

Holy Orders

The **Sacrament of Holy Orders** is known as a “Sacrament of Service to the Community”. By Baptism, all the members of the Church share in the priesthood of Christ. Additionally, some men are called to serve the community as deacons, priests and bishops.



Deacons

Deacons have been around in the Church from almost the very beginning – see Acts 6:1-7. The essence of diaconal work is captured in its name: “Deacon” comes from the Greek “Diakonia”, which means “service”. So does that mean a deacon is a servant? Yes, that’s precisely what it means! Deacons do all kinds of things, but at the core, every deacon is a servant.

This servant role is worked out in a variety of ways. Deacons serve in hospitals, hospices, and jails; in soup kitchens and half-way houses; and in many other arenas. They exercise their role in liturgy and formal proclamation of the gospel. Weddings, Baptisms, wake services, preaching, benediction services – these are all part of the work of the deacon. They follow the corporal works of mercy and the liturgical acts as two aspects of service that inform each other.

Typically, a deacon will operate on a part-time basis, earning his livelihood in a secular profession. But as Pope John Paul II pointed out, there is no such thing as a “part-time deacon”. A deacon, by virtue of his ordination, is a servant on a 24/7 basis, even when he is engaged in a part-time assignment.

Information on the formation process to become a deacon is on the Diocese of Rochester website.

Priests

By virtue of our Baptism, all Christians are part of a common priesthood of believers. We are all called to participate in Christ’s mission. Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, bishops and priests are given a special role in carrying out this mission. They exercise a ministerial priesthood. Deacons also receive a special grace through ordination and are called to assist the ministry of bishops and priests (*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], nos. 1547, 1554*). Pope Benedict XVI writes, “The priest is above all a servant of others” (*Sacramentum Caritatis [Sacrament of Charity], no. 23*). In gathering the community, modeling Christ’s love for the poor, presiding at Eucharist, and evangelizing social realities, ordained ministers help Christians imitate Christ’s mission of love and justice.