

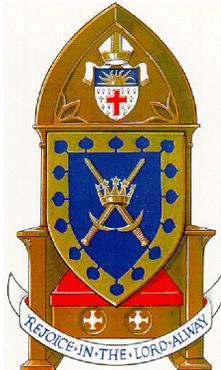
The Deacon in the Worshipping Community *Liturgy and the Diaconate*

by

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Dedicated to Deacon Ormonde Plater (1933-2016)
Role model for the diaconate and great liturgist

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The Deacon in the Worshipping Community *Liturgy and the Diaconate*

Introduction

The liturgical role is not peripheral to the ministry of the deacon: it is essential: “diaconal spirituality originates in the liturgy and points to service in the world.”¹ Yet recently-ordained deacons, and often their priests as well, may be unsure or confused about what they should do in worship. Some parishes may be unaware that deacons have a role in the liturgy and reluctant to accommodate it – for example, lay people may have read the Gospel in the past (though liturgically they shouldn’t!) and the parish resists allowing the deacon to now do so.

This study describes the diaconal role in the liturgy and the vestments that may be worn. We assume the normal pattern of deacons assisting priests in parishes (and bishops in episcopal liturgies) and so we emphasize the deacon’s role in the Eucharist. We realize, however, that some deacons may find themselves in more isolated situations, presiding at Morning or Evening Prayer, other liturgies of the Word, or communion from the reserved sacrament.

We also assume use of *The Book of Alternative Services* in worship, and so our references will be from that book (and from the *Book of Common Prayer* of The Episcopal Church in the United States). The traditional Canadian *Book of Common Prayer* (1959/1962) makes few references to the order of deacons and omits most diaconal functions from the Eucharist altogether. Deacons taking part in Prayer Book services may adapt suggestions in this study as best they can.

Finally, although this study is intended primarily for Anglicans/Episcopalians, we give many references to and comparisons with the Roman Catholic Church, for three reasons:

- (1) The liturgical role and vestments of the deacon in the two traditions are very similar and have identical origins;
- (2) The Anglican Communion owes its own revival of the vocational diaconate in large part to the sterling example of the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI; and
- (3) The Anglican Diocese of Qu’Appelle, home of the author, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina entered into a covenantal relationship in 2011, which included the diaconate. The covenant was expanded in 2020 to include the Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Ukrainian Catholic dioceses in the civil province of Saskatchewan.

This study suggests some “best practices” in both liturgy and vestments, without being prescriptive or rigorous. It takes examples from St. Paul’s Cathedral, Regina (Diocese of Qu’Appelle), which has had a deacon or deacons since 1977.

For a full explanation of the diaconal role in Anglican liturgies, see *Deacons in the Liturgy, Second Edition*, by a leading Episcopal deacon, the late Ormonde Plater (New York: Church Publishing, 2009). Roman Catholic equivalents are *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons* by Michael Kwatera, OSB (Liturgical Press, 2005), *The Deacon at Mass: A Theological and Pastoral Guide* by William T. Ditewig (Paulist Press, 2013), and *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy* by Frederick C. Bauerschmidt (Liturgical Press, 2016).

¹ Stephen F. Miletic, “The Mystery of Jesus as Deacon,” in James Keating, ed., *The Character of the Deacon: Spiritual and Pastoral Foundations* (New York: Paulist Press, 2017), 37.

Chapter 1 The Liturgical Role of the Deacon

It is essential that deacons fulfil, and be clearly seen to fulfil, their liturgical roles, especially at the Eucharist: proclaiming the Gospel; sometimes leading the Prayers of the People and the confession; inviting the people to share the peace; preparing the table; administering communion; and giving the Dismissal. The proclamation of the Gospel is the high point of the ministry of the Word and of the deacon's role in the Eucharist.



Word and Sacrament are integral parts of the deacon's ministry, as symbolized by the Book of Gospels and the ciborium for the bread of Holy Communion.

Significantly, while the presbyter (or bishop) convenes the assembly at the beginning of the eucharistic liturgy, it is the deacon who disperses it in the Dismissal, sending the faithful “to love and serve the Lord [...] over the church threshold and out into the world.” As Rosalind Brown puts it, “[t]here is no diaconal ministry without service in the Eucharist where the deacon, with others, enables the church to express its identity as God's people.”² Canon Brown traces the diaconal role of welcoming and sharing from the church door at the beginning of the service, through all the deacon's liturgical eucharistic actions, to the dismissal and departure, calling this the deacon's “ministry of hospitality.”³

Customs in worship vary considerably from parish to parish and from diocese to diocese. Liturgies range from the basic and simple to the elaborate and detailed. Some churches, like St. Paul's Cathedral in Regina, enjoy the ministry of children and young people as servers; others may have adult servers or none at all. St. Paul's has sub-deacons to assist the deacons; most parishes do not. In the Anglican tradition, there are few, if any, fixed liturgical rules. In the

² *Being a Deacon Today*, 55, 6.

³ Rosalind Brown, “The Deacon in Worship: A Ministry of Hospitality,” in D. Michael Jackson, ed., *The Diaconate in Ecumenical Perspective: Ecclesiology, Liturgy and Practice* (Durham, UK: Sacristy Press, 2019).

Roman Catholic Church, by contrast, there are international liturgical norms for rites, vestments, ornaments, posture and gesture.⁴ It is important to keep in mind that there are not “right and wrong ways” in liturgy; there are, rather, recommended ways and varied customs. We should avoid fussiness and stress. The purpose of liturgy is for the community to worship God. We want to do this with joy, dignity and sincerity.

Much liturgical practice will depend on the constraints or opportunities in a particular church building. Some chancels/sanctuaries are small, limiting options for the ministers of the service. Movements such as Gospel processions are dictated by the space available. Sometimes furnishings are moveable; all too often, however, Anglican churches are encumbered by fixed pews, prayer desks and other paraphernalia. At St. Paul’s Cathedral, we are fortunate that, over a thirty-year period of evolution, a typically crowded, century-old Anglican chancel was cleared of its prayer desks, choir stalls, communion rails (now moveable), organ and fixed eastward altar, leaving flexible furnishings and open space which we can adapt to the needs of each liturgy. We commend the experience to those who are contemplating church renovations!

The Deacon in the Eucharist

The roles in **bold** and subsequently marked *** are the ones which the deacon, when present, should *always* fulfil. The others are recommended but are optional according to local custom. The deacon...

- Carries the Book of Gospels in the entrance procession.
- **Proclaims the Gospel.**
- Sometimes leads the Prayers of the People.
- Gives the invitation to confession.
- At the Peace, invites those present to exchange a sign of peace.
- **Prepares the table at the offertory.**
- Says the Prayer over the Gifts.
- Turns pages in the altar book for the presider.
- Raises the cup at the doxology and at the invitation to communion.
- Assists in the administration of communion.
- Supervises ablutions.
- Makes closing announcements.
- **Gives the Dismissal.**

Note that the deacon plays an *assisting* or *collaborative* role for the presiding celebrant, whether bishop or priest. Deacons do not normally preside. Deacon and presider function as a team with other ministers. Deacon Frederick Bauerschmidt refers to the ancient tradition of “the deacon’s important but subordinate role in the liturgy,” which means that the deacon “is at the service of the presider and the assembly as they put themselves at the service of God.”⁵

⁴ See *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Canadian edition (Ottawa: Publications Service, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011).

⁵ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 19.

The Entrance Rite

The deacon precedes the presiding celebrant (whether priest or bishop) in procession (another custom is for the deacon to process on the presider's right if not carrying a Book of Gospels). If the parish has a Book of Gospels⁶ – which is recommended – the deacon carries this in the entrance procession (but *not* at the departure at the end of the service). Why does the deacon do this? “A Deacon carries the Gospel Book in procession – a sign that God is amongst us, and is about to speak a word to our current reality.”⁷

At the entrance, the deacon is advised by Deacon Bauerschmidt to carry the Book of Gospels “just above the eyes” so that it “makes the book visible to the assembly without the gesture being ostentatiously gratuitous.” He adds, “It also has the practical benefit of allowing him to see where he is going.” (!)⁸ The ministers acknowledge the altar according to the parish's custom and the deacon places the Book of Gospels on the altar. Henceforth the deacon sits or stands to the presider's right for the prayers, *Gloria*, readings, sermon, creed and Prayers of the People.

******Proclaiming the Gospel***

This is the focal point of the Liturgy of the Word and the single most important act performed by the deacon in the Eucharist. Accordingly, in most churches the Gospel reading is accompanied by some form of ceremonial, ranging from a simple move by the deacon to the place of the reading, to a Gospel procession with servers and incense. The people stand. The proclaiming of the Gospel should be done with care and be the focus of attention of the assembly.

i. *Who reads the Gospel?*

If a deacon is present among the ministers of the service, that person *always* reads the Gospel. “In this way, deacons share in the heralding ministry of the angels, which is to bring glad tidings.”⁹ *The Book of Alternative Services* is specific: it is “the function of a deacon to read the Gospel” (p. 183). The Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* says “A deacon should read the Gospel” (p. 354).

What happens if, as is often the case, no deacon is available? The *BAS* does not address this, only noting that “lay persons should normally be assigned the readings which precede the Gospel” (p. 183). However, the Episcopal book states that “the Deacon or a Priest reads the Gospel” (p. 357). The generally accepted custom is that “in the absence of a deacon functioning liturgically, the presider or an assisting priest reads the gospel.”¹⁰

Roman Catholic deacon James Keating gives a contemporary view: “It is the deacon who, even if in the presence of the Pope, is charged to proclaim the gospel during the eucharistic liturgy. This is his irreplaceable liturgical role and hence a key to his identity and mission: his voice

⁶ This is a large, specially-bound volume containing the gospel readings for all three years of the liturgical cycle, *The Gospels, Revised Common Lectionary*.

