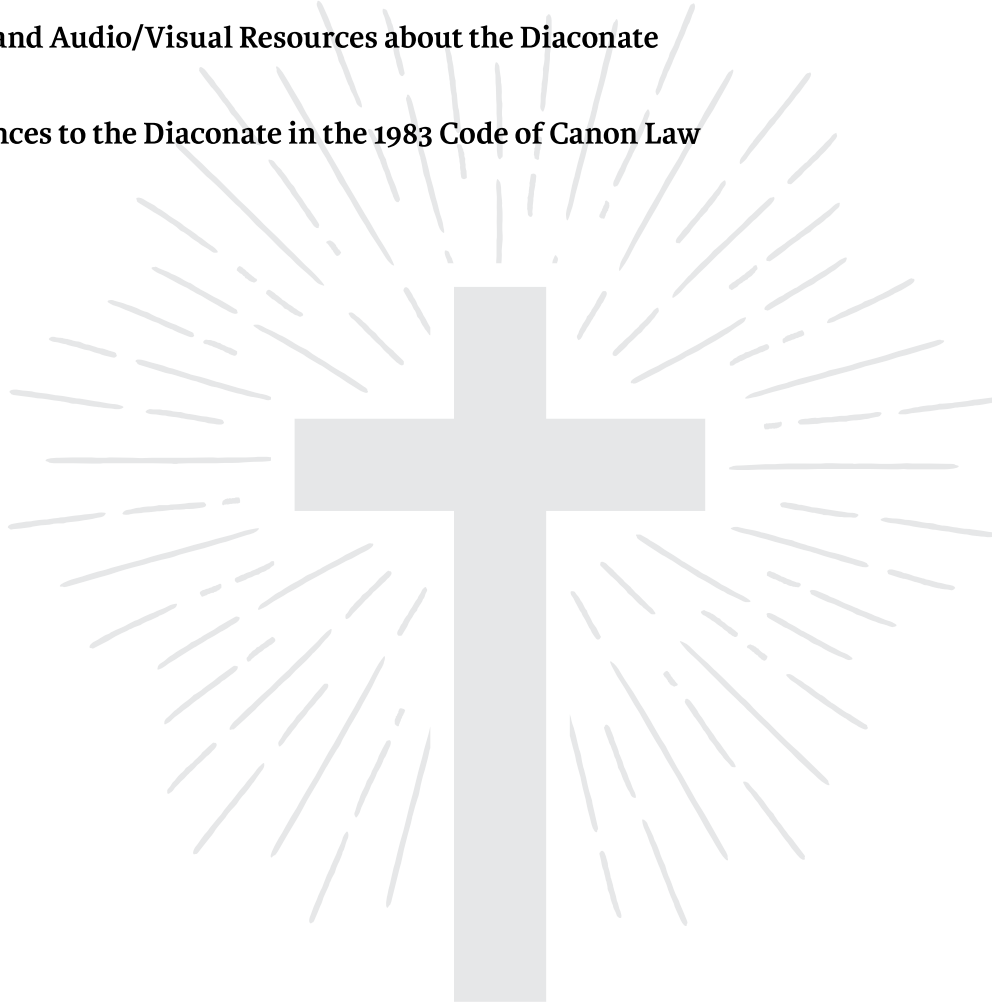


1000 SERIES

- 1000.0 **Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons**
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**BASIC NORMS FOR THE FORMATION OF PERMANENT DEACONS
DIRECTORY FOR THE MINISTRY AND LIFE OF PERMANENT DEACONS**

The Congregation for Catholic Education and **The Congregation for the Clergy** published these two documents in 1998. The documents explain in detail how the permanent Diaconate, restored by the Second Vatican Council, in continuity with ancient Tradition and the specific decision of the Council of Trent, has flourished in these last decades in many parts of the Church - with promising results, especially for the urgent missionary work of new evangelization. The Holy See and many Episcopates, in promoting this ecclesial experience, have continually afforded norms and guidelines for the life and formation of deacons.

