, s/he may wear cassock and surplice with deacon's stole, tippet, or academic hood.

The Deacon in Parish Liturgies

- **The Gospel Book**
If the parish has a Gospel Book, the deacon should carry it, held high so that the people can see it, in the entering procession. When carrying the Gospel Book, the deacon walks ahead of the Presider. If there is no Gospel Book, the deacon walks either ahead of the Presider or next to her/him. The deacon places the Gospel Book on

the altar as a sign of the connection between Word and Table in the liturgy. Depending on parish custom, the deacon may also carry the Gospel Book in the closing procession at the end of the service. In some parishes it is the custom for an acolyte to carry the Gospel Book.

- **The Gospel Procession and Proclamation of the Gospel**

The Gospel should be proclaimed in the midst of the people, in the center aisle if possible. A Sequence Hymn or other anthem, e.g. "Alleluia" may be sung while the Gospel Book is carried to the place where it will be proclaimed. An acolyte or the deacon may carry the Gospel Book, again held high so that the people can see it. Acolytes with torches can be part of the procession. Either the acolyte or the deacon holds the Gospel Book and the acolytes with torches should stand at each side of the book, facing each other.

The deacon announces the Gospel and makes a mark of the cross with her/his thumb on the opening word of the reading. S/he then marks himself/herself with a small cross on the forehead, lips, and over the heart. At the conclusion of the reading, the deacon raises the Gospel Book, says "The Gospel of the Lord" and keeps the book held high until the people have responded, "Praise to you, Lord Christ." The deacon may kiss the Gospel Book at the end of the Proclamation, if desired.

The Gospel Book may be placed back on the altar or taken to some other designated place. If it is placed on the altar, it should be removed during the Peace.

- **Preparation of the Table**

The deacon is responsible for preparing the altar for the Eucharist and may be assisted, per parish custom, by an acolyte. The deacon or the acolyte brings a corporal and a chalice to the altar. Note: In some parishes the chalice may be vested. If so, it can be placed on the altar during The Peace or it may be placed there prior to the beginning of the liturgy (depending on parish custom).

The deacon first spreads a corporal on the table and then receives the gifts of bread and wine. S/he pours wine into the chalice and then adds some water to the wine in the chalice and in the flagon. (The acolyte may bring the water to the deacon or the deacon may get it from the Credence Table.) The positions of the paten and chalice may vary, according to the preference of the Presider. If there is a supply priest or guest Presider, the deacon should ask that person prior to the liturgy about her/his preference.

- **Holy Eucharist**

The deacon stands next to the Presider at the altar during the Eucharist. The usual place is at the Presider's right. Again, the deacon should check with the Presider. The Presider may want the deacon to stand on the left to guide her/him in the Altar Book. If there are two deacons serving in this part of the liturgy, both can stand next to the Presider, one on each side. The deacon on the left tends to the Altar Book; the one on the right raises the chalice at the appropriate times (conclusion of Eucharistic Prayer and Words of Invitation).

After the Fraction or the Words of Invitation (per parish custom), an additional paten and chalice(s), if needed, are brought to the altar. The deacon may prepare the additional chalice(s) and assist with breaking of bread into small pieces. The deacon may administer either bread or the chalice during communion, depending on how many Eucharistic Ministers are present.

After communion is finished, the deacon places remaining elements in the appropriate place and clears the table, removing the paten(s) and chalice(s) to the Credence Table or to the Sacristy, according to parish custom.

- **The Dismissal**

The deacon gives the Dismissal at the conclusion of the liturgy, using one of the forms in the *Book of Common Prayer*, or other appropriate phrases (per parish custom). The deacon usually stands in the center aisle, near the back of the nave, but may also give the Dismissal at the altar.

- **Additional liturgical functions in the Eucharist**

The rubrics in the *Book of Common Prayer* indicate that the deacon may invite the people to say the Nicene Creed, as well as say the words of invitation for the Confession. The responsibility for these functions is to be negotiated by the priest and deacon. If the deacon issues the invitation to the people for the Creed and the Confession, the deacon should also begin them.

The deacon may also have responsibility for the Prayers of the People. This may include any or all of these functions: inviting the people to prayer, reading the intercessions, and supporting laypeople who have responsibility for reading the prayers.

- **Communion from Reserved Sacrament**

On occasions when the priest cannot preside at a Sunday Eucharist, deacons are authorized by the Bishop to distribute Holy Communion from the reserved Sacrament, using the form provided by the diocese. This may be done only if, after diligent effort, no substitute priest can be found. The parish must notify the Archdeacon at least one week in advance. This form of the Eucharist should not become the regular Sunday service. If the form is used more than five times in one year, special permission must be received from the Archdeacon. In a situation when the priest cannot preside at a Sunday Eucharist because of illness or unexpected emergency, the deacon may use the form for Communion from Reserved Sacrament. The deacon must notify the Archdeacon in the following week that s/he used the form, providing the date and an explanation of the circumstances.

The Diocese of Chicago has created a specific form for Communion from Reserved Sacrament that is to be used in such services. Note: It is attached to the Customary as an Appendix. Deacons are expected to be familiar with the form and to use it. The service leaflet should refer to the liturgy as "A Liturgy of the Word with Holy

Communion from Reserved Sacrament” or “Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.” The phrase “Deacon’s Mass” should never be used.