⁷ Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service for the triennial conference of the Association of Anglican Deacons in Canada, 2017, 2.

⁸ *The Deacon's Ministry of the Liturgy*, 33.

⁹ Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 4.

¹⁰ Ormonde Plater, *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 8.

must be one with the gospel.”¹¹ Deacon William Ditewig lists the order of preference for the Gospel reader as first, a deacon, then an assisting priest, and finally, and only in the absence of these ministers, the presiding celebrant.¹² It is not the custom in either the Anglican or the Roman Catholic tradition for lay people to read the Gospel.

ii. *Where does the reading take place?*

The Gospel should be proclaimed from a prominent location in the church. According to *The Book of Alternative Services*, “It is desirable that the readings be read from a lectern or pulpit, and that the Gospel be read from the same lectern or pulpit, or in the midst of the congregation” (p. 183). The lectern (or, in the Roman Catholic tradition, the “ambo”) is an appropriate place for proclaiming the Gospel – and then giving the homily. “Preaching from the ambo, as the place from which the Word has been proclaimed,” says Deacon Bauerschmidt, “shows the homily’s integral connection to the readings.”¹³

The custom, introduced in the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. in the 1950s, of processing down the centre aisle of the nave to read the Gospel interrupts the flow of the liturgy. As a Roman Catholic cardinal has said, “It is better not to read from the middle of the community because the word comes to us from elsewhere. It is proclaimed; it does not simply arise out of the community.”¹⁴ Episcopal Deacon Ormonde Plater pointed out that, if we want the gospeller to be heard and seen, half-way down the nave aisle is the worst possible location! (Admittedly, wireless microphones, if available, resolve the sound problem.)¹⁵ At St. Paul’s Cathedral, we normally proclaim the Gospel, using a wireless microphone, from the top of the chancel steps; at most services, a sub-deacon holds the Book of Gospels.

iii. *Blessing the Gospel reader*

It is customary for the deacon as Gospel reader to receive a blessing from the presiding priest (or the bishop, if present). The deacon bows before the presider and asks for a blessing. Ormonde Plater¹⁶ recommended that the presider, making the sign of the cross or laying one or both hands on the deacon’s head, give one of the two following blessings:

*The Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may worthily proclaim his gospel:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.* (the Roman missal)

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you as you bring good news to the poor.
(paraphrase of Luke 4: 18)

¹¹ James Keating, *The Heart of the Diaconate: Communion with the Servant Mysteries of Christ* (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 47.

¹² *The Deacon at Mass*, 55.

¹³ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 38.

¹⁴ Cardinal Godfried Daneels, “Liturgy Forty Years After the Second Vatican Council,” in Keith Pecklers, SJ, ed., *Liturgy in a Postmodern World* (London & New York: Continuum, 2003), 23.

¹⁵ For a contrary view, see Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service: “Normally, the deacon proclaims the gospel from the midst of the people, demonstrating Christ’s presence among us; and facing the entrance doors of the church, demonstrating that the word being proclaimed is not only the ‘good news’ for the church, but for those outside our doors.” 4.

¹⁶ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 38.

iv *The Gospel Procession.*

The deacon then moves to the altar and takes the Book of Gospels. The most common practice is for two servers bearing processional candles to lead the deacon, carrying the Book of Gospels (preceded by the person who is to hold the book, if such is the case), to the place of proclamation, during a hymn. According to Deacon Plater, “traditionally, a cross is not carried in the procession, since in this proclamation the gospel book is the primary symbol of Christ.”¹⁷ In some churches there is a practice of singing the final verse of the hymn *after* the Gospel, allowing the procession to return and the preacher to move to where the sermon is delivered. However, this practice is not recommended: nothing should separate the Gospel reading from the homily “so that the preaching would be related directly to the Scripture.”¹⁸

v *Proclaiming the Gospel.*

After placing the Book of Gospels on the lectern/ambo or in the hands of the assistant, the deacon says or sings the Gospel acclamation, “The Lord be with you,” with hands extended. After the response, the deacon says or sings the announcement, “The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to . . .,” “making a sign of the cross with the right thumb on the opening word of the gospel, forehead, lips, and breast.”¹⁹ (If incense is used, the deacon censes the Book of Gospels at this point.) After the response, “Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ,” the deacon proclaims the Gospel, firmly, clearly, and with expression. The deacon may also *intone* the Gospel. The North American Association for the Diaconate published a booklet by Ormonde Plater which contains tones for the Gospel (and litanies and the Dismissal).²⁰ The Association for Episcopal Deacons provides music for a wide range of specific Gospel readings on its website.²¹



Proclaiming the Gospel at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Regina, 2016.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Patrick Malloy, 2011, analysis of article by Marion Hatchett in *Sewanee Theological Review*, 2008. <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs039/1102067254998/archive/1105586716868.html>

¹⁹ Plater, *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 39.

²⁰ North American Association for the Diaconate: *Music and Deacons* (Monograph Series No. 8), 1995.

²¹ <http://www.episcopaldeacons.org/liturgical-resources-for-deacons.html> Follow the link →chant the gospel.

After the Gospel reading, the deacon says or sings the closing acclamation, “The Gospel of Christ.” The custom in some churches is for the deacon to elevate the Book of Gospels at this point, but it is not necessary. (Another custom in some churches is for the deacon to kiss the opening word of the Gospel passage or, if the bishop is presiding, to bring the book to the bishop to kiss.) Then, closing the book, the deacon may leave it on the lectern/ambo, carry it back to a side table, or hand it to the assistant to do so.

Intercessions/Prayers of the People

As those whose ministry brings them into close contact with the needs, concerns and hopes of the world, it is especially fitting that deacons should bring before the community the things they have encountered, and bid the community’s prayers. For this reason it is fitting in any liturgy for the deacon to bid the Prayers of the People, and to be responsible for teaching and assisting those who write and lead the prayers.²²

What is the deacon’s role in intercessions? *The Book of Alternative Services* stipulates that deacons or lay people lead the Prayers of the People (pp. 183, 190). Ormonde Plater said that “a deacon is the ordinary leader of the biddings inviting the people to pray for those in need.” “By leading or participating in leading these prayers, deacons fulfill their ordination role as those who interpret to the church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.” He observed that “although deacons are the preferred leaders, it is common for other baptized persons to lead the prayers.”²³ According to Michael Kwatera, in the Roman Catholic rite “the deacon’s ministry inside and outside the liturgy makes him the logical minister to lead these prayers,”²⁴ and he assumes that the deacon will normally do so. Father Kwatera says that the composing of the prayers “belongs to the faithful as well, and especially to the deacon [...] the pre-eminent minister to prepare and speak the intentions.” He notes that “by the end of the fourth century the deacon made the invitation to prayer and spoke the petitions of the lityny.”²⁵ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* specifies that the Prayers of the Faithful “are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful.”²⁶

In practice, in both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic traditions the role of the deacon as intercessor is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. It is important, however, that deacons at times lead or participate in the Prayers of the People. There are several ways that this can be done: the deacon takes his or her turn in the roster of intercessors; the deacon introduces and concludes the biddings given by a lay intercessor; the deacon and a lay person alternate biddings; the deacon prepares the intercessions or leads a group preparing them.

At St. Paul’s Cathedral, the deacon is responsible for the intercessions: drafting and leading them; or drafting them and asking a lay person to read them; or asking a lay person to both draft and read the intercessions. At Solemn Eucharists and other special occasions, the deacon and a sub-deacon or other lay leader may share the intercessions. The deacon begins with a call to

²² Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 6-7.

²³ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 9, 41.

²⁴ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 42.

²⁵ Michael Kwatera, *Preparing the General Intercessions* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 5, 7-8.

²⁶ 28, no. 71.

prayer; the other leader continues with brief intentions relevant to the occasion (the concerns of the world and the community, the sick and those in need, those in special need of our prayers), but *without* responses from the congregation; the deacon then says or sings a litany with congregational responses and concludes with a collect. A sung litany is effective: simple music is found in *The Book of Alternative Services* (pp. 915-917).

The Prayers of the People are a vital part of the liturgy and it is important that they be carefully prepared and delivered, meaningful, relevant, but not wordy or preachy. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the issue, but deacons can play a role by mentoring and instructing intercessors, leading by example, and preparing intercessions. Ormonde Plater provided thoughtful and helpful insights into the Prayers of the People, both in *Deacons in the Liturgy*, pp. 41-46, and in a book devoted to the subject: *Intercession: A Theological and Practical Guide*.²⁷

Confession and the Peace

After the intercessions, the deacon may give the invitation to confession and begin the confession, if the presider so wishes, although the *Book of Alternative Services* assigns this role to the celebrant (p. 191). In the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, “the Deacon or Celebrant says Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor” (p. 360). In the Anglican and Roman Catholic rites, the presiding celebrant gives the greeting for the Peace: “The peace of the Lord be always with you” (in the Anglican rite this comes just before the offertory; in the Roman rite it comes after the Great Thanksgiving, before Communion). In the Roman rite, the deacon invites the people to share the Peace: “Let us offer each other the sign of peace.” Deacon Ormonde Plater recommended the same practice for Anglican/Episcopal deacons, using “offer one another a sign of peace” or a similar phrase²⁸ and we do so at St. Paul’s Cathedral. This can be helpful when there are a lot of visitors or at weddings, funerals and baptisms.