The documents produced here are intended as a response to a widely felt need to clarify and regulate the diversity of approaches adopted in experiments conducted up to now, whether at the level of discernment and training or at that of active ministry and ongoing formation. In this way it will be possible to ensure a certain stability of approach, which takes account of legitimate plurality and in turn guarantees that indispensable unity, necessary for the success of the permanent Diaconate which had been fruitful and which, at the threshold of the Third Millennium, promises to make an important contribution to New Evangelization.

These directives contained in the following documents pertain to permanent deacons of the secular clergy, although many, with due adaptation, may also be applied to permanent deacons who are members of institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life.

NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR THE FORMATION, MINISTRY AND LIFE OF THE
PERMANENT DEACON IN THE UNITED STATES
(2ND EDITION)

This document, first promulgated in December 2004 and a 2nd edition was published and promulgated in June 2022 presents the latest teaching of the bishops of the United States on the ordained ministry of Deacons. It includes a doctrinal overview of the sacramentality of the Diaconate, insights into the ministry and life of deacons, and particular law related to the Diaconate in the United States. It also provides extensive direction on the comprehensive formation of candidates for ordination as well as ongoing formation of deacons following ordination.

The 1st edition has an addendum for permanent deacons and deacon directors in the United States, however, the 2nd edition is reflected in these *Guidelines for Deacons in The Diocese of Columbus*. This National Directory is intended to serve the entire Catholic Church in the United States. Its principles, norms, and pastoral applications are directed specifically to the Latin Rite. Nonetheless, it may be of assistance as a consistent reference for all Churches *sui iuris* in the United States in the preparation of the adaptations necessary to address the traditions, pastoral life, and requirements of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

DEACONS: ORDAINED MINISTRY OF SERVICE

The Office of the Diaconate published this web site to explain briefly how the permanent Diaconate has been developed in the Diocese of Columbus since it was restored in 1975. Deacons and/or pastors can visit this page to help interested men begin their initial discernment about receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders in becoming a Deacon.

This web page can be found by visiting the web site for the Catholic Diocese of Columbus:
www.columbuscatholic.org/deacons



BOOKS AND AUDIO VISUAL RESOURCES ABOUT THE DIACONATE

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DEACONS IN 1983 CODE OF CANON LAW

Q. Are permanent deacons specifically referred to anywhere in the 1983 Code of Canon Law?

Regarding permanent deacons, there are at least one dozen significant references in the 1983 Code of Canon Law. Some are explicit, others, implicit.

Canon 276, Paragraph 3, is an explicit citation. This paragraph distinguishes between (1) “deacons aspiring to the priesthood” (whom we usually call “transitional deacons” and (2) “permanent deacons” (*diaconi permanentes* in the Latin). The context has to do with the obligation to fulfill the Divine Office daily. While transitional deacons are bound to say the daily office, permanent deacons meet their obligations to the degree determined by the Conference of Bishops [i.e., in accordance with the guidelines or norms established by the bishops of each country].

— PREPARATION —

Canon 236 - specifies general norms regarding diaconal preparation. Aspirants to the permanent diaconate, it states, are to be formed, according to the prescriptions of the bishops' conference; to foster a spiritual life, and to be instructed as to the correct fulfilling of the responsibilities proper to their office.

Paragraph 2 of this Canon stipulates the men of more mature age, whether celibate or married, are to spend three years in a special program determined by the bishops' conference.

Paragraph 1 concerns young men: they are to live at least three years in a special house unless the diocesan bishop decides otherwise for grave reasons.

— CIVIL OFFICE —

Canon 288 exempts permanent deacons from certain laws binding clerics in general (e.g., rules pertaining to ecclesiastical garb; to holding public civil office, engaging in certain secular offices entailing an obligation to render accounts, acting as surety, etc.; to conducting business or trade; to taking an active role in political parties and in the direction of labor unions).

— MARRIED —

Canon 281, Paragraph 3, speaks of married deacons, hence implicitly, of permanent deacons, in the context of remuneration. Those who dedicate themselves totally to Church ministry are said to deserve a remuneration by which they can provide for their and their families' support.

