



## **What Does a Deacon Do?**

By Deacon Dottie Vuono, December 2009

A deacon is a liaison between the community and the Congregation whose work is supported by the Church. A deacon works in the world continually serving the needs of God's people.

A deacon can be a Chaplain, Office Manager or Administrator, Staff Member within the Church, or employed in different types of secular jobs and may serve on Boards. It has been said that a deacon looks at things differently. Seeing or learning of needs that must be met is when the Holy Spirit speaks within the deacon saying "This needs to be done," and then the deacon gets others involved, giving guidance and leadership in helping to do the work of God.

There are two different distinctions of deacons - Vocational and Transitional. A Transitional deacon will serve as deacon for a period of 6 months to a year before being ordained a priest. A Vocational deacon is a life-long servant to the people never moving into priesthood.

The deacon is not a fill-in priest nor assumes priest's duties. The deacon can assist the priest at all Sacraments and Services but does not substitute for the priest when he/she is on vacation. The deacon may give instructions for Baptism and Confirmation at the discretion of the priest.

In the Liturgy a deacon is responsible for duties that show they serve the Church in the world and, in so doing, represent the people of Christ.

The deacon walks alongside the priest as an ordained Minister of the Church yet sits at the right side of the priest as a sign of servant. This act of servant is the similar to what Jesus did several times when He was a servant; washing the feet of the Apostles is one example.

A primary responsibility of the deacon is to proclaim the Gospel. When a deacon is not present the priest reads the Gospel. The deacon may preach occasionally or when requested to do so. St. Stephen, who was one of the first deacons of the Church, proclaimed and preached the Gospel. He lost his life and became the first Christian Martyr because he chose to proclaim the Gospel. Reading the Gospel reminds the people to proclaim the Word in act and deed in the world.

The deacon assists in the Prayers of the People as they are prayers that the people pray. Guiding others to write their own Prayers of the People is another ministry that the deacon helps people to do. The Forms of Prayers of the People in the BCP are example guidelines and can be changed. A deacon may also form intercessory prayer groups.

The deacon accepts the "Gifts of the People, the people's bread and wine." During the early Church the people brought whatever crops they grew as offerings to God. These gifts were accepted in the sight of God as an outward sign of their love. Today, other gift offerings may be made as well along with the bread and wine such as special collection items for the poor.

The deacon, acting as a servant, sets the table preparing it for the priest who will consecrate the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The deacon helps to administer the

consecrated elements upon the request of the priest and, after communion helps to put away the Eucharistic vessels.

The deacon may be responsible for the Eucharistic Visitors, keeping a record of actual visits: and with the rector, assign shut-ins to Eucharistic Visitors. Deacons also “send out” the Eucharistic Visitors to bring communion to members who are not able to attend the worship service.

At the end of the Mass, on behalf of the members of the congregation, the deacon speaks the words of dismissal sending all out into the world to do the work that Jesus taught us to do. While Jesus was on earth he visited the sick, helped cure those who suffered, ate with outcasts, and showed God’s love to all. Jesus was the first servant and by his example showed deacons and all Baptized Christians how to act in the service and to the glory of God.

The deacon may preach on occasion when requested but not in regular rotation. Deacons may attend monthly Vestry meetings as ordained member of the staff with voice and no vote. The deacon may serve on Diocesan Committees/Commissions/Boards as appointed or elected.