******The Preparation of the Table and of the Gifts***

Like the Gospel reading, the preparation of the table at the offertory is clearly the prerogative of the deacon. *The Book of Alternative Services* states that “it is the function of a deacon [...] to make ready the table for the celebration, preparing and placing upon it the bread and cup of wine” (p. 183). At the preparation of the gifts, “representatives of the people may present the gifts of bread and wine for the eucharist [...] to the deacon or celebrant before the altar” (p. 192). After the Peace, the deacon stands at the table, assisted, depending on local custom, by a sub-deacon and/or servers, while the presiding celebrant moves to the side. Ormonde Plater specified four steps in the preparation of the table and gifts:²⁹

i *The deacon prepares the table.* The deacon ensures that the altar book is in the appropriate place on the altar. If the communion vessels are not already on the altar, the deacon receive the chalice, purificator and paten (with priest’s host), pall and corporal, from servers or other assistants (some parishes use the traditional burse and veil, the former containing the linens, the latter covering the vessels). The deacon spreads the corporal on the altar, leaving the

²⁷ Boston: Cowley Publications, 1995.

²⁸ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 47.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 49-54.

chalice and paten to the side. Both *The Book of Alternative Services* (p. 184) and the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 407) recommend that there be only one chalice on the altar; a cruets or flagon of wine may be used if required to fill additional chalices at the communion. Roman Catholic practice is similar: “only one vessel of bread and one chalice should be used ... Symbolically, this practice emphasizes one of the ‘fruits’ of the Mass – the unity of the community.”³⁰

ii *The deacon receives the gifts.* In many parishes, representatives of the congregation bring forward the bread, wine and water in an “offertory procession.” (In some parishes, the water is not brought forward and is simply provided by a server.) The deacon (and an assistant) may receive the gifts directly in front of the altar (this is implied by the *BAS*, “before the altar”). The gifts may also be received by servers. If there is not an offertory procession, servers may bring the gifts from the credence table to the deacon. And if there are no servers, the deacon brings the elements to the altar.

iii *The deacon prepares the gifts.* The deacon, possibly assisted by a sub-deacon or server with a bread-box, first adds or subtracts wafers as required to or from the ciborium, ensuring that there is a priest’s host on the paten. The deacon then pours wine from the wine cruets into the (single) chalice. (At St. Paul’s Cathedral, we usually have a small wine cruets to be used for a second chalice and, at major services, a large cruets or flagon for filling additional chalices.) The sub-deacon or a second deacon, or in their absence the deacon, adds a little water to the chalice (there is no need to add water to the cruets). There is a custom in some churches for the deacon to bless the water; Ormonde Plater recommended against it, although he suggested a prayer the deacon may say quietly. (The custom of blessing the water was eliminated in the Roman rite after Vatican II.³¹)

iv *The deacon places the gifts.* The deacon now places the gifts on the corporal. The ciborium goes on the left and the chalice on the right, covered with the pall. At St. Paul’s Cathedral, we place the small wine cruets next to them and the paten (with priest’s host) in front of them, close to the celebrant. The collection is then brought forward, received by a server in the alms basin, and placed at the end of the altar (customs will vary according to the parish and the preferences of the presiding celebrant).

Prayer over the Gifts

At Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria, “it is the Deacon who prays over the gifts of bread, wine and money. This is because these gifts are given, all of them, for the mending of the world – and it is the Deacon above all whose ministry is to ensure that we steward the gifts we bring for the sake of those in need.”³² We have adopted this practice at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Regina. After the gifts are ready and the prayer has been said, the deacon steps aside, indicating to the presider that the altar is now prepared. The presider moves to the centre of the altar, having received the lavabo from a server. (If incense is used, the censuring of the altar and gifts takes place just before the lavabo.)

³⁰ Dennis C. Smolenski, SJ, *How Not to Say Mass: A Guidebook on Liturgical Principles and the Roman Missal* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 19.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

³² Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 6.

The Great Thanksgiving

The deacon assumes his or her normal place to the right of the presider. The deacon (and at St. Paul's, the sub-deacon on the presider's left) should turn slightly towards the presider and not directly face the congregation (the role of the deacon is to focus on and assist the presider, freeing that person to preside without being concerned about logistical details). The deacon follows the presider's lead in posture and gesture. When the presider bows or makes the sign of the cross, the deacon does so too.

The deacon may be asked to turn the pages of the altar book for the presider, having ensured in advance that the pages are marked for the propers of the day, the preface (and its music when used), and the eucharistic prayer. Although presiders often place the book to their left (in fact, Ormonde Plater specified this³³), at St. Paul's we deliberately place the book to the presider's *right* so that the deacon can easily turn the pages. On the other hand, if the presider prefers the book to the left, the deacon can move to that side; as Michael Kwatera says, "a deacon is not glued to one spot; he should move anywhere there is need for his assistance."³⁴

After the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, the deacon removes the pall from the chalice, stopper from the wine cruet, and the lid from the ciborium (parishes will adapt their own practices to the vessels they are using and the people at the altar). During the eucharistic prayer, the deacon makes a profound bow at the words of institution of the bread and the wine. According to the presider's preference, the deacon may raise the chalice at the final doxology while the priest raises the bread. During the *Our Father* (said or sung), it is customary in many churches for the ministers at the altar to extend their hands, palms upwards, in the traditional gesture of prayer (*orans*).



***The Invitation to Communion:* the deacon raises the chalice, the presider the paten, and the sub-deacon the ciborium.**

³³ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 54.

³⁴ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 45.

After the breaking of the bread and the accompanying sentences, the presider gives the invitation to communion: “The gifts of God for the People of God.” The deacon raises the chalice³⁵ while the priest raises the paten or ciborium. As Frederick Bauerschmidt wittily puts it, the deacon “ought to hold the chalice in two hands, so as not to look as if he is offering a toast.”³⁶

Administration of Communion

After the invitation to communion, the deacon, where required, divides the consecrated wafers between the ciboria or patens and pours consecrated wine from cruet or flagon into additional chalices. The vessels are then given to the communion ministers. A long-standing custom has been that the ministers at the altar receive communion first, then administer it to the faithful – indeed, the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* specify this. However, at St. Paul’s Cathedral, the ministers receive communion with or after the congregation. This avoids a distinction between the clergy’s communion and the laity’s communion; as Episcopal liturgist Marion Hatchett said, “the ‘Church is *one* Body taking part in *one* Communion in the *one* Lord.’”³⁷ Deacons are traditionally ministers of the cup. Although it is often customary for the priest to administer the bread, at St. Paul’s lay ministers usually do so, for the practical reason that wafers are easier to administer to the communicant than a chalice; the priest and deacon administer the wine.

We normally administer communion from two stations on the floor at the front of the nave; this avoids the awkward logistics, and difficulty for the elderly or disabled, of climbing steps into the chancel. Many parishes, however, retain the traditional practice of administering communion to the people kneeling or standing at the communion rail in the chancel. *Intinction* – the practice of dipping the wafer in the wine – is not authorized in our diocese for health reasons. The deacon may need to tactfully ask communicants to refrain from intinction (they may instead touch the base of the chalice during the words of administration).

Ablutions

After communion, the ministers return with the vessels and remaining elements. The deacon supervises the ablutions (cleansing of the vessels) which follow. Practices vary greatly from one parish to another, but the key is that ablutions should be discreet and unobtrusive. For this reason we recommend against doing them at the altar. At St. Paul’s, the ministers gather after communion in the sacristy to consume the remaining elements (or reserve them in the aumbry) and cleanse the vessels. In some churches it may be practical to do ablutions at the credence table.³⁸

³⁵ “As the chief ‘wine steward’ (another servant image), the Deacon shares in the elevation/presentation of the sacramental gifts” (Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 9).

³⁶ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 43.

³⁷ Patrick Malloy, 2011, analysis of article by Marion Hatchett in *Sewanee Theological Review*, 2008. <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs039/1102067254998/archive/1105586716868.html>

³⁸ *The Book of Alternative Services* stipulates that “any remaining consecrated bread and wine (unless reserved for the communion of persons not present) is consumed at the end of the distribution or immediately after the service. This is appropriately done at the credence table or in the sacristy” (184).

***Dismissal

Like the proclamation of the Gospel and the preparation of the table, the Dismissal is one of the “must-do” functions of the deacon. Just as the presiding priest convenes the assembly at the beginning of the eucharistic celebration, so the deacon adjourns the assembly and sends its members into the world. This act again reflects the ministry of the deacon: “The Deacon ‘un-gathers’ the community in the same way that the priest gathers it. He or she leads the community back into a world very much in need of the every grace, courage, forgiveness, solace and wisdom we have received.”³⁹ “The deacon,” says William Ditewig, “is the normal minister for the dismissal because it is the deacon who is the sacramental sign of the church’s own diaconal nature in the world.”⁴⁰ According to *The Book of Alternative Services*, “the deacon, or other leader, dismisses the people” (p. 215). The Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* specifies “the Deacon, or the Celebrant” (p. 366).

The deacon is seen in both the Anglican and Roman Catholic rites as an appropriate minister to make announcements, but this responsibility is often shared with the presider or lay persons. Announcements, if any, should be brief, useful, and not a repeat of the Sunday bulletin. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* puts this neatly: “the Deacon makes brief announcements to the people, if indeed any need to be made, unless the Priest prefers to do this himself.”⁴¹

A blessing by the presiding celebrant is optional in the Canadian Anglican, Episcopal and Roman Catholic rites, but it is a frequent custom. Episcopal liturgical scholar Marion Hatchett considered a final blessing redundant, “since every person would have just received Communion (the greatest blessing) or would have approached the Altar for a personal blessing.”⁴² It is preferable that the Dismissal be given by the deacon immediately after the blessing (if there is one) as the second part of a single action, but sometimes they are separated by a hymn.

The Book of Alternative Services provides four recommended options for the Dismissal. The deacon may vary these or add brief introductory phrases for special occasions. During the fifty days of Easter, the deacon adds “alleluia, alleluia!” Note that the Dismissal may be sung; tones are found in the *Book of Alternative Services* (p. 924) and Ormonde Plater’s *Music and Deacons*.

