

# The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma



## Customary for Deacons

*The Rt. Rev. Poulson Reed, Bishop of Oklahoma*

## **Deacon's Customary**

This revised customary has been authorized by the Bishop, and it serves as a guide for Deacons serving in the Diocese of Oklahoma. This customary establishes the protocol to be followed by Deacons and priests as it relates to the liturgies and sacraments of the Church.

### **Deacon's Role in the Eucharist**

When a Deacon is one of the ministers of the Eucharist, the Deacon should read the Gospel lesson, read the biddings of the Prayers of the People (though they may be led by another leader), bid the invitation to Confession and pronounce the Dismissal. Additionally, the Deacon should prepare the altar which includes the preparation of the vessels, attending to additional chalices and patens before the administration and may perform or supervise the ablutions.

In addition, the Deacon should stand with the celebrant at the altar and should assist in administering communion. A Deacon may assist with the distribution of bread, only if another priest is not available.

When a Deacon is administering bread during the Communion and comes to a person who does not receive, it is appropriate for the Deacon to place their hand on the person's head or shoulder and say, "The peace of the Lord be always with you," or "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us evermore." No sign of the cross may be made.

If more than one Deacon is a minister at the Eucharist, it is appropriate that both be at the altar with the celebrant.

A priest functioning in the Deacon's liturgical role is not to wear diaconal vestments and is not to be referred to as a Deacon. Nor is it appropriate for lay readers, acolytes, or other laypersons assisting at a service to wear diaconal vestments.

### **Communion from the Reserved Sacrament**

Should a congregation not have a priest available, Wardens should contact the Canon to the Ordinary who can assist with arranging for supply priest coverage. In the absence of a priest, a Deacon (or lay person) may officiate at the service of Morning Prayer and the Deacon may preach, but distribution of reserve sacrament is not permitted. A Deacon's Administration of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament (often called "Deacon's Mass") is not a regular practice in this diocese except under unusual and special circumstances, which requires written permission from the Bishop.

## BAPTISM

Holy Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saints' Day or the Sunday after All Saints' Day, and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord. It is recommended that, as far as possible, Baptisms be reserved for these occasions or when a priest or bishop is present.

If on any one of the **above-named days** the ministry of a bishop or priest cannot be obtained, the Bishop may give special permission to a Deacon to preside. At the Thanksgiving over the water all is read, however the Deacon does not touch the water during the prayer. In addition, the Deacon omits the prayer over the candidates (page 308) and **does not** perform the Chrismation. The Baptism may be entered into the church Registry, with the notation, *"Baptism by a Deacon."* *Note: As soon as practical the person baptized should receive Chrismation by a priest or bishop.*

## CONFIRMATION

Confirmation is an Episcopal Act. The role of the Deacon during the liturgy is determined and under the direction of the Assisting Priest and/or the Bishop.

## THE CELEBRATION and BLESSING of a MARRIAGE

A priest or a bishop normally presides at the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, because such ministers alone have the function of pronouncing the nuptial blessing and preside at the Eucharist.

A Deacon **must** obtain the permission of the Bishop before officiating at this service. If permitted to officiate by the Bishop, a Deacon may use the service outlined in the BCP, omitting the nuptial blessing which follows the Prayers. Additionally, a Deacon must be in compliance with the state laws of Oklahoma and the Canons of the Church. The marriage may be entered into the church registry with the notation, *"Marriage by a Deacon."* Communion from the reserved sacrament is **not** to be used in conjunction with the Celebration of a Marriage by a Deacon.

When assisting a priest at a marriage ceremony, the Deacon may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform assisting functions at the Eucharist.

## A THANKSGIVING for the BIRTH or ADOPTION of a CHILD

On occasion the rite might be used in the hospital or home; in other circumstances, it is particularly appropriate for use at the first parish Eucharist a family attends after the birth or adoption of a child.

If a Deacon is presiding at the service, a blessing is not given, but rather a prayer offered for the child and the family.

In addition, there are no manual acts made by the Deacon (hand over the child, holding child or having the child brought to the altar).