— AGE —

The age for the permanent diaconate is explicitly spelled out in Canon I 031. Paragraph 2 says that a

candidate for the permanent diaconate who is not married may not be admitted to the diaconate unless he has completed at least 25 years of age. If married, he must have completed at least 35 years of age -and must have his wife's consent. (Paragraph 3 adds that an older age may be required for the permanent diaconate by the bishops' conference. Paragraph 3 notes that the Apostolic See reserves to itself a dispensation from the age requirements of the Code.)

— TIME —

Canon 1032, Paragraph 3, declares that aspirants to the permanent diaconate are not to be ordained unless they have completed the time required for diaconal formation

— CELIBACY —

The obligation of celibacy prior to ordination on the part of an aspirant to the permanent diaconate is specified in Canon 1037. (He must assume his obligation in a prescribed rite publicly before God and the Church or else, in the case of a religious, profess perpetual vows.)

— ROLES —

Canons defining diaconal functions wherein no distinction is made between permanent and transitional deacons, include (1) Canon 861 (a deacon, along with a priest, is an ordinary minister of baptism); (2) Canon 910 (a deacon is also an ordinary minister of Holy Communion); (3) Canon 1108 (a deacon can also be delegated to assist at marriage); (4) Canon 1169 (a deacon can perform certain blessings; i.e., those expressly permitted by law); and (5) Canon 943 (a deacon can also serve as a minister of Eucharistic exposition and benediction).

Q. Does the 1983 Code of Canon Law spell out the functions of deacons?

A. The new Code of Canon Law confirms, explicitly or implicitly, 11 areas of diaconal activity spelled out by Pope Paul VI in the *Sacram Diaconatus Ordinem*, issued 18 June 1967. These 11 areas represent three major concentrations: (1) liturgical, (2) catechetical and (3) charitable.

Insofar as liturgy is concerned, the offices of deacons are detailed for the most part in the Canons dealing with the sacraments.

— BAPTISM —

Thus Paul VI, in *Sacram Diaconatus Ordinem*, indicated that a deacon is empowered “to administer baptism solemnly and to supply the ceremonies that have been omitted at baptism in the case of an infant or adult. “In the new Code, Canon 861, Paragraph 1, states that the deacon, along with the priest or bishop is “the ordinary minister of baptism.”

— COMMUNION —

Too, Paul VI declared that a deacon is “to have custody of the Eucharist, to distribute it to him and to

others, and to impart Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament to the people with the pyx.” This corresponds in the new Code to Canon 910, Paragraph 1: “The ordinary minister of Holy Communion is a bishop, a presbyter or a deacon”.

Canon 943:”The minister of exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament and Eucharistic Benediction is a priest or deacon . . .”

— MARRIAGE —

Paul VI affirmed the deacon’s power “to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church when there is no priest present, with delegation from the bishop or the pastor . . .”In the new Code, Canon 1108 reads: “Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local Ordinary (e.g., Bishop) or the pastor or a priest or a deacon delegated by either . . .”

— SACRAMENTALS —

Paul VI spoke of deacons’ administering Sacramentals and presiding at funeral and burial rites. The new Code, in Canon 1169, Paragraph 3, states that a deacon can confer “only those blessings expressly permitted to him by law.” (There is a new ritual which clarifies this.) As for funerals and burials, diaconal participation is regulated by liturgical norms.

Canon 274, Paragraph 2 reminds all clerics to undertake and faithfully fulfill duties assigned them by their Ordinary (e.g., Bishop).

— PREACHING —

Paul VI specified deacons’ responsibilities regarding reading the Scriptures, teaching, and preaching. Canon 957 reminds deacons “to serve the people of God in the ministry of the word in communion with the bishop and the Presbyterate.

Canon 764 states that deacons as well as priests are empowered to preach in accordance with the general norms of Canon Law.

Canon 767, Paragraph 1, states that the liturgical homily (e.g., preaching at Mass, at baptism) is “reserved to a priest or deacon.

Canon 774, Paragraph 1, refers implicitly to a deacon’s role in teaching, or catechesis.

— PASTORAL —

Paul VI also referred to the possibility of deacons’ guiding “outlying communities” of Christians in the name of the pastor and the bishop, and presiding over “the offices of religious worship and prayer services when there is no priest present.

