

Holy Orders – Religious Life

The **Sacrament of Holy Orders** is known as a “Sacrament of Service to the Community”. It is directed primarily to service to the large Faith Community. By Baptism, all the members of the Church share in the priesthood of Christ. The Sacrament of Holy Orders, which includes diaconate, priesthood and episcopacy establishes individuals who serve the community of all Christ faithful by teaching, worship, and pastoral governance.



The Diaconate

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. You will find deacons serving in hospitals, hospices, and jails. You will find deacons working in soup kitchens and half-way houses. They minister to the poor, the rich, and the elderly. 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.