A hymn sometimes come next, with procession of the ministers and choir (if present). Ormonde Plater said that if a hymn precedes the Dismissal, “with all the liturgical ministers retiring to the front door, the deacon should still remain in front of the people or return to the front to give the dismissal.”⁴³ What should be avoided is the “disembodied voice” of the deacon, unseen at the back of the church.

Marion Hatchett noted that his committee, in preparing the 1979 Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*,

³⁹ Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC, Order of Service, 10.

⁴⁰ *The Deacon at Mass*, 91-92.

⁴¹ 48, no. 184.

⁴² Analysis by Patrick Malloy.

⁴³ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 61.

did not mention a closing or recessional hymn because it thought that the rite would be more effective without one. The Postcommunion prayers all suggest an immediate movement into the world. “Send us now into the world,” they say, and “now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do.” Then comes the dismissal, which, by definition, sends the Church forth. [...] The Eucharist sends us out, so the rite should reflect that.⁴⁴

In other words, *the leaving should come immediately after the Dismissal without further words or singing*. A recommended sequence is: closing prayers, announcements (if any), closing hymn (optional), blessing (optional), Dismissal, and procession out (either to music or in silence).



The author gives the Dismissal at the end of the service. Server Gillian Engen is ready to help lead the procession of ministers immediately afterwards.

Communion from the Reserved Sacrament

i. Communion of the Sick/Shut-ins

Deacons are historically ministers of communion to the sick, visiting individuals at home or in hospital, although they are not the only ministers to do this. *The Book of Alternative Services* provides in “Ministry to the Sick” (pp. 551-558) for ministers, ordained or not (in the latter case, when authorized by the bishop), to bring the reserved sacrament to the sick person. Note that the *BAS* also permits the anointing of the sick to be done by “clergy [who of course include deacons] and those lay persons who have received authorization by the diocesan bishop” (p. 555). The *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer* states that “in cases of necessity, a deacon or lay person may perform the anointing, using oil blessed by a bishop or priest” (p. 456).

The Book of Alternative Services, in “Communion under Special Circumstances For those not present at the celebration” (pp. 256-260), extends the practice to “those who because of work schedules or physical or other types of limitations cannot be present at a public celebration of the eucharist.” It notes that “Justin Martyr, in one of the earliest existing accounts of the Sunday eucharist, tells us that deacons left after the celebration to bring communion to the sick, to the imprisoned, and to those who for any reason were unable to be present at the community eucharist” (p. 256). The service “may be conducted by a priest, or by a deacon or lay person authorized by the diocesan bishop” (p. 257).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Analysis by Patrick Malloy.

⁴⁵ The equivalent in the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer* is “Communion under Special Circumstances” (pp. 396-399) – “The Celebrant, whether priest or deacon...”

ii. Communion in Institutions

Deacons may be called upon to preside at services of communion from the reserved sacrament in care homes, hospitals and seniors' residences. Deacons must take care to ensure that the liturgy does not give the appearance of a eucharistic celebration minus the words of institution. It should be made clear that the consecrated sacrament has been brought from a church where the Eucharist has been previously celebrated.

The Diocese of Qu'Appelle has issued *An Order for the Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament* in both BCP and BAS language versions.⁴⁶ This brief service form is flexible and adaptable to different circumstances. It provides for the gathering; one, two or three readings; a "short reflection by the leader;" Prayers of the People; confession and assurance of pardon; the Peace; distribution of Holy Communion from the reserved sacrament; and the closing. In this rite, before the distribution of communion, the leader says:

The Church of Christ of which we are members has taken this bread and wine and given thanks according to the Lord's command. We now share in the Communion of Jesus' Body and Blood.

Or

This Holy Communion was consecrated at the altar of (*name the Church*) and we share it with you as fellow members of the Body of Christ.

This clarifies the rationale and safeguards the integrity of the ministry of the reserved sacrament.

iii. Reserved Sacrament in a Church

On occasion, deacons may preside at a service of the Word and Holy Communion from the reserved sacrament in a church. This, however, should only take place in certain circumstances. One example is when a priest is not available in a church where Sunday communion is the norm and people are reluctant to have a liturgy of the Word such as Morning Prayer as the main service. Another example is a mid-week service of Holy Communion, where Morning Prayer does not correspond to the expectations of those attending. Still another example is an isolated church where the sacraments are rarely celebrated.⁴⁷ Bishops are reluctant to authorize such services without good reason. The need to clarify and safeguard the integrity of the communion ministry applies here just as much here, if not more so, as to services in institutional settings.

The Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (pp. 408-409) makes provision for such a service and gives guidelines for the liturgy: "When the services of a priest cannot be obtained, the bishop may, at discretion, authorize a deacon to distribute Holy Communion to the congregation from the reserved Sacrament..." There is no similar provision in *The Book of Alternative Services*. However, soon after its introduction in 1985, the Anglican Church of Canada issued a form of service for such occasions. Entitled *Public Distribution of Holy Communion by Deacons and*

⁴⁶ Authorized by the Bishop for use in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle, October 2016.

⁴⁷ Communion in churches from the reserved sacrament is infrequent in the Anglican Church. The Roman Catholic Church faces a different situation because of the shortage of priests in many locations. For the problems this poses for a eucharistic Church, see Keith F. Pecklers, SJ, *Worship: A Primer in Christian Ritual* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 200-202.

Lay Persons,⁴⁸ this Form emphasizes that “the distribution of holy communion outside of the eucharist is not a substitute for a celebration of the eucharist [...] but it is an opportunity for the eucharist to reach into a context where the required conditions cannot, for the moment, be met.” It notes that “there should be a full celebration of the word [...] i.e., everything in the eucharistic rite down to the Prayers of the People...” (p. 3). The service omits the Prayer over the Gifts, the Proper Preface, the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, and the Breaking of the Bread. The Peace is immediately followed by the placing of the Gifts on the holy table, the *Our Father*, the invitation to communion, and the distribution of communion.

Authors on liturgy offer varied perspectives on communion services with the reserved sacrament. Episcopal deacon Ormonde Plater dealt with it only briefly, decrying the erroneous term “deacon’s mass,” considering the service as “intended for use in an emergency,” and cautioning against its regular use.⁴⁹ Roman Catholic writers are more accepting. Frederick Bauerschmidt, in “Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest,” outlines the appropriate form of service, referring to two documents issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.⁵⁰ Michael Kwatera discusses “Holy Communion outside Mass” in some detail. He does not consider this to be in any way a “a poor substitute for the Mass” but a valid if temporary alternative, in the absence of a priest, for the “ideal form of Sunday worship.”⁵¹

Services of the Word with communion from the reserved sacrament in churches can be spiritually meaningful and pastorally effective on condition that (a) the deacon presiding is trained and well prepared, (b) the exceptional nature of the liturgy is explained at the beginning of the service, and (c) the liturgy carefully follows the pattern given above. Communion from the reserved sacrament may thus be considered a legitimate form of diaconal ministry.⁵²

Other Services

We have dealt so far with the Eucharist and Holy Communion, which incorporate the most frequent diaconal functions in liturgy. However, deacons have roles in other liturgies:

- Deacons may officiate at *Morning and Evening Prayer* and other Liturgies of the Word.
- They assist the bishop in *episcopal liturgies*: ordination, confirmation, blessing of the oils. It is recommended that at least one deacon, and if possible more, attend the bishop at such liturgies. They assist the bishop with the pastoral staff and mitre and hold books where required. When the bishop is the eucharistic presider, the deacon or deacons fulfil their customary assisting roles. Deacons can be helpful in various other ways at ordinations, such as master of ceremonies, litanists, presenters, communion ministers and general assistants.

⁴⁸ Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1987.

⁴⁹ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 63-64.

⁵⁰ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 72-76.

⁵¹ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 71-77.

⁵² See D. Michael Jackson, “Appreciating the Liturgical Role of the Deacon,” in *The Diaconate in Ecumenical Perspective: Ecclesiology, Liturgy and Practice* (Durham, UK: Sacristy Press, 2019), 180-181.

- Reflecting their involvement in “the world,” deacons have a role in *pastoral liturgies* – baptisms, marriages and funerals, paying special attention to occasional worshippers. Deacons fulfil their normal assisting and collaborative functions in such liturgies, particularly if the Eucharist is part of the service. On occasion, and if authorized by the parish incumbent or the bishop, deacons may preside at baptisms, marriages and funerals (they must have a civil licence for marriages). This may occur in the absence of the priest, or if there is a personal connection with the deacon.



Assisting at a baptism: Deacon Michael Jackson (left) leads the Prayers of the People.

- *Seasonal liturgies:* The liturgies of Holy Week and Easter in *The Book of Alternative Services* assign major duties to the deacon:
 - on *Palm Sunday*, reading the Gospel of the Liturgy of the Palms (p. 298);
 - on *Good Friday*, leading the Solemn Intercession (p. 309); and
 - at the *Easter Vigil*, carrying the paschal candle and singing the *Exsultet* (pp. 322-323).

Deacons may also provide assistance on:

- *Ash Wednesday* in the imposition of ashes;
- *Maundy Thursday* in the foot-washing, in reserving the sacrament, and in supervising the stripping of the altar and furnishings; and
- *Good Friday* in the procession and veneration of the cross and in the distribution of communion from the reserved sacrament.



At the 2017 Easter Vigil at St. Paul's Cathedral, Deacon Michael Jackson holds the paschal candle (being prepared by Dean Michael Sinclair) prior to leading the procession and singing the *Exsultet*.

