



It has been a joy to serve the parish as a deacon. I wish to thank all parishioners for the kind reception given me in this role. Here is my brief bio: My wife, Connie and I have been parish members for twenty years. We have four children – all married. Three of our children and all 14 of our grandchildren are members of Ascension. Our fourth child, lives in Fairbanks, Alaska. I am a retired attorney. I was ordained as a permanent deacon in 2017.

So, what exactly is a deacon and what is their role in the Church? There are three orders of clergy in the Church: bishops, priests and deacons. Historically, deacons assisted bishops and priests especially in serving the poor.

Deacons are new to our Archdiocese and to our parish, but they have been around since the very beginning of the Church, where we read about them in the Acts of the Apostles. The Order of the Diaconate was discontinued after 500 years but was reinstated in 1968. Currently there are approximately 40 men serving as deacons in the Archdiocese and another 40 in formation. Twenty of those in formation are scheduled to be ordained in the Spring of 2020. Formation is a five-year program involving spiritual formation, academic study and pastoral training.

Note the term “permanent deacon”. It is to be distinguished from a transitional deacon to which every priest has also been ordained. A permanent deacon is just that. He will remain a deacon for life and will not transition to a priest.

Unlike priests, deacons are typically married – but they cannot marry or re-marry after their ordination. Deacons are ordained not to the priesthood but to service. Unlike a priest, he cannot consecrate the Eucharist or absolve sins. A deacon has a three-fold role to the Church: Charity in which he is of service to the community; Word, in which he proclaims the Gospel and preaches; and Liturgy where he assists at Mass, is an ordinary minister of the Eucharist and baptism, witnesses marriages, ministers at funeral services, and leads the community in prayer.

The word deacon is derived from the Greek, *Diakonia* – which is translated as “service”. The USCCB describes deacons, thusly: “Deacons are ordained as a sacramental sign to the Church and to the world of Christ, who came ‘to serve and not to be served.’”

Deacons answer directly to their bishop and the parish priest to whom they are assigned. Most deacons are assigned to serve in roles outside their parishes as well. The Archbishop assigned me to prison ministry. As such, I coordinate volunteers who serve in jail ministry and in prisons. Other deacons serve in other areas of charity such as: to the sick and dying in hospitals and hospices, counseling those addicted to drugs and alcohol, providing communion services at nursing homes and the homebound, helping to eliminate human trafficking, assisting the poor and the homeless, and other works of charity.

Being ordained a deacon is a humbling experience for which I am unworthy. I wish to thank Fr. Tom for allowing me to serve at Ascension, where, God willing, I hope to serve many more years.