

Diaconal liturgical norms used for the sake of liturgical integrity

Summary

- the presider must be seen to be the presider throughout for the unity of the liturgy in its different parts. This means the presider always: says the opening greeting; says the collect; says the absolution; starts the creed; says the collect at the end of the intercession; gives the sign of peace; says the offertory prayers; says the eucharistic prayer; says the invitation to communion (if any); says the post-communion collect; says the blessing.
- the deacon: reads the Gospel; introduces or leads the intercession; prepares the altar; does the ablutions; says the dismissal.
- the deacon or Lay Reader can also: introduce the confession; read the epistle; hold the gospel book for the gospel reading; say the intercession; serve at the altar; introduce the Lord's Prayer and Agnus Dei; administer communion; assist with ablutions.

The Deacon in the Eucharist

Deacons are essential to liturgy. They draw on the talents of others in the assembly. They help presiders to preside and assistants to assist. The deacon plays a *collaborative* role with the presiding celebrant, whether bishop or priest.

The Entrance Rite The deacon immediately precedes the presider (whether priest or bishop) in procession carrying the Book of the Gospels. The ministers acknowledge the altar according to the congregation's custom and the deacon places the Book of the 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 intercession.

Proclaiming the Gospel This is the focal point of the Liturgy of the Word. Accordingly, in most congregations 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 an elaborate Gospel procession with servers and incense. Regardless, the proclaiming of the Gospel should be done with care and be the focus of attention of the assembly. If a deacon is present among the ministers of the service, that person always reads the Gospel. 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. The presider, making the sign of the cross or laying one or both hands on the deacon's head, gives a blessing. The deacon then moves to the altar and takes the Book of the Gospels. The most common practice is for two servers bearing processional candles to lead the deacon, carrying the Gospels (preceded by the person who is to hold the Book, if such is the case), to the place of proclamation while choir and congregation sing. After placing the Book of the Gospels on the lectern or in the hands of the assistant, the deacon may say or sing the greeting, 'The Lord be with you.' After the response, the deacon says or sings an announcement such as '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, and then on forehead, lips, and breast. If incense is used, the deacon censes the Book of Gospels at this point - 3 double swings; to centre, to left, to right. After the congregational response, the deacon proclaims/sings the Gospel.

After the Gospel reading, the deacon says or sings the closing acclamation, 'Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel' or equivalent. The custom in some churches is for the deacon to elevate the Book of Gospels at this point. (Another custom 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, leaving the book open at the day's Gospel reading (to symbolise that the Gospel has been proclaimed), the deacon may leave it on the lectern/ambo, carry it back to the altar or a side table, or hand it to the assistant to do so.

Prayers of Intercession 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 bid the community's prayers. For this reason it is fitting in any liturgy for the deacon to bid the Prayers of Intercession, and to be responsible for teaching and assisting those who write and lead the prayers. In his book *Deacons in the Liturgy* (2009), Ormonde Plater stated that the deacon is the ordinary leader of the biddings for by so doing he or she acts as one who interprets to the church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. He further observed, however, that although deacons are the preferred leaders, it is common for other baptized persons to lead the prayers. In short, deacons can fulfil their role variously by mentoring and instructing intercessors, leading by example, and preparing intercessions.

Confession and the Peace After the intercessions, the deacon may give the invitation to confession and begin the confession, if the presider so wishes. The presider gives the greeting for the Peace.

The Preparation of the Table and of the Gifts Like the Gospel reading, the preparation of the table at the offertory is clearly the duty of the deacon.

The deacon prepares the table. The deacon first ensures that the altar book is in the appropriate place on the altar. He or she then receives the chalice, purificator and paten (with priest's host), pall and corporal from the servers; some congregations use the traditional burse and veil, the former containing the corporal, the latter covering the vessels. The deacon unfolds (not 'shakes out and spreads'!) the corporal on the altar, leaving the chalice and paten to the side.

The deacon receives the gifts. In many congregations, representatives of the congregation bring forward the bread and wine in an offertory procession. The deacon (and an assistant) may receive the gifts directly in front of 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.

The deacon prepares the gifts. The deacon, perhaps assisted by a sub-deacon or server, 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 cruet into the chalice(s). The sub-deacon or in their absence, the deacon, adds a little water to the chalice.

The deacon places the gifts. The deacon now places the gifts on the corporal. *Either:* the paten/ciborium nearest the presider, the chalice nearest the congregation. *Or:* the paten/ciborium to the right and the chalice to the left. The chalice may be covered with the pall, the paten covered

with the folded edge of the corporal. The collection is then brought forward. After the gifts are ready, the deacon steps aside to the right, indicating with a bow 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, or, if there is no server, from the deacon. If incense is used, the censuring of the altar and gifts takes place just before the reception of the lavabo.

The Great Thanksgiving The deacon assumes his or her normal place to the right of the presider, or if they are to turn the pages of the altar book, at whichever side it is placed (usually on the left). The deacon should turn slightly towards the presider and not directly face the congregation, for the role of the deacon is to focus on and assist the presider, freeing that person to preside. The deacon always follows the presider's lead in posture and gesture' for example, when the presider bows or makes the sign of the cross, the deacon does so too.

After the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, the deacon removes the pall from the chalice and stopper from the wine cruet if its contents are also to be consecrated, while the sub-deacon removes the lid from the ciborium and/or the folded corporal from the paten. (Congregations will adopt their own practices according to the vessels used 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 Lord's Prayer (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*). After the breaking of the bread and the accompanying sentences, the presider gives the invitation to communion. At this point, the deacon may raise the chalice while the priest raises the paten or ciborium.

Administration of Communion After the invitation to communion (if any), the deacon, where required, may divide the consecrated hosts between the ciboria or patens, and pour consecrated wine from cruet or flagon into additional chalices. The vessels are then given to the communion ministers.

Ablutions After communion, the ministers return with the vessels and remaining elements. The deacon supervises the ablutions (cleansing of the vessels) which follow.

Dismissal Like the proclamation of the Gospel and the preparation of the table, the Dismissal is one of the 'must-do' duties 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 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. It is much preferable that the Dismissal be given by the deacon immediately after the Blessing as the second part of a single action, rather than being separated by a hymn. The leaving should come immediately after the Dismissal without further words or songs.
