

# DEACON CUSTOMARY



## EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF FLORIDA

### **The Right Reverend Samuel Johnson Howard**

“A deacon is a baptized person called and empowered by God and the Church to be a model of Christ's servant ministry for all people. As agents of God's compassion and reconciling grace, deacons are missionaries to the world and messengers to the Church of the world's needs, hopes, and concerns. In the Church, deacons call forth, empower, and inspire the baptized to respond to these needs. The role of the deacon in the liturgy mirrors this role of the deacon in Church and world. Deacons are living symbols of Christ's presence as they embody Christ's servant ministry and point to the presence of Christ in those they serve.

(Association for Episcopal Deacons)

## **The Nature of the Diaconate**

The Ordinal (BCP, p.543) describes the nature of the diaconate as:

*My brother/sister every Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ serving God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God now calls you to a special ministry of servanthood directly under your bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.*

*As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word, and example, to those among whom you live, and work and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time. At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.*

## **Deacon's Relationship to the Bishop**

Deacons have had a special relationship to the Bishop since apostolic times. Each deacon reports directly to the Bishop or his designated representative and is under the direct pastoral care of the Bishop.

Deacons are appointed to their respective ministries by the Bishop. The Bishop will assign a deacon to a parish or mission with the consent of the rector/vicar. Often this is **not** the parish or mission that sponsored the deacon for ordination, but the assignment will be a decision made by the Bishop in consultation with all concerned.

## **Deacon's Relationship to the Congregation and the Priest**

Deacons serve the congregation with the expressed permission of the priest/vicar and are under the direction of the priest/vicar concerning matters of the congregation. When a new priest is called, the assigned deacon must offer his/her resignation from that congregation to the Bishop.

## **Annual Reports**

An annual report is due to the Bishop at the start of the calendar year in January. A copy of the annual report is to be sent to the Archdeacon as well. The copy should include a paragraph stating what each deacon has done in the parish to encourage the parish's outreach into the world. Also a brief note to highlight what each deacon is personally doing in the world.

## **Spiritual Direction**

It is expected that a deacon will maintain a disciplined prayer life and follow a regular course of study. Deacons are to be in Spiritual Direction with a trained Spiritual Director approved by the Bishop. The Spiritual Director must be in direction themselves.

## **Compensation and Benefits**

Diaconal ministry is usually non-stipendiary. However, a congregation may reimburse a deacon for some expenses like mileage, attendance at Convention or other diocesan events.

It is expected that deacons will contribute financially to the church in which they serve. It is customary that the contribution be the biblical standard.

## **Discretionary Funds**

The Diocese of Florida does not encourage that deacons have discretionary funds. Deacons are again non stipendiary. If a deacon has a fund it must be audited annually.

## **Continuing Education**

Deacons are expected to attend the two clergy conferences in the diocese which are usually held at Camp Weed and Cervený Conference Center in March and October. It is also the expectation that deacons are to attend the annual Deacons' Day with the Bishop which is generally the first Tuesday in May. All deacons are invited to attend refresher classes at the Bishop's Institute for Diaconal Education and other continuing ed.

## **Diocesan Convention**

Deacons are expected to attend Diocesan Convention in January. To be excused, one must receive permission from Bishop Howard. Deacons are allowed seat, voice and vote at Convention. They vote as clergy.

## **Councils of the Church**

In the Diocese of Florida, deacons must meet with the Diocesan Bishop and obtain his approval before having their names placed in nominations for a diocesan or General Convention office. It is appropriate for the Bishop to appoint a deacon to serve on the Commission on Ministry.

## **Deacons' Ministry in the Liturgy**

A deacon takes the appropriate place along with the Bishop (when present), the priest, other liturgical ministers, and the gathered laity. The Bishop or priest presides at the Liturgy. During the liturgy, the role of a deacon is as follows:

Process with the Gospel Book

Read the Gospel

Preach occasionally with the permission of the priest or the Bishop  
Lead or at least introduce the Nicene Creed, the Prayers of the People,  
and issue the invitation to the Confession of Sin  
Prepare the table and receive the gifts  
Stand at the left side of the Celebrant during the Great Thanksgiving, assist  
her/him with the missal and raise the chalice at the end of the canon  
Distribute the bread and/or wine  
Perform the ablutions assisted by the Eucharistic Ministers  
Give the dismissal  
Carry the Paschal candle in procession at the Easter Vigil, baptisms and  
funerals  
Lead the Prayers for the Candidates at baptism and confirmations  
Sing or say the Exsultet at the Easter Vigil

### **Deacons' Ministry in the World**

A deacon's ministry is twofold. They symbolically have a foot in the Church and a foot in the world. Deacons are to be in the world serving and bringing Christ to the world as well as to be serving in the church bringing the world to Christ. Deacons are to encourage outreach ministries within parishes and to sit on the outreach committee in the parish.

