



UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF DEACON: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



JULY 2022 — Bishop Joseph Siegel announced Deacon placements for the Diocese of Evansville, and we are so pleased to share that Deacon Dan Niemeier and Deacon Ed Walker will be serving at Resurrection! These assignments begin on the day of their ordination– August 13th. Dan and Ed have received many questions from parishioners about the diaconate, so Ed compiled a list of frequently asked questions and answers to help you understand the role of a deacon a little better. In the coming months, we will share more information about Dan and Ed’s roles at Resurrection.

Q: Does a deacon get paid?

A: For their role as a deacon, per canon law, he does not get paid.

Q: How are deacons assigned to their parish?

A: The bishop, working with the clergy board, gives the deacon his assignment. Preferences are requested from the deacons, but the final decision belongs to the bishop, who balances the needs of the diocese with the desire of the deacon. The deacon is not expected to move, and so is assigned within driving distance of his home.

Q: Who decides what a deacon does in his parish?

A: The pastor and the deacon work together to address the needs of the parish and the time availability of the deacon. The diocese provides guidance with a required service agreement.

Q: Are deacons part of the clergy?

A: Yes, the clergy is made up of bishops, priests, and deacons.

Q: Can a deacon be married/get married?

A: Married men can be ordained as a deacon. If you are single or your spouse dies, you take a vow of chastity that you will remain single.

Q: How old can a deacon be?

A: Per Canon law, the minimum age for ordination is 35 years old.

Q: What are the various ministries of the deacon?

A: As ministers of Word, deacons proclaim the Gospel, preach, and teach in the name of the Church. As ministers of Sacrament, deacons baptize, lead the faithful in prayer, witness marriages, and conduct wake and funeral services. As ministers of Charity, deacons are leaders in identifying the needs of others, then marshaling the Church's resources to meet those needs.

Q: What is the difference between permanent and transitional deacon?

A: A transitional deacon is a deacon who intends to continue on to priesthood. A permanent deacon is ordained with the intent to remain serving the Church as a deacon.

Q: How long does it take to become a deacon?

A: Currently, there is a year of discernment and 4 years of formation, meeting 10 weekends a year for a total of 40 formation weekends. There is also a week dedicated solely to homiletics.

Q: Does a deacon keep his "real" job?

A: Yes, most deacons continue to work their normal job until retirement. This is how they continue to provide for their family. A deacon can work for the church outside of his diaconate duties and get paid for this work.

Q: Does a deacon's wife have any input on his ministry?

A: Yes, the deacon's wife is part of the entire journey and ministry. She must agree, in writing, to his starting the formation process and approve his agreement with the pastor for his parish work. In the Evansville diocese, she is not required to attend all the formations. In some dioceses, the wife is required to attend all formation sessions with her husband.

Q: How do you tell the difference between a priest and deacon at church?

A: There are 2 distinct differences. First, the stole is different. The stole (scarf like vestment) hangs over both shoulders of the priest, but on the deacon the stole goes over his left shoulder to his right hip. The deacon wears a dalmatic (outer garment) which has closed sleeves while the priest wears a chasuble which has open sleeves.

Q: Can a deacon..?

a. Baptize: Yes, outside of the Mass.

b. Witness a marriage: Yes, outside of the Mass.

c. Hear confessions: No, only the priest can hear confessions.

d. Do anointing of the sick: No, only the priest can do anointing of the sick. The deacon can pray with the sick and take communion.

e. Do funeral services: Yes, outside of the Mass.

f. Give blessings: Yes. There are a few blessings limited to priests or bishops, but most blessings can be given by a deacon. A deacon and priest's blessings are "equal" if the deacon is allowed to perform it.