Canon 571, Paragraph 2. This Canon allows the diocesan bishop, because of a shortage of priests, to entrust participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish to a deacon, although the bishop must appoint some priest endowed with the powers and faculties of a pastor to oversee the pastoral care.

— APOSTOLATE —

Finally, in non-liturgical matters, Paul VI spoke of deacons' doing charitable, administrative and welfare work in the name of the hierarchy and fostering and aiding the lay apostolate. Canon 274, Paragraph 2 in the new Code, again, can be read in this context. Too, there are many indirect references to the same in the new Code, especially in areas relating to the Church's role in general.

Some diaconal functions are of course contained within the definition of, the theology of, and the liturgical norms for, the diaconate.

Q. Does the 1983 Code of Canon Law explicitly limit ordination to the diaconate to men? Does it have any room for discussion as to the ordination of women to the diaconate?

Canon 1024 states that only a baptized male person validly receives sacred ordination.

This canon obviously refers to the validity of ordination, whether to the diaconate, presbyterate or episcopacy. Indeed, it represents word for word the opening clause of Canon 968 in the former (1917) code.

Thus, from the viewpoint of Canon Law, the possibility of ordained deaconesses -deaconesses participating in the Sacrament of Holy Orders -is ruled out as invalid. (Church doctrine and theology underlie the Canons, of course.) Any candidate for the diaconate must be (1) a male person and (2) baptized.

— MINISTRIES —

Q. Can men be ordained deacons without first having served in the so-called "minor orders" of lector and acolyte?

The offices of lector and acolyte are now referred to not as "minor orders" but rather as "ministries." This clarification dates from 1972, with Pope Paul VI's "First Tonsure, Minor Orders and the Subdiaconate." Moreover, one is no longer "ordained" to such offices; instead, the offices -that of lector and acolyte -are "conferred" upon the recipient, who is "installed" in them.

As to whether men may be ordained deacons without first having been installed as lectors and acolytes, the answer is in the negative. Canon 1035 stipulates that before anyone is advanced to either the permanent or the transitional diaconate, he should have had received the ministries of lector and acolyte — and he should have had experienced these ministries for a suitable period of time.

Paragraph 2 of Canon 1035 adds that between the conferral of acolyte and diaconate, at least six months' time should intervene.

The time references in both paragraphs of this Canon are meant to provide the Church with the opportunity of seeing, and evaluating, candidates for Holy Orders.

Q. Does the 1983 Code specify the academic requirements for ordination to diaconate?

Canon 1032 states that candidates for the Presbyterate can be ordained to the diaconate only after completion of a five-year curriculum of philosophical and theological studies. Moreover, deacons must participate in pastoral care and exercise their diaconal order for a suitable time prior to advancement to the priesthood. (The suitable time is determined by the bishop or, in the case of religious, the superior.)

As for permanent deacons -those not going on to priesthood -Paragraph 3 of 1032 states that they are not to be promoted to diaconate unless they have completed a time of formation. In practice, this “time of formation” is determined by each bishop, or by the national conference of bishops.

Q. Can the minimal age for the diaconate be dispensed from?

If more than a year is involved, any dispensations regarding the minimal age for Holy Orders are reserved to the Apostolic See.

See Canon 1031, Paragraph 4. However, bishops can always set a higher age than that set by the Code for admittance to Orders; see Canon 1031, Paragraph 3.

Q. Candidates for the diaconate are still required to vow celibacy, right?

If unmarried, a candidate for diaconate, like a candidate for priesthood, must assume publicly, in a prescribed rite, before God and the Church, the obligation of celibacy -unless (if a religious) he has professed perpetual vows in a religious institute. Otherwise, he is not to be admitted to the diaconate. Canon 1037.

Q. Are permanent Deacons clerics or laymen in terms of the 1983 Code of Canon Law?

By the very fact of ordination, deacons are not laymen, but clerics. This is true whether the deacon is a permanent deacon or a transitional deacon (i.e., one aspiring to priesthood).

Canon 266, Paragraph 1 of the new Code of Canon Law explicitly states this with respect to secular clergy: “A person becomes a cleric through the reception of diaconate and is incardinated into the particular church or personal prelature for whose service he has been promoted.”