The service follows the typical form (Liturgy of the Word) up to the Peace. After the Peace, the deacon places the reserved sacrament on the altar and sets the table according to parish custom. Taking a position in the center aisle and facing the altar, the deacon leads the people in the Litany of the Presanctified Gifts, a litany provided by the diocese. The deacon then leads the people in the Lord’s Prayer. The deacon then moves to the altar, takes the elements, faces the people and says, “The Gifts of God for the People of God.” Holy Communion is then distributed according to the usual parish practice.

Following Communion, the deacon leads the people in the Post Communion Prayer and gives the Dismissal. There is no blessing.

- **Holy Baptism**

The deacon is responsible for the usual diaconal functions when there is baptism. The deacon may also carry the Pascal Candle and lead the procession to the font. The deacon may also lead the Prayers for the Candidates. The priest usually administers baptism, but the deacon may do so on occasions when the deacon has a close relationship with the person being baptized, e.g. a member of the deacon’s family or a person whom the deacon has prepared for baptism.

The deacon may assist in other ways, e.g. holding the Prayer Book for the priest, pouring the water into the font during the Thanksgiving over the Water, lighting the baptismal candle and presenting it to the person who has been baptized or to the family.

- **Holy Week Liturgies**

In addition to the usual diaconal functions in the liturgy, the deacon has special roles in these services.

Palm Sunday: Liturgy of the Palms

The deacon reads the Gospel lesson and gives the opening words for The Procession (BCP, p. 271)

Maundy Thursday

This is an appropriate occasion for the deacon to preach because of the servant ministry symbolized in the footwashing.

At the end of communion, if the remaining Sacrament is to be reserved for use on Good Friday, the deacon places the bread and wine in the designated place (tabernacle, Altar of Repose).

Where it is the custom to strip the altar at the conclusion of the liturgy, the deacon can coordinate this action. If desired, the deacon can wash the altar after it has been stripped and liturgical objects have been removed.

Good Friday

The deacon invites the people to prayer and says or sings the biddings for the Solemn Collects (BCP, p. 277-280). If there is to be Communion from Reserved Sacrament, the deacon brings the consecrated bread and wine to the altar and prepares the table.

Easter Vigil

The specific functions assigned to the deacon in this liturgy are carrying the Paschal Candle and singing/saying "The Light of Christ" while leading the procession. Once the candle is in place, the deacon, standing near the candle, sings or says The Exsultet.

In the rest of the liturgy the deacon has the usual roles, including those for Holy Baptism if that is part of the service.

- **Other Services**

The priest in the parish/mission is responsible for funerals and weddings and is expected to preside at these liturgies. The deacon may assist in these services as her/his schedule permits. The deacon has the usual diaconal functions and may have additional roles at the direction of the priest.

Upon occasion, the priest may authorize the deacon to preside at a funeral or a wedding, if there is to be no Eucharist. In these cases, the priest must request permission for this assignment from the Bishop and then notify the Archdeacon that the deacon has permission to preside.

In all other cases of requests for a deacon to officiate at a liturgy in another diocese, the deacon should contact the Archdeacon to obtain information about the procedure to be followed.

The Deacon in Diocesan Liturgies

In services where the Bishop presides, e.g. ordinations, confirmations, Diocesan Convention Eucharist, deacons have the usual diaconal functions (proclaiming the Gospel, preparing the table, giving the Dismissal). In addition, the Bishop has attending deacons, usually two. One deacon has responsibility for the Bishop's service book and assisting the Bishop in following the service. The other deacon is responsible for the Bishop's miter and crozier, i.e. giving and receiving them from the Bishop at the appropriate times. On some occasions, e.g. in deanery confirmations when a deanery has a small number of deacons, the attending deacons may have the usual diaconal functions as well.

The Archdeacon assigns deacons to serve in these liturgies.

Appendix

Communion from Reserved Sacrament

After the Liturgy of the Word (and the receiving of the people's offering) the deacon places the consecrated Sacrament on the Altar, during which time a communion hymn may be sung.

The officiating deacon then walks to a place in the midst of the Assembly, stands facing the Altar (with the Assembly standing), and invites them to join in the Litany of the Consecrated Gifts. This litany, given below, should be printed in the bulletin.

The Litany of the Consecrated Gifts

Deacon We give thanks to you, O God, for all things
good and beneficial to our bodies and souls.

Assembly **We thank you, O God.**

Deacon For the Body and Blood of Christ, set here before us;

Assembly **We thank you, O God.**

Deacon That you have brought us together in this place;

Assembly **We thank you, O God.**

Deacon That your eternal Word was made flesh for us;

Assembly **We thank you, O God.**

Deacon For Christ's life and ministry, death and resurrection;

Assembly **We thank you, O God.**

Deacon That you fill our lives with grace and grant us the gift of the Holy Spirit;

Assembly **We thank you, O God.**

Deacon That through this Sacrament you grant us a pledge of our eternal inheritance;

Assembly **We thank you, O God.**

Deacon We pray, therefore, in the words our Savior Christ has taught us.

The officiating deacon then leads the Assembly in the Lord's Prayer.

The officiating deacon then walks to the table, picks up the Bread and the Cup, faces the Assembly and says, "The Gifts of God for the People of God." There is no fraction or fraction anthem. Holy Communion is distributed to all who desire it by the officiating deacon and lay Eucharistic ministers, as appropriate. Hymn(s) or anthem(s) may be sung during the distribution, according to the congregation's custom.

After Communion, the officiating deacon clears the Altar, leads the Assembly in the postcommunion prayer (pp. 339, 365, or 366) and dismisses them.