### **Deacons as Ministers of the Reserved Sacrament/Pre-sanctified**

Under **no** circumstance should a deacon in the Diocese of Florida offer communion from the Reserved Sacrament in the liturgy even if the absent priest requests a deacon to do so. This is often referred to as a "Deacon's Mass" and is not permitted in this Diocese.

### **Deacons as Trainers and Supervisors of Eucharistic Ministers**

The laity is trained by a group of designated deacons to carry the sacrament to members of the congregation who are sick or in the hospital. Trainings are held in the five regions of the Diocese two times a year. To be a trainer, a deacon must be a part of the training team.

It is appropriate for congregational deacons to schedule the Eucharistic visitors and to send the visitors out from the primary Eucharist of the day. At no time should Eucharistic Visitors conduct services in nursing homes to a larger group of residents without a priest accompanying them to lead the service! It is the responsibility of the parish deacon to make sure that Eucharistic lay led services are not happening.

### **Clerical Clothing and Liturgical Dress by Deacons**

Street clothing is the **norm** for deacons. Deacons are asked to wear clerical attire only when serving in a liturgical role, when representing the church in an official capacity or

when exercising their special ministry in the world. A deacon should have a deacon's stole in seasonal colors, an alb and dalmatic if desired.

### **Titles**

“The Reverend” applies to all clergy for use in written communication and for introductions. In the Diocese of Florida, the written title and title for introduction of a deacon is “the Rev. Dn. Joe Smith. The “Venerable” is the title for an Archdeacon. Often deacons prefer to be addressed as “Deacon Joe”.

### **Retirement**

On reaching the age of 72, a deacon shall retire. In the Diocese of Florida, any deacon desiring to continue in active ministry after the age of 72, must write Bishop Howard asking for permission to serve for the next calendar year. This request must be made annually to the Bishop. It is the Bishop's decision whether a deacon will be allowed to continue on a yearly basis.

### **Role of the Archdeacon**

The Archdeacon is appointed by the Bishop to assist him in coordinating deacons for the leadership of mission ministry within and beyond the body of the church. The overall objective of the Archdeacon is to develop, build, form and maintain a vibrant deacon community in the diocese.

The Archdeacon provides pastoral care to the community of deacons, assists in deployment, provides communication to the community, encourages the raising up of potential deacons and co-chairs the diaconal training at the Bishop's Institute for Leadership and Learning.

### **The Bishop's Visitation**

Arrive 30-45 minutes before the service to vest and get your spirit centered in prayer.

Review the Altar Book and the Gospel Book to be sure that everything is properly marked with ribbons. Check the Credence Table to be sure all vessels are there and filled.

Check the Bishop's seating and place an extra service bulletin on the Bishop's chair.

When the Bishop arrives, assist him in carrying his vestments and staff into the Rector's office. Bishop Howard likes for you to assemble his crozier and place his crozier stand near the Bishop's chair.

Return to the vesting area and stay nearby in case the Bishop needs something. After the service, return his vestments, BCP and crozier stand to his car while the Bishop meets with the congregation in the parish hall.

The Bishop will process in and recess out carrying the crozier and wearing the mitre. Be prepared to carry his BCP if needed.

As the Bishop's chaplain, you will stand and sit beside him. If the Bishop is leading the opening prayers from the middle of the chancel, stand on his right, hold the crozier in your left hand with the crook facing out and hold the Bishop's prayer book open to the correct spot in your right hand so he can see it.

When the Bishop proceeds to his seat behind the altar, place his mitre on the left side of the front of the altar with the lappets hanging over the altar facing the congregation. (Bishop Howard does not always bring his mitre.) Also, at this time place the crozier in its stand near the Bishop's chair.

Set the table for communion.

Be prepared to point the book for the Bishop. He prefers that you do that standing on his left side.

At the Post Communion Prayer, get the crozier and hand it to the Bishop before he blesses the people.

Recess out immediately in front of the Bishop and deliver the dismissal from the rear of the church.