Paragraph 2 of this Canon says about the same with respect to religious (those in vows); Paragraph 3 has to do with deacons of secular institutes.

It used to be that entrance into the clerical state was affected by the ceremony of first tonsure; this had been

the case since the time of Pope Innocent III (1210). The rule was changed by Pope Paul VI, in his *Ministeria quaedam* (which ended first tonsure). From the time of this document (1 Jan. 1973). No one can become a cleric except by ordination to the diaconate.

Deacons are clerics.

— INCARDINATION —

The juridical notion of “incardination” is linked with diaconal ordination by Canon 266.

“Incardination,” from the Latin words in (“to”) and *cardo* (“hinge”), signifies the state of being “hinged to” or “connected with.” Holy Orders — priesthood and episcopacy as well as diaconate — are not conferred as honorary titles but as responsibilities for service to others. Hence a deacon (like a priest or bishop) is ordained with an “attachment” to some particular part of the Church, in which he becomes juridically “incardinated.”

Once validly incardinated in a particular church (e.g., a diocese), a deacon juridically belongs to that church. To relocate, he must initiate the processes of “excardinatio” (through written permission from both the bishop of the place he is leaving and “incardination” (written permission from the bishop of the place to which he is transferring). Thus, Canon 267, Paragraph 1. Further, excardinatio is not effective unless incardination has been secured.

Read Canon 267, Paragraph 2.

(The same rules apply to all clerics).

The 1983 Code also allows for what can be described as “*ipso facto*” incardination.

Canon 268, Paragraph 1 states that a cleric (in this context, a deacon — and of course a priest) who has legitimately relocated from his own particular church into another church (e.g., diocese), is incardinated into this other particular church by the law itself, after five years, provided that the cleric made such a desire known in writing both to the diocesan bishop of the church welcoming him and to his own diocesan bishop; and provided that neither bishop informed the cleric of his opposition or contrary mind in writing within four months of reception of the afore said letter of intent.

Also, according to Paragraph 2 of Canon 268, a cleric is excardinated from his own particular church through perpetual or definitive admission to an institute of consecrated life or to a society of apostolic life in accordance with Canon law, specifically, Canon 266, Paragraph 2.

These are rules governing bishops’ allowing the incardination of clerics. Canon 269 states that a

diocesan bishop is not to permit a cleric's incardination unless (1) the necessity or advantage of his own particular church requires it, with due regard for the prescriptions of law regarding the decent sustenance of clerics (Paragraph I); (2) the bishop is sure, from a legitimate document, that excardination has been granted, and he also has appropriate testimonials from the excardinating diocesan bishop (secretly, if necessary) concerning the cleric's life, morals and studies (Paragraph 2); and (3) the cleric himself has declared in writing to the same diocesan bishop that he wants to be "attached" to the church of transferal in accordance with Canon Law.

These rules in Canon 269 refer to licitness of excardination-incardination. The earlier Canons -266, 267, and 268 generally have to do with validity.

Q. When and how was the diaconate restored?

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Constitution, *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*, by which the new Code of Canon Law was promulgated on 25 January 1983, noted:

"The Conciliar image of the Church . . . must always be referred to . . . as the primary pattern whose outline the Code ought to express insofar as it can . . . within the limits of its specific matter and of the language appropriate to that material."

Thus, we refer to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, issued by Vatican Council II, for the basic thematic statements underlying the restored diaconate. It is there that the Conciliar image of the Church is drawn. No. 29 of the Dogmatic Constitution reads:

"At a lower level of the hierarchy are deacons, upon whom hands are imposed •not unto the priesthood but unto a ministry of service.' For strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his group of priests, they serve the People of God in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity. It is the duty of the deacon, to the extent that he has been authorized by competent authority, to administer baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside at the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer Sacramentals, and to officiate at funeral and burial services. Deacons are dedicated to duties of charity and administration . . ."