Blessings

There is a long-standing custom that, while bishops and priests may bless people, deacons may only bless objects, for example the water at the eucharistic offertory. Ormonde Plater noted that “there is no restriction on informal blessings, which any person may give” and that there has been “a trend to extend blessings to deacons in circumstances of need.” He added that “deacons (and other eucharistic ministers) sometimes bless children and others who do not receive communion,” bless people in diaconal ministry in prisons and other institutions, and bless animals and objects, “mainly when no priest is available or when there is a need for additional ministers.”⁵³

The Book of Alternative Services gives mixed messages on blessings by deacons. At baptisms, it states that deacons may preside “if the ministry of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained” (p.163). There is no restriction on the deacon blessing the water or on making the sign of the cross (with chrism if desired) on the newly-baptized, for, in both cases, the *BAS* specifically says that *the celebrant*, who may be a deacon, performs these acts (pp. 156, 160).

In the marriage service, however, *The Book of Alternative Services* states (p. 527) that if a marriage is performed by a deacon, “the nuptial blessing and the blessing on the ring(s) shall be appropriately changed.” (While the former is understandable, changing the form of blessing the rings is questionable.) The *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*, on the other hand, says that if a deacon presides at a marriage, the nuptial blessing should be omitted (p. 422). It also specifies that “the Priest may ask God’s blessing on a ring or rings” (p. 427).

⁵³ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 23-24.

In the Roman Catholic rite, Michael Kwatera appears to have no problem with a deacon giving either nuptial or ring blessing at a marriage. Indeed, he says that, for the nuptial blessing, “it is fitting that the deacon lay his hands on the bride’s head, on the groom’s, and over both bride and groom, thus matching this gesture of blessing to the parts of the prayer.”⁵⁴ Interestingly, Frederick Bauerschmidt, in describing the liturgy for communion from the reserved sacrament, says that at the end of the service the deacon “blesses the people.”⁵⁵

The customs with respect to blessings by deacons are ambiguous. We recommend following Ormonde Plater’s advice: “Since their use of blessings may cause offence and lead to controversy, deacons need to exercise caution and seek advice from the bishop or priest in charge.”⁵⁶

Master of Ceremonies

The 3rd century Syrian document *Didascalia* “points to the role of the deacon in keeping order in the liturgical assembly,” notes Frederick Bauerschmidt, who describes the deacon of ancient times as a “liturgical ‘enforcer’.”⁵⁷ Fortunately, this rather severe approach has been superseded by a more benign function! The deacon often serves as “master of ceremonies” or liturgical coordinator, liaising with other clergy, lay ministers, readers and communion ministers, servers, and musicians to facilitate the participation of the assembly – and allow the presider to focus on presiding. This can be particularly helpful at major occasions like baptisms, Christmas, Holy Week and Easter celebrations, diocesan events, or episcopal services such as ordinations and confirmations.

The image of the master of ceremonies in the liturgy serves as a good analogy of what the ministry of the deacon should look like in the Church [...] When a deacon performs this role in the liturgy ... he is exercising a liturgical function that matches his sacramental character. [The deacon] prepares, anticipates, directs, encourages, and helps the entire assembly to fulfill their functions with grace. He is the designated worrier for the assembly, which relies upon him when the unexpected occurs.⁵⁸

Liturgy is by nature dramatic. It deserves careful preparation and direction. The deacon, aptly called “the designated worrier,” may act as a combination of producer, stage manager, and prompter. To again quote Frederick Bauerschmidt,

As the liturgy’s principal servant, the deacon needs to cultivate a keen sense of “situational awareness,” knowing at all times who should be doing what – whether this be the presider, readers, altar servers or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion – and helping them to do what they are supposed to do without appearing in any way to usurp their ministries.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 64.

⁵⁵ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 75.

⁵⁶ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 24.

⁵⁷ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 5-6.

⁵⁸ W. Shawn McKnight, “The Uniqueness of the Deacon,” in James Keating, ed. *The Character of the Deacon*, 79-80.

⁵⁹ *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 20.

Elsewhere he says,

...as it were the *major domo* of [the] assembly [...] the deacon is the servant of the liturgical assembly (not, as some might assume, the servant of the priest-celebrant) [...] the deacon serves in a special way by exercising care not only over his or her own service, but also over everyone else's service [...] the deacon's ministry [...] is one of care for the ministry of others.⁶⁰

Conclusion

Why all this attention to the role of deacons in the liturgy? Have we not been able to without them for a long time – and in many cases, still do? While there are many responses to this question, one cannot do better than to cite again Ormonde Plater:

In liturgy, deacons always perform in relationship with others. [...] Deacons enhance the liturgy [and] help all Christians – bishops, priests, deacons, and all the baptized – express baptismal ministry in the life and worship of the church. [...] Deacons are the principal assistants, the most active of all who serve in liturgy. They are heralds of the word, servants of the church, and agents of the bishop. Deacons act for the good of others by setting them free for worship of God and action in the world. [...] they enlist and involve other baptized persons in proper liturgical roles, as in ministries of mercy and justice.⁶¹

Deacons are an asset to liturgy. They bring to it collegiality and diversity. They draw on the talents of others in the assembly. They help presiders to preside and assistants to assist. Through their ancient office they link us to worship in the earliest centuries of the church. “Deaconless” liturgies are, of course, frequent, even the norm, in many parishes. However, they lack a historic and valuable dimension of the worship of the church. When deacons are available, they should, without question or hesitation, perform their roles in the liturgy. As Deacon Plater put it in his inimitable way, “My motto: When in doubt, do it!”⁶²

⁶⁰ Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, “Attentiveness: The Liturgy in the Spiritual Life of the Deacon,” in D. Michael Jackson, ed., *The Diaconate in Ecumenical Perspective*, 168.

⁶¹ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 4-7.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 5.

Chapter 2 Vestments for the Deacon⁶³

Introduction

What should deacons wear? The question may seem trivial. After all, ministry is about ministering, not about appearances. And yet many religious traditions have dress codes for their adherents – for example, the *yarmulke* (skull cap) worn by Jewish men or the *hijab* (head scarf) worn by Muslim women. Ordained ministers – rabbis, imams, Christian clergy – often wear some form of distinctive dress, both during worship (liturgical vestments) and outside of worship (street dress). The clerical collar is the best known identifier for Christian clergy for the majority of denominations. Robes such as cassocks and headdress are street wear for clergy in many Orthodox countries. Religious orders have traditionally had some form of “habit.” What deacons may or should wear is therefore of interest. Dress *outside* of the liturgy is easily dealt with. *Liturgical* dress, on the other hand, is more complex.

Street Dress

Should deacons wear clerical collars and if so, when? The use of clerical collars *at all* by deacons, like that of the title “reverend,” has been questioned. The Anglican custom has generally been that ordained ministers wear clerical collars when “on duty,” both liturgically and non-liturgically – and this has included deacons. On the other hand, deacons used to be such rare birds that the question hardly arose for them. With the revival of the diaconate as a distinct order, attuned to the “secular” world outside the church institution, wearing clerical garb has been challenged as detracting from the deacon’s identity.

James Barnett, for example, said that “round collars and ‘the Reverend’ are actually counter-symbols of the new diaconate, implying as they do a false distinction between the deacon and the laity, implying that the ordained person is somehow more sacred or holy than others.”⁶⁴ While the title “reverend” is now less often used for deacons, in favour of “deacon” (Deacon John or Jane Smith), clerical collars are frequently worn – but normally for liturgy and for specifically-identified forms of diaconal ministry.

William Ditewig, Roman Catholic deacon in the United States, notes the variety of practices in his own Church. Some dioceses, he says, discourage the wearing of the collar by deacons “because they are afraid people might confuse deacons with priests. [...] In other dioceses, deacons may wear the collar at their discretion whenever they are involved in public ministry,” such as prison ministry. “Some deacons are concerned that, without some easily recognizable garb that identifies them as clerics, people will not know that they are deacons and available to serve [...] Other deacons and their bishops find that wearing a clerical collar puts too much distance between the deacon and the people he is to serve.”⁶⁵ This sums up the pros and cons of distinctive clerical garb for deacons.

⁶³ “Vestments for the Deacon” was first published in *Diakoneo*, publication of the Association for Episcopal Deacons, Vol. 34, #5 (2012).

⁶⁴ James Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, 169.

⁶⁵ William T. Ditewig, *101 Questions and Answers on Deacons* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 56-57.

Practice at St. Paul’s Cathedral follows a middle course. Deacons wear the clerical collar, but only when (a) functioning liturgically and (b) exercising a specific diaconal ministry outside the church community – hospital visiting, services in seniors’ and special care homes, and public events such as Remembrance Day.

Liturgical Vestments for the Deacon⁶⁶

Anglican deacons usually vest for sacramental liturgies in one of two ways: *cassock, surplice and stole*; or *alb and stole*. For Morning and Evening Prayer, Anglican deacons wear the black preaching scarf over surplice and cassock (this, of course, makes them indistinguishable from priests – which was of such concern to the Roman Catholic dioceses cited by William Ditewig!). Historically, the most distinctive vesture of the deacon has been the *dalmatic*, a knee-length tunic with wide sleeves, in liturgical colours.

Historical Note

In the early Church there was no distinctive dress for the clergy: in the Roman Empire they wore the same “classical” garments as others, which included the alb, cope, chasuble and dalmatic. By about the sixth century, however, Roman dress had evolved into different forms while clergy retained the traditional classical dress. “Christian vestments are then derived primarily from the customary dress of the people of the late Roman Empire.”⁶⁷

The alb is the basic liturgical robe, originating from the *tunica alba* (white tunic), an indoor garment worn in the ancient world. In church use, the alb symbolized the white robe given to new Christians at baptism. It was and is worn under vestments like the chasuble, dalmatic and cope. In some traditions it is worn over the cassock; indeed, the surplice is simply an abbreviated alb. In many cases, the “cassock-alb” has replaced cassock and surplice.

