

# Understanding the Mass

## The Deacon

*Each week, we are explaining the different parts of the Mass - what is in the church, what we use in the Mass, and why (and how) we celebrate Mass the way we do.*

*Today our topic is the **Deacon**.*

As well as altar servers and acolytes, another person who assists the priest in the celebration of Mass is the **deacon**, a word that comes from the Greek word *διάκονος*, or *diakonos*, and means "servant", "minister", or "messenger".

Deacons have been part of the Church since its earliest days, when the Apostles appointed Saint Stephen (the patron saint of deacons) and six other men to help take care of the early Christian community.

Like these early Christians, today's deacons are called to serve God's people through the ministries of liturgy, word, and charity.



*Therefore brethren pick out from among you seven men of good repute full of the Spirit and of wisdom*

There are two types of deacon: permanent and transitional. Both types of deacons are ordained into their roles; this means they are formally consecrated (specially blessed) and authorised to complete certain roles. *Permanent deacons* are ordained into the diaconate with the intention of remaining in that role, whilst *transitional deacons* are usually seminarians in the last stage of training before being ordained into the priesthood.

During the Mass, the deacon will proclaim the Gospel reading and lead the prayers of the faithful. He may also deliver the Homily. The deacon will assist the priest in receiving the offertory gifts, prepares the chalice, and will assist in the distribution of Holy Communion.

Beyond the Mass, deacons can also baptise, witness marriages, and preside at funerals or burial services. Just like priests, deacons are assigned to parishes and tasks by the bishop, according to the needs of the diocese. Usually, a deacon will be assigned to a parish close to his home. He may also be required to take on ministry – such as providing pastoral services in hospitals, prisons, nursing home etc. – outside the parish.

How many kinds of deacons are there? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the responsibilities of a deacon during the Mass? \_\_\_\_\_