". . . The diaconate can in the future be restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy. It pertains to the competent territorial bodies, of bishops, of one kind or another, to decide, with the approval of the Supreme Pontiff, whether and where it is opportune for such deacons to be appointed for the care of souls. With the consent of the Roman Pontiff, this diaconate will be able to

be conferred upon men of more mature age, even upon those living in the married state. It may also be conferred upon suitable young men. For them, however, the law of celibacy must remain intact”.

(No. 29 - Translation from *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter Abbott; American Press, 1966).

See, for example, Canon 1037.

Authorization for restoration of the permanent diaconate in the Roman Rite -making it again possible for men to become deacons permanently without going on to the priesthood -was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 18 June 1967, in a document entitled *Sacram Diaconatus Ordinem* (“Sacred Order of the Diaconate”). The Western Church, since the fourth or fifth century, generally followed the practice of conferring the diaconate principally as a sacred order preliminary to the priesthood, and of restricting the ministry of deacons to liturgical functions. There were notable exceptions, St. Francis of Assisi, for example.

Q. What does the 1983 Code of Canon Law have to say about the qualifications and preparations for ordination to the diaconate?

The 1983 Code has quite a deal to say about candidacy to the diaconate and the preparations necessary.

— BISHOP —

Canons 1015 and 1016 identify the bishop who should ordain a deacon, and who can grant dimissorial letters, (“Dismissorial letters” refers to authorization to ordain.)

— FREEDOM —

The candidate is to be free to assume the diaconate; see Canon 1026.

He must receive an accurate formation in accordance with law; see Canon 1027.

He must be duly instructed concerning matters which pertain to the order to be received -in this case, diaconate and the obligations annexed; see Canon 1028.

And he must have received the Sacrament of Confirmation; see Canon 1033.

Baptism is of course necessary for validity; see Canon 1024.

— REQUISITES —

Canon 1029 insists that after all circumstances have been taken into account in the prudent judgment of the proper bishop or (in the case of a religious) the competent superior, those only should be called to orders who possess an integral faith, are motivated by the right intention, have the requisite knowledge, and enjoy a solid reputation, good morals, proven virtues and other physical and psychological qualities appropriate for the order (diaconate in this context) to be received.

Canon 236 notes that aspirants to the permanent diaconate are to be given sound spiritual formation to nourish a spiritual life, and should be instructed in the correct implementation of the duties proper to this order in the following manner:

(1) Young men are to reside for at least three years in a special residence unless the diocesan bishop decides otherwise for serious reasons;

(2) More mature men, whether celibate or married, should spend three years in a program defined by the conference of bishops.

Regarding age, Canon 1031, Paragraph 2, states that the candidates for the permanent diaconate who are not married are not to be called to diaconate unless they have completed at least 25 years of age. However, if candidates are married, they are not to be admitted to the permanent diaconate unless they have completed at least 35 years of age and have their spouses' consent.

A transitional-deacon candidate, Canon 1032 insists, must have completed a five-year curriculum of philosophical and theological studies before going on to the order of diaconate. Furthermore, according to Paragraph 2, before advancing to priesthood, he must have participated in pastoral care, exercising his diaconal order for a suitable time period.

There are several other canons relating to candidacy for the diaconate.

Q. Does the 1983 Code spell out what value a deacon is to the Church? Where especially (in contrast with laity) can he minister?

One obvious area in which deacons can minister and laity cannot is liturgical preaching. The liturgical homily is reserved to those in holy orders; see Canon 767, Paragraph I. Also, there are blessings which deacons can bestow, and laity cannot.

— CHURCH —

Canon 834, Paragraph 1, recalls that in the sacred liturgy the sanctification of mankind is signified and accomplished in a manner proper to each of the signs and the whole of the public worship of God is implemented by the Mystical Body of Christ; namely, by the Head — Christ — and the members — the faithful. Paragraph 2 adds that this worship occurs when it is carried out in the name of the Church by persons lawfully deputed and through actions approved by the Church's authority.

Though bishops, Canon 835, Paragraph 1 goes on, are the high priests and principal dispensers of the mysteries of God, as well as moderators, promoters and custodians of the entire liturgical life of the Church, and although presbyters or priests are sharers of the priest hood of Christ, as Paragraph 2 continues, deacons, according to Paragraph 3, have a part in the celebration of divine worship in accord with the prescriptions of the law.

