

## LITURGICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE DIACONATE

From New Testament times, the deacon has been associated with the bishop in the ministry of the church. The diaconate developed early as a professional ministry, with administrative and liturgical functions. A deacon is called "to a special ministry of servanthood, directly under the authority of [the] bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, [he/she serves] all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick and the lonely." The deacon is "to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by word and example, to those among whom he/she lives and works and worships, ... to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. ... to assist the bishop and priests in public worship, and in the administration of the sacraments." (Ordination of a deacon, BAS, p. 655.)

The liturgical functions are an extension, and an acting out, of their daily function of showing "Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself."

1. Assisting at baptism.
2. The reading of the Gospel at the eucharist.
3. The proclamation of the Word in preaching, subject to the bishop's licence.
4. Leading or organizing the prayers of the people.
5. Receiving the offerings of the faithful and the preparation of the elements on the altar at the offertory, and assisting with the distribution of the communion - both in the church and in taking the sacrament to the sick.
6. The dismissal, i.e. sending people back out for service.
7. During the Paschal Triduum, the deacon has special responsibilities:
  - on Good Friday, the deacon says the biddings of the Solemn Intercession and carries the cross into the church.
  - at the Easter Vigil, it is the prerogative of a deacon to carry the paschal candle to its place, and to chant the Exsultet, as well as assist at baptism and eucharist.