The stole also has ancient origins. Some think it came from “a scarf worn over the tunic and chasuble in ancient Rome by senators and consuls as an insignia of their status.”⁶⁸ Others suggest it was “a long scarf worn by such official persons as messengers,”⁶⁹ which made it an appropriate garment for deacons as messengers of the Gospel. The wearing of the stole by deacons appears as early as the fifth and sixth centuries in the East, although it was not prevalent in the West and Rome until the ninth or tenth centuries. Priests, as today, wore the stole as a scarf hanging vertically from the neck in the front on both sides and under the chasuble (if used).

⁶⁶ Helpful summaries of the historical and current uses of diaconal vestments are found in the following:

Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*, 29.

William T. Ditewig, *The Deacon at Mass*, Second Edition, 34-38, 97-99.

Michael Kwatera, *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, Second Edition, 18-21.

Ormonde Plater, *Deacons in the Liturgy*, Second Edition, 15-19.

More detailed information is provided in James Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, 168-170, 219-225. For the Orthodox equivalent, see John Chryssavgis, *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia: The Diaconate Yesterday and Today* (Brookline, MS: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2009), Appendix B.

⁶⁷ James Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, 220.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁶⁹ Michael Kwatera, *The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 18.

However, in the East the diaconal stole (*orarion* in Greek, *orarium* in Latin – from *oro*, “to pray”) was worn over the left shoulder, *over* the tunic (*stikharion*), and straight down front and back – as it still is in many of the Orthodox Churches.⁷⁰ (The Council of Toledo in 613 directed that the stole be worn this way so that the deacon’s right hand and arm were left free for service.) When the *orarion* or stole (from *stolas*, for “towel” in Greek) was finally adopted in Rome and the West for deacons, it was originally worn *over* the dalmatic, which was the western equivalent of the *stikharion*. Thus the eastern stole and western dalmatic together became the diaconal vestments. Eventually, the diaconal stole was placed *under* the dalmatic; it was then worn crossways and tied under the right arm – which is still the case in most western rite churches.⁷¹

The dalmatic is “an ancient vestment associated with a servant”⁷² and “appears to have originated as a garment of ordinary dress in the province of Dalmatia, being made from the fine wool for which the province was noted.”⁷³ Its use as an ecclesiastical vestment seems to have become general by the fifth century in Rome, where it was worn by both bishops and deacons. (The Roman rite still provides for bishops to wear the dalmatic under the chasuble at such services as ordinations.) Eventually the custom of the deacon wearing the dalmatic spread across the western church. Originally, dalmatics were decorated with two vertical stripes on either side reaching from top to bottom, front and back, and with two circular stripes on the sleeves. Although this pattern is still found, dalmatics evolved like other vestments and were decorated in a variety of ways. In the traditional “high mass,” the deacon wore a dalmatic with two horizontal stripes, while the sub-deacon wore a very similar garment, the *tunicle*, differentiated from the dalmatic by having only one stripe.

The Church of England

We find references to the alb in the First Prayer Book of King Edward VI (1549). At “The Supper of the Lord and the Holy Communion, commonly called the Mass,” the priest is to wear “the vesture appointed for that ministration, that is to say: a white alb plain, with a vestment or cope.” Assisting priests and deacons are to wear “likewise the vestures appointed for their ministry, that is to say, albs with tunicles” (the dalmatic is not mentioned). In the ordinal of 1550, the rubric specifies for the Ordering of Deacons “every one of them that are presented, having upon him a plain alb.” A similar phrase is found in the Ordering of Priests. For the consecration of bishops, the ordinal states that the bishop-elect and presenting bishops wear surplice and cope. These references were omitted from the Second Prayer Book of 1552; indeed, such vestments were prohibited – priests and deacons were “to have and wear a surplice only” and bishops were to wear a rochet. The ordinal of 1552 deletes all references to vestments. However, in the slightly revised Elizabethan prayer book of 1559, we find the following statement: “such Ornaments of the Church, and of the Ministers thereof at all times of their Ministration, shall be retained and be in use, as were in this Church of England by the Authority of Parliament, in the Second Year of the Reign of King Edward the Sixth” – that is, 1549. We are back full circle to the First Prayer Book. However, with some exceptions, albs, copes (and mitres), chasubles, dalmatics and tunicles did not return to use in the Church of England until the catholic revival of the 19th century.

⁷⁰ For other theories about the name, see John Chryssavgis, *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia*, Appendix B.

⁷¹ See Ormonde Plater, *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 17-18.

⁷² William Ditewig, *The Deacon at Mass*, 34-35.

⁷³ James Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, 223.



Traditional vestments: the deacon's dalmatic worn by the author (left) has two horizontal stripes; the sub-deacon's tunic, worn by Tannis Patterson (right), has one. Dean Michael Sinclair wears the chasuble. This set, designed and made by Merrilyn Dubreuil, parishioner at St. Paul's Cathedral, was inaugurated on All Saints' Day, 2015.

Contemporary Vestments for the Deacon

The deacon's stole should, first of all, not be a priest's stole tied sideways! This was often the case when deacons were few and far between and vestment makers did not produce specifically diaconal stoles. The situation has changed and genuine deacons' stoles are now readily available. These stoles are normally wide, appear in the traditional liturgical colours, and are decorated with various symbols. The "Latin" stole is worn crossways over the left shoulder and under the right arm. Episcopal deacon Ormonde Plater gave three options for wearing the diaconal stole, all over the left shoulder:⁷⁴

1. The **Latin style**, tied or attached under the right arm – the most frequent western usage.
2. The **Eastern style orarion**, hanging straight down from the left shoulder, used in many Orthodox churches.
3. The **"Byzantine" style**, a long stole (in effect a double *orarion*) worn crossways under the right arm like the Latin stole but with the ends hanging vertically front and back from the left shoulder like the *orarion*. This is the usage in some Orthodox churches and increasingly among Anglican deacons.

⁷⁴ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 17-18.

The dalmatic, historically *the* deacon's vestment, was worn by the deacon in the Anglo-Catholic "high mass" tradition and at the Roman Catholic solemn high mass (the sub-deacon wore a tunicle). After Vatican II, the solemn high mass was eliminated from the Roman missal. So was the order of sub-deacons. As was the case for deacons' stoles, vestment makers stopped making dalmatics. The revival of the diaconate has resulted in them being made again.

The dalmatic has tended to be reserved for special occasions in both the Anglican and Roman Catholic rites. This, maintains Roman Catholic deacon William Ditewig, is regrettable: in his view, the deacon should wear the dalmatic whenever the priest wears a chasuble.⁷⁵ His colleague Frederick Bauerschmidt agrees: "the dalmatic is for the deacon the equivalent of the priest's chasuble."⁷⁶ Episcopal deacon Ormonde Plater added that deacons should also wear the dalmatic when the priest wears a cope, for example at Solemn Evensong. He noted, however, that "[i]n practice, the dalmatic is often reserved for occasions of great solemnity."⁷⁷ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states that "the vestment proper to the deacon is the dalmatic, worn over the alb and stole; however, the dalmatic may be omitted out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity."⁷⁸



Wearing the dalmatic at a non-sacramental liturgy, the deacon presides at the Service of Light, Lent 2016, at St. Paul's Cathedral. The priest wears a cope and the senior server a tunicle.

Vestments like dalmatics can be expensive and this may be an obstacle for individual deacons; parishes where there is a deacon should provide matching sets of chasubles and dalmatics – and stoles. One practice should be vigorously discouraged: vesting other people as deacons, whether priests, for example reading the Gospel in the absence of a deacon, or lay persons – the so-called "liturgical deacons" found in some parishes. It would be unthinkable to vest as priests those who are not. The same should apply to the diaconate. A Roman Catholic writer, referring to "a renewed spirit of liturgical authenticity," says that "priests should not dress like deacons, ever."⁷⁹

⁷⁵ *The Deacon at Mass*, 35-36.

⁷⁶ *The Deacon's Ministry of the Liturgy*, 29.

⁷⁷ *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 17.

⁷⁸ 71, no. 338.

⁷⁹ Dennis C. Smolenski, SJ, *How Not to Say Mass*, 42.

A Case Study: St. Paul's Cathedral, Regina

At St. Paul's Cathedral, the deacon generally follows the guidelines given by Deacons Plater and Ditewig: when the presiding celebrant wears chasuble or cope, the deacon wears the dalmatic. We have five complete sets of vestments (cope, chasuble, dalmatic, tunicle and stoles), in white, red, green, purple and blue. There are both Latin stoles and Byzantine double *orarions* in our sets of vestments. Both styles are in regular use.⁸⁰ During the pandemic in 2020-21, Merrilyn Dubreuil even made face-masks for us in the liturgical colours!



Liturgical face-masks

We wear our stoles *over* the dalmatic. Admittedly, this is a rare practice. We do so because, as noted above, this was the most ancient tradition, and also because lay sub-deacons assist at most of our eucharistic celebrations. Since in some of the vestment sets the tunicles are identical to the dalmatics, the stole is the distinguishing feature for the deacon. On an antiquarian note, James Barnett tells us that “The Council of Braga, 563, directs the deacons to wear the stole over the shoulder and outside the tunic (dalmatic), so that they will not be confused with the subdeacons.”⁸¹ Whether we are antiquarian or innovative in this respect at St. Paul's is open for discussion. We like to think the latter! Our cadre of sub-deacons has been in place since the 1980s and we find this a valuable form of lay liturgical and other ministry.

The award-winning white vestment set at St. Paul's Cathedral, made by Saskatchewan artist Martha Cole and depicting the water of baptism. From left to right: Deacon Michael Jackson, wearing the Byzantine stole *over* the dalmatic; Dean Michael Sinclair in the chasuble; and Sub-Deacon Jan Besse in the tunicle.