Canon 836 elaborates on this. Since Christian worship, it explains, in which the common priesthood of

the faithful is exercised, is a work (the Greek word for “work” is one of the roots of the term “liturgy”) that proceeds from faith and is founded on faith, the deacon is bound to strive diligently to awaken and illumine the faith, particularly through the ministry of the word by means of which faith is born and fed. This striving must always be done in union with the bishop and his Presbyterate, of course; see Canon 157.

— PREACHING —

Canon 767, Paragraph I remind us that among the forms of preaching, the homily takes first place; the homily is integral to the liturgy, and hence is reserved to a priest or to a deacon. In it, the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living are to be expounded from the sacred text during the entire course of the liturgical year. This homiletic ministry reaffirms the deacon’s liturgical role.

Q. Where does it say in the 1983 Code of Canon Law that permanent deacons, unlike priests, are exempt from the rules restraining priests from political involvement?

Permanent deacons are generally exempt from several restrictions which bind priests in the new Code of Canon Law. Specifically, permanent deacons are not generally bound by rules regarding the holding of public office (Canon 285, Paragraphs 3-4); occupations involving business and trade (Canon 286); taking part in partisan politics and serving as officials in labor unions (Canon 287, Paragraph 2). The fact of such general exemption is stated in Canon 288.

Note the word, “general” here. Particular law (e.g., diocesan law) can restrict permanent deacons in any of the above activities; this is stated explicitly in Canon 288 by the phrase, “unless particular law determines otherwise.”

Q. What does the 1983 Code say about deacons wearing black suits and collars -like priests?

Canon 284 requires of clerics suitable ecclesiastic garb in accordance with the norms issued by the Conference of Bishops, and in the context of legitimate local custom. (Here in the United States, the legitimate local custom in part derives from the plenary councils of Baltimore, but also reflects more recent guidelines; e.g., the Letter of the Congregation for Bishops to Papal Representatives throughout the world, on 27 Jan. 1976; the Letter of Pope John Paul II to the Papal Vicar of Rome, on 8 Sept. 1982; the norms of the Vicar of Rome for the Diocese of Rome, on 1 Oct. 1982; and of course, the Code of 1917 (especially Canons 136, 188, Paragraph 7; and 2298, Paragraph 9).

However, permanent deacons, though clerics are nonetheless generally exempt from Canon 284 in the 1983 Code. This is expressly stated in Canon 288.

The Guidelines of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on the Permanent Diaconate (1971) interpreting Paul VI’s *Sacram Diaconatus Ordinem* (1967) to the effect that “local custom [regarding clothing] is to be observed in accordance with the rules laid down by the Episcopal conference” (n. 31), endorsed “the hope that

deacons will resemble lay people in these matters [e.g., clothing] of lifestyle; however, a fundamental trust must rest in the judgment and sensitivity of deacons themselves .” (n. 158).

Practically speaking, of course, a permanent deacon should follow the rules for clothing current in his own diocese.

Q. May deacons enter military service? Does the 1983 Code take up this question?

The matter of deacons and military service is covered in Canon 289, which treats of clerics in general. Paragraph I of this Canon states that clerics therefore deacons as well as priests are not to volunteer for military service without the permission of their Ordinary (e.g., bishop). This also applies to candidates for holy orders. The reason is implied in the opening phrase of Paragraph I: namely, “Since military service is not especially congruous with the clerical state . . .”

Q. Does the 1983 Code say anything about deacons serving on juries?

There is a reminder, in Canon 289, Paragraph 2, that clerics -deacons, too, therefore -should make use of exemptions granted them (by law, custom agreement) from exercising duties and public civil functions alien to the clerical state, unless in particular cases their own Ordinary (e.g., bishop) has decided otherwise. (One can envision the difficult hypothetical situation of a cleric sitting on jury summoned for an alleged capital crime.)

