

The Permanent Deacon

The Permanent Diaconate has been a restored Office of the Church since 1968. **Permanent Deacons** in the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese receive a minimum of 5 years of academic education and diaconal formation. Some have advanced degrees such as a Master of Arts in Theology or other Ecclesial Discipline.

A **Deacon** is an ordained minister of the Catholic Church. There are three groups, or Orders of ordained ministers in the Church: Bishops, Priests (presbyters) and Deacons.

Deacons are ordained as a sacramental sign to the Church **and** to the word of Christ, who came “*to serve and not be served.*” The entire Church is called by Christ to serve, and the **Deacon**, in virtue of his sacramental ordination and through his various ministries, is to be a **servant in a servant-Church**.

The various ministries of the Deacon are:

As ministers of the Word, Deacons:

- Carry the Book of Gospels
- Proclaim the Gospel
- Guide the faithful people by giving them instruction
- Announce the intentions of the Universal Prayer
- Preach and teach in the name of the Church
- Provide spiritual direction and counsel (if properly trained)

As ministers of Sacrament and Prayer, Deacons:

- Baptize
- Witness marriages
- Function as ORDINARY ministers of the Eucharist
- Assist Priests and Bishops at Mass
- Lead the faithful in prayer and Eucharistic Devotion
- Assist with Christian Burial by conducting Vigils, Services without a Mass and Committals
- Other functions at special liturgies as noted in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*

As ministers of Charity, Deacons:

- Are leaders in identifying the needs of others, then organizing the Church's resources to meet those needs

Deacons, priests, and bishops are considered clerics, members of the clergy, in the Catholic Church. Just as a Priest is normally addressed as “Father”, the **Deacon** is addressed as “Deacon _____ (first or last name as the Deacon prefers).”

The Attire of the Permanent Deacon:

Although very similar, the vestments of the **Deacon** and those of the Priest are different. Both wear a white alb. However, the colored stole of the **Deacon** is worn diagonally while that of the Priest is worn vertically. The outer garment of the **Deacon** is a dalmatic and it has sleeves. That of the Priest is called a chasuble and does not have sleeves.

In the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese, the proper formal non-liturgical attire of the **Deacon** is normally a tie and jacket. Sometimes the **Deacon** wears a lapel pin, which is a cross with a diagonal stole on top of it. This is the symbol of the office of the **Permanent Diaconate**.