### **THE RECONCILIATION of a PENITENT**

The Reconciliation of a Penitent may not be conducted by a Deacon without written permission of the Bishop. Absolution may be given only by a priest or bishop.

### **MINISTRATION to the SICK**

Part I of this office may be led by a Deacon or a lay person, with the exception of the absolution at the end which can only be given by a priest or bishop. Part II, which consists of the Laying on of Hands and Anointing, should be conducted by a priest or a bishop. However, in case of necessity, a Deacon or lay person may anoint with oil blessed by a bishop or priest using the prayer on page 456 of the BCP, *“I lay my hands upon you in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, beseeching him to uphold you and fill you with his grace, that you may know the healing power of his love.”*

### **MINISTRATION at the TIME OF DEATH**

A variety of materials are provided in the Book of Common Prayer for use with persons at or near the point of death and those gathered with them. They are intended primarily for use by the “Minister of the Congregation,” who should be called at such time, but they may be led by anyone in cases of necessity.

The first prayer is for a person near the point of death. The Litany at the Time of Death is meant for use by those gathered around the dying person. It is followed by two prayers of commendation and the final brief prayer for rest in peace.

### **The BURIAL of the DEAD: RITE ONE and TWO**

A priest normally presides at the service. It is appropriate that the bishop, when present, preside at the Eucharist and pronounce the Commendation. When the service of a priest cannot be obtained, a Deacon may preside at the service using the rubrics outlined in the Prayer Book and with permission from the Bishop in advance of the service.

If a Deacon presides, there is no Eucharist and no blessing of the people offered at the end of the service. In addition, no manual gestures are made during the commendation.

During the prayer of committal, when earth is cast on the coffin (or urn), the Deacon does not extend their hand or make a sign of the cross with the dirt.

If the grave is in a place that has not previously been set apart for Christian burial,

the Deacon may not consecrate or bless the burial site.

## **BISHOP'S VISITATIONS and DIOCESAN EUCHARISTS**

The rubrics for assisting at the Eucharist apply when the Bishop is the celebrant. The Deacon should read the Gospel lesson, read the biddings of the Prayers of the People (or they may be offered by another leader), bid the invitation to Confession and pronounce the Dismissal. Additionally, the Deacon should prepare the altar which includes the preparation of the vessels, attending to additional chalices and patens before the administration and may perform or supervise the ablutions.

In some cases, The Canon to the Ordinary will serve as the Bishop's Chaplain. If the Canon to the Ordinary is not present, a priest, Deacon or other person may be asked to serve as Chaplain.

## **NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR DEACONS**

The Primary ministry of the Deacon is in the world. Following our Lord's example, the Deacon models through servant leadership the ministry to which all Christians are called. The administration of the sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the Church are thus secondary and in context of the servant ministry in the Order of Deacons. Deacons can expect that there will be encouragement and support and such assistance as is required to maintain the Deacon's primary focus of ministry in the world.

It also important for the Deacon to be able to approach the Preparing of the Holy Altar and the Proclamation of the Gospel with confidence and dignity. Speak to the priest with any concerns that you may have with these skills.

Regarding the parish assignment the Deacon will:

- Enter into a standard Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the Rector/Vicar utilizing the diocesan boilerplate LOA. The final agreement requires the approval of the Bishop. The LOA will specify ministry expectations, and it will become the basis for the Deacon's annual ministry review. The Canon to the Ordinary will assist with the LOA process.
- Assist liturgically as required in the Prayer Book and as detailed in this Customary
- Preach as determined by the priest in charge of the congregation
- Assist in parish programs and administration as befits the Deacon's skills and gifts.

Unless approved by the Bishop, the Deacon serves the parish on a non-stipendiary basis.

Other expectations:

- Be available to the Bishop for special assignments
- Participate in diocesan meetings and conferences
- Attend Diocesan Convention as a clergy member of the Diocese
- Attend clergy conferences as feasible

- Attend clericus meetings as feasible
- Participate in regular continuing education
- At the request of the Bishop, represent the Diocese at community and ecumenical gatherings
- The Deacon's ministry will be reviewed annually by the rector or vicar in consultation with the vestry. An annual discussion will then be held with the Bishop or his representative to consider future work and assignments