

The permanent diaconate formation period in the Roman Catholic Church varies from diocese to diocese as it is determined by the local ordinary. But it usually entails a year of prayerful preparation, a four- or five-year training period that resembles a collegiate course of study, and a year of post-ordination formation as well as the need for lifelong continuing education credits. Diaconal candidates receive instruction in philosophy, theology, study of the Holy Scriptures (the Bible), homiletics, sacramental studies, evangelization, ecclesiology, counseling, and pastoral care and ministry before ordination. Although they are assigned to work in a parish by the diocesan bishop, once assigned, deacons are under the supervision of the parish pastor. Unlike most clerics, permanent deacons who also have a secular profession have no right to receive a salary for their ministry,[10] but many dioceses opt to remunerate them anyway.

The ministry of the deacon in the Roman Catholic Church is described as one of service in three areas: the Word, the Liturgy and Charity. The deacon's ministry of the Word includes proclaiming the Gospel during the Mass, preaching and teaching. The deacon's liturgical ministry includes various parts of the Mass proper to the deacon, including being an ordinary minister of Holy Communion and the proper minister of the chalice when Holy Communion is administered under both kinds. The ministry of charity involves service to the poor and marginalized and working with parishioners to help them become more involved in such ministry. As clerics, deacons are required to recite the Liturgy of the Hours. Deacons, like priests and bishops, are ordinary ministers of the sacrament of Baptism and can serve as the church's witness at the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, which the bride and groom administer to each other (though if the exchange of vows takes place in a wedding Mass, or Nuptial Mass, the Mass is celebrated by the priest and the deacon acts as another witness). Deacons may preside at funeral rites not involving a Mass (e.g., the final commendation at the gravesite or the reception of the body at a service in the funeral home), and may assist the priest at the Requiem Mass. They can preside over various services such as Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and they may give certain blessings. They cannot hear confession and give absolution, anoint the sick, or celebrate Mass.

At Mass, the deacon is the ordinary minister of the proclamation of the Gospel (in fact, a priest, bishop, or even the Pope should not proclaim the Gospel if a deacon is present) and of Holy Communion (primarily, of the Precious Blood). As ordained clerics, and if granted faculties by their bishops, deacons may preach the homily at a public Mass, unless the priest celebrant retains that ministry to himself at a given Mass.

Permanent deacons often serve in parish or other ministry as their time permits, since they typically have other full-time employment. They may also act as parish administrators (C. 217 of the Code of Canon Law). With the passage of time, more and more deacons are serving in full-time ministries in parishes, hospitals, prisons, and in diocesan positions. Deacons often work directly in ministry to the marginalized inside and outside the church: the poor, the sick, the hungry, the imprisoned.

[from Wikipedia]