



A Customary for Deacons

The Episcopal Diocese of Missouri

Introduction

This customary sets out guidelines for the role of deacons in liturgies, both in the local worshipping communities, and in diocesan liturgies, e.g. ordinations and confirmations. These should be considered norms for the liturgy. It has been approved by Bishop Deon and by the Community of Deacons 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
- Bidding the Confession
- Bidding the Creed
- Bidding the Prayers of the People

If there is a deacon in a worshipping community, 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.

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 worshipping community has dalmatics that match its chasubles, the deacon wears that dalmatic. If the worshipping community does not have matching vestments, a plain ivory or white dalmatic with the stole worn on the outside is appropriate and preferred. **Deacons are not required to own dalmatics.**

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, she/he may wear cassock and surplice with deacon's stole, tippet, or academic hood.

The Deacon in Local Liturgies

- **THE GOSPEL BOOK**
 - If the community 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 local custom, the deacon may also carry the Gospel Book in the closing procession at the end of the service. In some worshiping communities 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
 - The deacon announces the Gospel and makes a mark of the cross with her/his thumb on the opening word of the reading. She/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. When the Bishop is present the Gospel Book should be brought to the Bishop to be kissed following proclamation.
 - 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 local custom, by an acolyte. The deacon or the acolyte brings a corporal and a chalice to the altar. Note: in some worshiping communities 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 local custom).
 - The deacon first spreads a corporal on the table 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 a guest Presider, the deacon should ask that person prior to the liturgy about her/his preference.

- **THE 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 the Eucharistic Prayer and Words of Invitation).
 - After the Fraction or the Words of Invitation (per local 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 concluded, 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 local 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 local 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 deacon is also responsible 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 lay people who have responsibility for reading the prayers. If the various forms of the Prayers of the People in the BCP are not in use and the local custom is to write or customize the Prayers of the People, the deacon is responsible for this task or may oversee those whose ministry it is to write the Prayers.
- **COMMUNION FROM RESERVED SACRAMENT**
 - On occasions when the priest cannot preside at Sunday Eucharist, deacons are authorized by the Bishop to distribute Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament using the form provided below. This may be done only if, after diligent effort, no substitute priest can be found. The deacon 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 Bishop.
 - 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 she/he used the form, providing the date and an explanation of the circumstances.

- The Diocese of Missouri 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 local custom.
 - Taking a position in the center aisle and facing the altar, the deacon leads the people in the Litany of the Consecrated Gifts, a litany provided below.
 - 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 local 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 Paschal Candle and lead the procession to the font. The deacon may also lead the Prayers for the Candidates. The Presider 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 Presider, 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 foot washing.
 - 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, sings or chants the biddings for the Solemn Collects (BCP, p. 277-280). If there is to be Communion from the 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/chanting “The Light of Christ” while leading the procession. Once the candle is in place, the deacon, standing near the candle, may sing, say, or chant The Exsultet. The Exsultet may be sung, said or chanted by a cantor or others assigned this duty.
 - 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 worshiping community 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 all other cases of requests for a deacon to officiate a liturgy in another diocese, the deacon should contact the Archdeacon of the Diocese of Missouri to obtain information about the procedure to be followed.
- **THE DEACON IN DIOCESAN LITURGIES**

- In services where the Bishop presides, e.g. ordinations, confirmation, Diocesan Convention Eucharist etc., 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.

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.

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

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

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

Deacon That you have brought us together in this place;

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

Deacon That your eternal Word was made flesh for us;

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

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

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

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

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

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

People **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 lay Eucharistic Ministers not the officiating Deacon**. 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 customary post communion prayer. Following the post communion prayer the officiating deacon leads the assembly in the Act of Thanksgiving:

ACT OF THANKSGIVING

Deacon Let us pray.

Silence is kept for a time.

Deacon God of all creation, we gather on this first day of the week made holy by the resurrection of Christ, your Son.

People ***In the waters of baptism we were buried with him so that we might also rise with him and so share his victory over sin and death.***

Deacon You have transformed our lives into the living stones that form your Church with Christ as the foundation stone.

People ***Strengthen this community's bond of communion and peace and deepen our solidarity with your Church throughout the world. Rekindle within us this Sabbath day the vision of your kingdom so that our daily concerns and labor may find their proper perspective.***

Deacon Fill our homes with the spirit of the Gospel.

People ***Give us the grace to see the true face of the people with whom we live. In a world torn by sin and division make us instruments of reconciliation and mercy. We raise our voices in praise and thanksgiving to you, O God.***

Deacon May we who celebrate Christ's resurrection this day share in his eternal glory where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The officiating deacon then dismisses the people. No blessing is given.