

*What is a Deacon in the Catholic Church?*

A deacon is an ordained Catholic minister but not a priest. In ordination he is marked with a sacramental character that cannot be undone. Only a bishop in apostolic succession can make a man a deacon.

There are two groups of deacons; transitional and permanent. Transitional deacons are seminarians who usually go on to be priests. Permanent deacons may be married men but once ordained they cannot get married.

Deacons assist the priest in liturgy beyond what is allowed for lay people. They are also ordinary ministers of Eucharist and not just extraordinary ministers of Communion. They can read the Gospel and preach homilies. They can preside at and bless marriages, preside at funerals, and baptize. They can officially preside at Liturgy of the Hours, and the rites of RCIA. Besides liturgical ministries, deacons are especially called to services of charity and various social ministries. Deacons are mostly self-supporting.

Some things a deacon cannot do are say Mass, hear Confessions, Sacramentally anoint the sick, and confirm.

St. Stephen (Acts 6) was one of the original seven deacons of the early Church. They were ordained by the apostles to relieve Church leaders of some of their routine work thus freeing them for their primary apostolic mission of preaching, praying, leading and sanctifying. Stephen later became the first martyr of Christianity. By his sacrifice all are blessed.

St. Ignatius of Antioch (CCC #1554) who was ordained bishop by St. Peter, writes, "Let everyone revere the deacon as Jesus Christ." Then as today, a good and holy deacon is a special blessing to a parish. He is a gift and support to a pastor and his flock

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders (bishop – priest – deacon) the official mission given the apostles by Jesus continues in God's Church today.