

What is a Permanent Deacon

By Deacon Peter Cistaro

A permanent deacon is a man of faith and love. As an ordained minister of the Catholic Church, he strives to extend that faith and love by serving the sick, the lonely, the troubled and the poor by proclaiming the Word of God, and by administering His Sacraments. As the Greek word *diakonos* suggests, a deacon is a servant, assisting in the work of bringing God to His people and of reconciling His people to God through the proclamation of the Word, celebration of the Sacraments and service to others. Often his most effective ministry on behalf of the Church is in the surroundings of his worldly environment.

The Church as a servant carries on the mission of Christ. The deacon, a witness to the serving Christ, is a man of faith called by the Church to serve God and his neighbor as an official representative of the Church in loving service to others in the community and in the marketplace. The deacon with roots both in the world and in ordained ministry shares the service of both elements of the Church.

While proclaiming by his public activity his concern for the re-ordering of human institutions, his ordained service reaffirms his commitment to the Church as the instrument of God's salvation. The deacon serves as a bond between the Church and the world, between clergy and laity, and is a concrete manifestation of the love of the Father and of Jesus for the Church and the world.

Some specific forms of service in which the deacon may be involved are: health care ministry, youth ministry, prison ministry, campus ministry, pastoral counseling, religious education, baptism, marriage preparation and ministry to the elderly, the homeless, the divorced and separated and the marginalized victims of our society. Deacons may also be administrators on the diocesan or parish level.

The deacon has a unique calling and his response to that call acknowledges God's special design in his life and, indeed, in the life of his family if he is a husband and father. The call is not away from the world but rather into it.

The deacon, a symbol of service, makes a difference through his dedication and the manner and form in which he publicly responds through ministry. He is willing to take risks and to re-define his life by selfless service to others who, with him, share the enterprise of life. Yet, as a man of God, the deacon must be a man of prayer and reflection, open to pondering his experiences in the light of his faith.

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