⁸⁰ Michael Kwatera states that “[I]turgical authenticity requires that only a deacon of an Eastern rite should wear an Eastern-style *orarion*” (*The Liturgical Ministry of Deacons*, 19), but we do not see this restriction applying to the Byzantine stole (double *orarion*).

⁸¹ *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, 223.

Conclusion

For deacons, vestments *do* matter. Indeed, all liturgical vestments have a purpose beyond mere ornamentation. Deacon William Ditewig explains this well for his own Roman Catholic tradition; it applies equally to the Anglican tradition:

[W]e are a church that makes rich use of outward signs and other aids to religious imagination and expression. Vestments do many things, including offering a link to our religious heritage. The alb, for example, is a sign and reminder of the white garment of baptism. The stole and dalmatic of the deacon express his servanthood as well as the servanthood of the entire church in the servanthood of Christ, just as the priest's vestments signal the priesthood of the priest and the church in the High Priesthood of Christ. The partnership of priest and deacon thus demonstrates to the assembly the link between priesthood and service; between worship of God and care of neighbor; between Word, sacrament and charity.⁸²

Amen!

⁸² *The Deacon at Mass*, 37.

Chapter 3 The Deacon in Liturgical Texts

Let us see how the deacon's liturgical roles are prescribed – or not prescribed – in some Anglican books of worship: the First Prayer Book of King Edward VI (1549); the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Anglican Church of Canada (1959/1962); the *Book of Common Prayer* of The Episcopal Church in the United States (1979); *The Book of Alternative Services* of the Anglican Church of Canada (1985); and *Common Worship* of the Church of England (2000). We also look the 2011 version of the Roman Missal for the Roman Catholic Church and offer a summary description for the Lutheran Churches.

The First Prayer Book of King Edward VI, 1549

The first Book of Common Prayer continues the mediaeval assumptions about the diaconate, but at least includes a vestige of the liturgical role of the deacon.

The Supper of the Lord and the Holy Communion, commonly called The Mass

Deacons [...] shall have upon them [...] the vestures appointed for their ministry, that is to say, albs with tunicles.

The priest or deacon shall then read the Gospel.

If there be a Deacon or other Priest, then shall he follow with the chalice.

Note: these references are omitted in the Second Prayer Book of 1552.

The Ordering of Deacons

Then one of them appointed by the Bishop, shall read the Gospel of that day.

The Book of Common Prayer, Canada, 1959/62

Four hundred years later, the Canadian Book of Common Prayer registers no change in the liturgical function of the deacon. References to the diaconate are cursory.

All Priests and Deacons, unless prevented by sickness or other urgent cause, are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer. (lvi)

In Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall all receive the Communion with the Priest every Sunday at the least, except they have a reasonable cause to the contrary. (66)

Eucharist

the Deacon or Priest who reads [the Gospel] (71)

[the Priest shall] proceed to deliver [the Communion] to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons (84)

If there be no Communion, the Priest or Deacon may say... (87)

Baptism

In the absence of a Priest, it is lawful for a Deacon to baptize children. (522)

Note: there is no reference to this "lawful" diaconal act in the baptism of adults.

Ordination – of Deacons

Then one of them, appointed by the Bishop, shall read The Gospel. (643)

And here it must be declared unto the Deacon, that he must continue in that office of a Deacon the space of a whole year (except for reasonable causes it shall otherwise seem good unto the Bishop) to the intent that he may be perfect, and well expert in the things appertaining to the Ecclesiastical Administration. If he has been found faithful and diligent, and has satisfied the Bishop that he is sufficiently experienced in the things belonging to the Ministry, he may be admitted by his Diocesan to the Order of Priesthood... (644)

These references in the ordination rite are taken virtually verbatim from the First and Second Prayer Books of King Edward VI. The Canadian revisers of the mid-20th century were scarcely innovators!

The Book of Common Prayer of The Episcopal Church in the United States, 1979

This book, reflecting the early revival of the diaconate in the Episcopal Church, pays considerable attention to the liturgical role of the deacon.

Concerning the Service of the Church

In all services, the entire Christian assembly participates in such a way that the members of each order within the Church, lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons, fulfil the functions proper to their respective orders, as set forth in the rubrical directions for each service. (13)

The leader of worship in a Christian assembly is normally a bishop or priest. Deacons by virtue of their order do not exercise a presiding function; but, like lay persons, may officiate at the Liturgy of the Word [...] Under exceptional circumstances, when the services of a priest cannot be obtained, the bishop may, at discretion, authorize a deacon to preside at other rites also... (13-14)

Proper Liturgies for Special Days

Provision is made for a deacon or lay reader to officiate at the Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday rites. In the Palm Sunday rite, a Deacon or other person appointed reads the Gospel of the Palms and the deacon starts the procession with Let us go forth in peace. In the Good Friday service, a Deacon or other person appointed leads the Solemn Collects.

(264-277)

For the Easter Vigil, we find the following:

It is the prerogative of a deacon to carry the Paschal Candle to its place, and to chant the Exsultet. Deacons likewise assist at Baptism and the Eucharist according to their order. A deacon may also, when the services of a priest cannot be obtained, and with the authorization of the bishop, officiate at public Baptism; and may administer Easter Communion from the Sacrament previously consecrated. (284)

Baptism

If... the ministry of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained, the bishop may specially authorize a deacon to preside. In that case, the deacon omits the prayer over the candidates... and the formula and action which follow. (312)

This is more restrictive of the deacon's role in baptism than in the Canadian Book of Alternative Services.

The Holy Eucharist

A deacon should read the Gospel and may lead the Prayers of the People. Deacons should also serve at the Lord's Table, preparing and placing on it the offerings of bread and wine, and assisting in the ministration of the Sacrament to the people. *In the absence of a deacon* [our emphasis], these duties may be performed by an assisting priest. (322 and 354)

In both Rites I and II, the Deacon or Celebrant says the invitation to Confession and gives the Dismissal. The Episcopal book prescribes how a deacon may, at the bishop's discretion, administer communion from the reserved sacrament. (408-409)

Marriage

A deacon, or an assisting priest, may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist.

Where it is permitted by civil law that deacons may perform marriages, and no priest or bishop is available, a deacon may use the service which follows, omitting the nuptial blessing which follows The Prayers. (422)

Ordination**- of a Bishop**

A Deacon or Priest reads the Gospel... (516)

Deacons prepare the Table. (522)

A Deacon dismisses the people. (523)

- of a Priest

the Deacon, or, if no deacon is present, a Priest reads the Gospel. (528)

the Deacon, or a Priest if no deacon is present, dismisses the people. (535)

- of a Deacon

After receiving the Holy Communion, the new deacon assists in the distribution of the Sacrament, ministering either the Bread or the Wine, or both. (536)

A Priest and a Lay Person, and additional presenters if desired, standing before the bishop, present the ordinand. (*Note: curiously, there is no reference to a deacon being one of the presenters.*) (538)

the Deacon, or, if no deacon is present, a Priest reads the Gospel. (540)

The newly-ordained Deacon prepares the bread, pours sufficient wine (and a little water) into the chalice, and places the vessels on the Lord's Table. (546)

The Bishop blesses the people, after which the new Deacon dismisses them. (547)

After participating in the Peace, the deacons go to the Altar for the Offertory. If there are many deacons, some assist in the Offertory and others administer Holy Communion. One, appointed by the bishop, is to say the dismissal. (554)

When desired, deacons may be appointed to carry the Sacrament and minister Holy Communion to those communicants who, because of sickness or other grave cause, could not be present at the ordination.

If the remaining Elements are not required for the Communion of the absent, it is appropriate for the deacons to remove the vessels from the Altar, consume the remaining Elements, and cleanse the vessels in some convenient place. (555)

Celebration of a New Ministry

The new Minister, if a deacon, should read the Gospel, prepare the elements at the Offertory, assist the celebrant at the Altar, and dismiss the congregation. (558)

The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada, 1985

The Book of Alternative Services is surprisingly progressive as far as the diaconate is concerned — progressive in that deacons are given appropriate roles in almost all liturgies; surprisingly, because in the early 1980s the diaconal movement had not yet gathered as much momentum as in the Episcopal Church in the USA and deacons were few and far between. The compilers of the Book were ahead of their time and Canadian deacons should be grateful.

Morning Prayer

A deacon or lay member of the community may lead the intercessions and thanksgivings. (53)
(*The same phrase is found in Evening Prayer – 70*)

The Service of Light

Deacon, other assistant, or the officiant: (*opening response*)

Thanksgiving

A deacon, or other assistant, or the officiant sings or says, (*response*) (61)

Baptism

It is appropriate that the Gospel be read by a deacon.

If the ministry of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained, a deacon may preside at a public baptism. (163)

Reconciliation of a Penitent

If a deacon or lay person hears a confession, a declaration of forgiveness may be made in the form provided. (166)

Eucharist

A deacon or lay person, *rather than the priest* [our emphasis], is the appropriate minister to lead the Prayers of the People. (176)

It is the function of a deacon [our emphasis] to read the Gospel and to make ready the table for the celebration, preparing and placing upon it the bread and cup of wine. The deacon may also lead the Prayers of the People. (183)

A deacon or member of the community leads the Prayers of the People... (190)

...may lead... (235)

Dismissal

The celebrant may bless the people. The deacon, or other leader, dismisses the people, saying in these or similar words. (215)

Then the deacon or the celebrant says, (249)

Palm Sunday

Then a deacon, a priest, or some other appointed person shall read one of the following. [Gospel of the Liturgy of the Palms] (298)

In the absence of a bishop or a priest, the preceding service may be led by a deacon or lay person. (299)

Good Friday

Solemn Intercession ... the deacon or other person appointed says to the people... (309)

The biddings may be read by a deacon or other person appointed. (310)

Easter Vigil

It is the prerogative of a deacon [our emphasis] to carry the paschal candle to its place, and to chant the Exsultet. Deacons likewise assist at baptism and the eucharist according to their order. [...] In the absence of a bishop or priest, a deacon or lay reader may lead the first two parts of the service... (321)

The deacon (a priest *if there is no deacon* [our emphasis]) takes the paschal candle, lifts it high, and sings, *The Light of Christ*. [...] The procession enters the church, led by the deacon with the paschal candle. At a suitable place, the deacon lifts the candle high and sings a second time, *The Light of Christ*. [...] The procession continues until the deacon arrives before the altar. Turning to face the people, the deacon sings a third time, *The Light of Christ*.