Q. Can permanent deacons bless Rosaries? What about other blessings?

Yes. The various blessings which deacons are empowered by the Church to impart, by using certain formulas, were recently clarified with publication of the new Roman Ritual, mandated by Vatican Council II Called *De Benedictionibus* (literally: ‘About Blessings’) the updated ritual was issued by the Vatican’s Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship on 31 May 1984. (The manual is available in Latin from the Vatican Polyglot Press. The actual words and signs, as indicated in the book, must be used.

- The “Blessings” ritual, after providing a lengthy and helpful preface of general notes, is divided into several chapters (539 pages). The first chapter, for example, has to do with blessings of persons (e.g., the blessing of a family, the blessing of spouses on the anniversary of their marriage, the blessing of children, etc.). A traditional blessing retained and updated here is the Blessing of a Woman before or after Childbirth. Number 216 confers the power to impart this blessing to anyone in holy orders, to deacons included, therefore and even to laypersons, in accordance with special norms. (The ceremony followed differs for a lay minister.)
- Another of the traditional benedictions now permitted to deacons is the blessing of sick persons. (No. 292)
- Chapter IX of the new Ritual focuses on the blessing of things. One is the blessing of a new house, which deacons can now confer. (No. 475) Again, some provision is made for a lay

minister.

Q. What about the blessing of images or representations of Christ, the blessed Virgin, and the saints in general?

- Where such images or representations are meant for public veneration, Chapter XXIX explains, the blessing is to be imparted by a priest, or, if possible, a bishop. (988) Where the blessing of objects of devotion is not public, then a deacon can impart the blessing. (Chap. XXXVII; No. 1164)
- The same as regards the Rosary. Chapter XXXVIII, No. 1185, allows such a benediction to a deacon. The assumption is that, if possible, several Rosaries are blessed at once but after the recitation of the Rosary, in which a congregation participates. And appropriate Bible readings (e.g., Luke 2:46-52) are provided.
- Deacons are also empowered to bless water, when this blessing occurs outside Mass; see Chapter XXIII, Rubric 1087. Ordinarily, the blessing of water should take place at Mass on Sunday, according to the rite in the *Roman Missal* (as an alternate form of the penitential rite).
- A detailed description of this last ceremony in the new Ritual indicates how most of the other blessings are structured. The ceremony consists of (1) an opening Sign of the Cross; (2) a thematic greeting by the priest or deacon, with the response by all, *Et cum spiritu tuo* ("And also with you"); (3) an opening prayer; (4) Scripture reading: e.g., John 7:37-39; and finally the prayer of benediction itself (options are given) by the priest or deacon, performed with a specific formula. In general, the typical celebration of each blessing in the new Ritual consists of two major parts: first, the proclamation of the word of God; secondly, praise for God's goodness and the prayer for heavenly assistance. General intercessions are also given for some.
- Most blessings are to be performed with at least a few of the faithful present, for whom a brief homily or allocution on the proclamation of God's word can be given. A psalm or a period of meditative silence can be observed after the Bible reading, and especially if there is more than one reading. (Nos. 20, 21)

Q. What is the so-called "admission to candidacy?"

Anyone aspiring to the diaconate or priesthood must, first, in writing, petition Holy Orders of his bishop or superior – in effect, he must manifest publicly his intention to offer himself to God and the Church in Holy Orders; this, by virtue of Canon 1034, Paragraph I, which reflects legislation by Paul VI in 1972. This written petition is then accepted in writing by the proper Church authority.

The petitioning procedure, which takes the place of the old ceremony of first tonsure, is known as "Admission to Candidacy."

Incidentally, aspirants to the diaconate or priesthood who have already been admitted to clerical institutes by vows need not observe this type of admission. (The reason is that the necessary petition is included in the ceremonies surrounding the vows.)

Q. Candidates for the diaconate are still required to vow celibacy, right?

If unmarried, a candidate for diaconate, like a candidate for priesthood, must assume publicly, in a prescribed rite, before God and the Church, the obligation of celibacy — unless (if a religious) he has professed perpetual vows in a religious institute. Otherwise, he is not to be admitted to the diaconate. Canon 1037

Q. Can widowed permanent deacons remarry?

Canon 1087 of the 1983 Code states: “Persons who are in Holy Orders invalidly attempt marriage.” Petitions for an exemption can be made to the Vatican but are rarely given.

