



The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Episcopal Church in Western Washington

www.ecww.org

Customary for Deacons

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From the Office of the Bishop

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Function of the Deacon in the Eucharist	2
The function of the Deacon in Holy Baptism	3
The function of the Deacon in Proper Liturgies for Special Days	4
During Lent	4
Palm Sunday	4
Maundy Thursday	4
Good Friday	4
Easter Vigil	4
The function of the Deacon at the Marriage Rite	4
The Deacon and Ministration to the Sick	5
The function of the Deacon during Bishop’s Visitations and in Diocesan Eucharists	5

When the deacon is assigned to a congregation, he/she serves at the pleasure of the Bishop, if present, and otherwise the priest in charge. The following addresses the function and role of the deacon in the Eucharist and various other special liturgies.

The Function of the Deacon in the Eucharist

When a deacon is present, he/she will vest and participate in the liturgy.

When a deacon is one of the ministers at the Eucharist, the deacon shall:

- Read the Gospel
- Bid the Prayers of the People
- Read the exhortation to confession
- Pronounce the dismissal

The deacon shall stand at the altar with the celebrant. If more than one deacon is present, it is appropriate that the other(s) also be at the altar with the celebrant.

When a deacon is one of the ministers at the Eucharist, the deacon shall prepare the altar. This includes:

- Preparing the vessels
- Receiving the offerings and oblations from the laity
- Attending to a second chalice and/or paten during the administration
- Removing the vessels after communion and performing or supervising Ablutions, if that is the custom

When there are two deacons present at Eucharist one deacon shall:

- Assist in administering the Communion, offering either the bread or the cup,

The second deacon shall:

- Attend the altar by performing such functions as refilling the patens, Refilling the chalices and preparing the Eucharistic home communion kits

It is appropriate and recommended that the deacon be responsible for assuring that those communicants who are unable to come forward have the sacraments brought to them.

It is appropriate and recommended, when a deacon is present, that the deacon:

- Read the Summary of the Law and the Comfortable Words (in Rite I services)

- Lead or be responsible for the Prayers of the People
- Lead the Confession
- Elevate the cup at the doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer and at the celebrant's words, "The gifts of God for the People of God," while the celebrant elevates the paten

When a deacon administers the bread during Communion and comes to a child or adult who does not receive, it is appropriate for the deacon to sign them with the cross and greet them with an appropriate liturgical phrase, assuring that person of God's love for them.

Deacons may(should) be invited to preach on a regular basis by the priest in charge of the congregation.

In an emergency, where a Eucharistic service is scheduled and no priest is available, an available deacon may, at the request of the parish priest, conduct a daily prayer service instead. In rare circumstances, at the priest's request and **ONLY** with the **SPECIFIC PRIOR APPROVAL** of the Bishop, as it is discouraged, the deacon may officiate at the Liturgy of the Word and distribute the Holy Eucharist using reserved sacraments in accordance with the directions on page 408 of the Book of Common Prayer.

The function of the Deacon in Holy Baptism

When present, deacons shall vest and participate as ministers at Baptism.

The deacon shall:

- Read the Gospel
- Read or be responsible for the prayers for the candidates(s)
- Assist the celebrant by pouring the water into the font, holding towels, oil stock or Prayer Book, lighting candles from the Paschal Candle, and otherwise being of service.
- Present the newly baptized with the baptismal candle saying, " _____, receive the light of Christ and carry it forth into the world."

In this diocese deacons are not customarily the sole officiant at baptisms, and **MUST** have the Bishop's permission to do so in each case. The baptismal water may not be blessed by a deacon.

The function of the Deacon in Proper Liturgies for Special Days

Ash Wednesday

It is appropriate and recommended for the deacon to read the Invitation on page 264 of the Book of Common Prayer and to assist in the imposition of ashes.

It is also appropriate for the deacon to sing or say the Great Litany at any time it is used.

During Lent

When it is used, it is appropriate for the deacon to read the Exhortation.

Palm Sunday

If the deacon is one of the ministers on Palm Sunday, the deacon shall read the Gospel in the Liturgy of the Palms and bid the people to procession. It is traditional to have the deacon act as the narrator if the Passion Gospel is read or sung in parts.

Maundy Thursday

If a deacon is one of the ministers on Maundy Thursday, the deacon should participate in the washing of feet according to the local custom of the parish.

Good Friday

If a deacon is one of the ministers of the Good Friday liturgy, the deacon shall read or sing the biddings included in the Solemn Collects, tailoring them as appropriate.

Easter Vigil

If a deacon is one of the ministers during the Easter Vigil, the deacon shall lead and bear the paschal candle in procession and shall sing or say the Exsultet.

The function of the Deacon at the Marriage Rite

When assisting a priest at a marriage ceremony, the deacon shall:

- Deliver the charge
- Request the Declaration of Consent
- Read the Gospel
- And perform those assisting functions previously outlined in the section on the Eucharist

It is preferable that a priest or the Bishop preside at a marriage ceremony. However, if no priest or bishop is available and a deacon is asked to officiate at a marriage in their absence, the deacon may accomplish the celebration of a marriage up to, but not including, the Blessing of the Marriage. Prior to agreeing to perform the marriage ceremony, the deacon is to consult with the Bishop.

The Deacon and Ministration to the Sick

It is appropriate for a deacon to perform the service and anoint with oil, using oil blessed by a bishop or priest.

The function of the Deacon during Bishop's Visitations and in Diocesan Eucharists

All of the Customary above applies when the Bishop is the celebrant. In addition, the Bishop's chaplain should be a deacon, if possible. If two deacons are available, it is appropriate that both attend the Bishop.

In procession, the deacon(s) precede the Bishop. If it is the custom for the Gospel book to be carried in the procession, the Deacon of the Word may carry it, unless there is someone already assigned to carry the book. The Bishop is always last.

If you are attending the Bishop, whether one or two deacons, neither deacon has anything in their hands. Each should make sure a bulletin has been placed on their seat prior to the beginning of the service. In the procession when you reach the altar reverence the altar with the Bishop, then turn and reverence the congregation. It is important that you are in sync with the Bishop's piety. This is also true when standing at the altar.

For the Bishop's Visitation the deacon attending is on the bishop's left. If there is a 2nd deacon this deacon is on the Bishop's right. The first deacon is generally the Deacon of the Table

and the book holder for the bishop. The second deacon holds the bishop's crozier and miter when needed and is generally Deacon of the Word. The second deacon (or lay Eucharistic minister) follows the lead of the first deacon. If there is only one deacon serving then not only are you Deacon of the Table, but you are also Deacon of the Word.

When the bishop is standing you are holding his presider's book in such a way that the book is in front of him so he may face the congregation. When the bishop moves you move. This would be true for 2 deacons as well, the 2nd deacon holding the crozier. When the bishop is moving, he carries the crozier, so the deacon walks alongside.

The dalmatic is the proper liturgical vestment for deacons corresponding to the chasuble for priests and bishops. In this diocese dalmatics are customarily worn at Diocesan Eucharists. It is appropriate that deacons wear dalmatics at bishop's visitations to parishes, if available.

Deacon (s) plan to arrive 30 minutes prior to the first service so that you are present to help the Bishop when he arrives. Questions you might want to ask when you arrive regarding the service: 1) When are the alms brought forward, who receives them. 2) Inquire about a microphone for the bishop and try to have available for him prior to him vesting. 3) What is the seating arrangement for the deacon (s) and Bishop. Deacon (s) should be seated on either side of the Bishop.

At all diocesan services, the roles of deacons shall be filled by deacons.