



What is a Deacon?

Deacons have been present in the since the earliest years of Christianity, appointed by the Apostles to assist with caring for the poor, and the practical organisation of Church.

Although often seen as a step in preparation for priesthood, the Church in recent times has recognised the importance of the role of the Permanent Deacon, as the sign of Jesus Christ the Servant in the Church and in the wider community.

A Deacon is a man called by the Bishop of the Diocese to Ordination.
He is ordained to serve the Church in a threefold ministry

The Ministry of Charity –

He is particularly called to serve the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised.
He will coordinate the local church's response to their needs.
He will have a special care for matters of social justice.
He will foster and support parish groups and organisations.

The Ministry of the Word –

He will proclaim the Gospel and sometimes preach at Mass and other Religious Services.
He will preside over Services other than the Mass.
He will lead the people in Prayer
He will officiate at Funeral and Burial Services.

The Ministry of the Altar –

He will offer Service at the altar at Mass assisting the Bishop or Priest.
He will distribute Holy Communion at Mass, in hospital and in the homes of the sick, the housebound and the dying.
He will Baptise and prepare people for the Sacrament of Baptism.
He will officiate at Marriages and prepare couples for that Sacrament of Marriage.

Formation Programme

This is a four year programme, consisting of a propaedeutic period and three years formal study.

The applicant undergoes a psychological assessment, a formal selection panel, and interview by the Cardinal Archbishop before being accepted as aspirant into the propaedeutic programme lasting six to twelve months. This propaedeutic programme is an introductory period initiating the aspirants into a formal prayer life, basic liturgy and a way of thinking with Christ and his Church. The aspirant will then start formal studies lasting three years, culminating in a degree. The study programme starts in September, and if all goes well, the aspirant is admitted by the Bishop as a Candidate for the Permanent Diaconate.

During this period of study and formation the focus is on the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development of the candidate in all appropriate areas of theology, scripture, catechesis, liturgy, Canon Law and other related subjects. In addition to monthly formation days there are two study weekends and a retreat weekend during each of the three years. The studies will lead to a Foundation Degree in Pastoral Ministry, and Postgraduate Certificate in Catholic Social Teaching.

Each year there is an assessment process. The assessments facilitate the process of discernment, God's call to the individual candidate. Therefore, acceptance of the applicant into the formation programme does not automatically mean acceptance for ordination. If all is well, the candidate is instituted as a Lector at the end of the first year of formal training, the following year as Acolyte, and finally Ordained a Permanent Deacon at the end of the third year of the study programme.

Ordination

The role of a Deacon, once Ordained, will depend on the individual, their skills, and their availability in the light of their family and work commitments, as well as the needs of the Diocese and the Parish. However, all Deacons need to be able to work within their Parish if called to do so. Deacons who are in full-time employment, especially those, for example, working as teachers, doctors, nurses, in evangelisation, social care, and charitable work or engaged to work at Diocesan level, may not be able to carry out certain Diaconal duties very often within the Parish. However, irrespective of the frequency with which they may occur, a man once ordained will be expected to be able to be proficient in the key aspects of his ministry.

The Deacon will continue to be a sign of Christ the Servant throughout their lives.