The deacon, or other person appointed, standing near the candle, sings or says the Exsultet. (322-323)

In the absence of a deacon [our emphasis], the Exsultet may be sung by a priest or by a lay person. (334)

Marriage

When the form of service on page 541 is celebrated by a deacon, the nuptial blessing and the blessing of the ring(s) shall be appropriately changed. (527)

Note: this does not reflect the long-standing tradition that deacons may bless objects, although not people.

Funerals

There are brief references to possible roles for a deacon in Form I: as celebrant (571), leading the Prayers of the People (579), giving the Dismissal (586). Forms II and III do not mention the deacon for the Prayers (593) or the Dismissal (596, 597, 600). Form III stipulates, however, that

The celebrant may be a bishop, priest, deacon, or lay person. (598)

Ordination

- of a Bishop

Representatives of the presbyterate, diaconate and laity for which the new bishop is to be consecrated, are assigned appropriate duties in the service. (632)

The Presentation ...representatives of the diocese and province (priests, deacons, and lay persons), standing before the archbishop, present the bishop-elect... (634)

The Dismissal A deacon dismisses the people with these words. (641)

Note: the same reference is found in the ordinations of priests (650) and deacons (658).

- of a Deacon

The Presentation A priest and a lay person, and additional presenters if desired, standing before the bishop, present the ordinand... (653)

The liturgy continues with the offertory. The newly ordained deacon prepares the elements and places the vessels on the Lord's Table. The bishop, joined (if possible) by presbyters, presides at the celebration of the eucharist. (657)

Note: It is bizarre that in its rite for ordination of deacons, the deacon-friendly BAS, like the Episcopal BCP, does not provide for deacons as presenters, whereas it does for episcopal ordinations! Nor does it suggest that deacons might join the presiding celebrant at the table.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, 2000

The Church of England's liturgical texts reflect its lack of enthusiasm for the diaconate. The Alternative Services Book of 1980 virtually ignored the deacon, who is not mentioned in the eucharistic rites at all (in fact, Rite B specifies that the priest gives the dismissal). In the 1980 ordinal, the declaration states that "a deacon assists the priest under whom he serves... It is his general duty to do such pastoral work as is entrusted to him." (p. 344). Deacons are given no role in the diaconal ordination service.

One would have hoped that twenty years later the Church of England's attitude towards deacons had evolved, especially in the light of the Canadian Anglican and American Episcopal (and Roman Catholic) liturgical texts. Alas, this was not the case. Common Worship (2000) ignores the deacon almost as much as did its 1980 predecessor. The General Notes for the Eucharist (pp. 158-159) demonstrate the ambivalence of the Church of England towards the diaconate:

In some traditions the ministry of the deacon at Holy Communion has included some of the following elements: the bringing in of the Book of the Gospels, the invitation to confession, the reading of the Gospel, the preaching of the sermon when licensed to do so, a part in the prayers of intercession, the preparation of the table and the gifts, a part in the distribution, the ablutions and the dismissal.

The deacon's liturgical ministry provides an appropriate model for the ministry of an assisting priest, a reader, or another episcopally authorized minister in a leadership ministry that complements that of the president.

When appropriate, the president may [...] delegate the leadership of all or parts of the Gathering and the Liturgy of the Word to a deacon, Reader or other authorized lay person.

In the absence of a priest for the first part of the service, a deacon, Reader or other authorized lay person may lead the entire Gathering and Liturgy of the Word.

Although Common Worship well summarizes the liturgical role of the deacon in the Eucharist, it clearly does not view this as any kind of norm: it is followed "in some traditions," it may provide "an appropriate model" for other ministers, and it is seen as much like that of the Reader.

The Roman Missal, 2011

The Roman Catholic Church, with its centralized authority, is very different indeed from the Anglican Communion, which is decentralized not only among but within its component national provinces. The Holy See gives specific liturgical directions, not only for rites (the texts), as do Anglican prayer books, but for ceremonies – movement, posture, gesture, vestments, ornaments and furnishings – which Anglican formularies since the 16th century have only rarely attempted to do and even then, unsuccessfully. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*⁸³ provides comprehensive commentaries and detailed directions for the eucharistic celebration. While such a publication is inconceivable for Anglicans, it provides valuable insights into liturgical practice.

Roman Catholics do not have the equivalent of *The Book of Common Prayer* or *The Book of Alternative Services*. The Roman Missal itself is the presider's book. Books like the *Catholic Book of Worship* or the *Sunday Missal* usually include the text of the eucharistic rite, or at least the parts of it needed by the congregation; in some cases, the propers (collects, other prayers, readings, psalms); and in others, music and hymns. Some of these books are published in annual editions.

The General Instruction for the Roman Missal

Reflecting the prescriptive nature of the Roman rite, references to deacons abound in *The General Instruction* and it would be pointless to reproduce them all here. References are to the relevant numbered sections in *The General Instruction*.

⁸³ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Canadian edition (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011).

Chapter II. The Structure of the Mass, Its Elements and Its Parts

Gestures and Bodily Posture

42 Among gestures are included also actions and processions, by which the Priest, with the Deacon and ministers, goes to the altar; the Deacon carries the Evangeliary or *Book of Gospels* to the ambo before the proclamation of the Gospel.

The Biblical Readings

#59 The function of proclaiming the readings is by tradition not presidential but ministerial. Therefore the readings are to be read by a reader, but the Gospel by the Deacon, or, in his absence, by another Priest.

The Homily

#66 The Homily should ordinarily be given by the Priest Celebrant himself or be entrusted by him to a concelebrating Priest, or from time to time and, if appropriate, to the Deacon, but never to a lay person. (*Note: the Roman rite, unlike the contemporary Anglican books, clearly provides for occasional preaching by deacons.*)

The Universal Prayer

#71 [The intentions] are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful.

The Fraction of the Bread

#83 The Priest breaks the Eucharistic Bread, with the assistance, if the case requires, of the Deacon or a concelebrant. (*Note: there is no such reference in Anglican prayer books.*)

Chapter III. Duties and Ministries in the Mass

The Duties of Those in Holy Orders

#94. After the Priest, the Deacon, in virtue of the sacred Ordination he has received, holds first place among those who minister in the celebration of the Eucharist. For the sacred Order of the Diaconate has been held in high honour in the Church even from the early times of the Apostles. At Mass the Deacon has his own part in proclaiming the Gospel, from time to time in preaching God's Word, in announcing the intentions of the Universal Prayer, in ministering to the Priest, in preparing the altar and in serving the celebration of the Sacrifice, in distributing the Eucharist to the faithful, especially under the species of wine, and from time to time in giving instructions regarding the people's gestures and postures,
(*Note: this is both a succinct and a complete description of the deacon's role at the Eucharist. One could only wish that something similar appeared in Anglican prayer books!*)

Chapter IV. The Different Forms of Celebrating Mass

Mass with the People

#116. If at any celebration of Mass a Deacon is present, he should exercise his function. (*note: well said!*) *This section includes sub-sections A) Mass without a Deacon, and B) Mass with a Deacon.*

The Deacon in Lutheran Liturgies

A study of the role of the deacon in Lutheran liturgies remains to be done. The Lutheran Churches not only vary greatly in their approaches to the diaconate but are in a state of flux as they re-examine the order in an ecumenical context. However, the following extract from a 2019 report for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)⁸⁴ gives a good indication of where Lutheranism appears to be moving liturgically.

By virtue of their vocation, [...] deacons are distinctively positioned to contribute to the worshiping leadership of the Christian assembly. For example, in leading the intercessions and in preaching, deacons speak the needs of the world to the church, invite the assembly to join in prayer for those who suffer, and call upon those gathered to go out to serve. A deacon reading the gospel lesson traditionally has exemplified the close relationship between what God's people believe and how they serve.

Welcoming reclaimed liturgical roles for deacons works in mutuality with the increased roles lay persons have assumed in worship leadership as part of 20th-century liturgical renewal. Deacons, for example, may be among those who take on the roles of assisting minister, those serving communion in the assembly or those carrying the communion to those who cannot be present.

With the formation of the Roster of Ministers of Word and Service, congregations may want to explore again ways appropriately to involve deacons and lay people together in roles of worship leadership, providing yet another opportunity to highlight the intersections of church and world, while also honoring both ancient and contemporary practice. While deacons live out their connections with the worshiping assembly in diverse ways, that relationship is essential to the understanding and witness of the deacon as public leader of the church.

Especially when leading worship, deacons may wear a diaconal stole. The deacons' stole is widely recognized ecumenically as a symbol of the diaconate. The stole, usually worn diagonally across an alb, emphasizes the importance of connecting worship and service and identifies the deacon as a public minister of the church.

Outside the assembly's worship, the cross is an appropriate symbol as it identifies the deacon as a presence of the servant Christ in the world. The Entrance Rite Discernment Group suggests that the appropriate churchwide staff facilitate a conversation among deacons to propose a single cross design that can be worn as a pin.

⁸⁴ *Report and Recommendations of the Entrance Rite Discernment Group*, ELCA, 2019.

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