

## ORDAINED MINISTRY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the Sacred Tradition of the Catholic Church, all ministries of the Body of Christ, both head and members, are important for the people of God. We all minister in collaboration with one another. Deacon, priest and the bishop serve the Church through the sacrament of Holy Orders. They minister as the hierarchy of the Catholic Church by virtue of their ordination and exercise the *hierarchical gifts* proper to them. Lay persons, who include vowed religious sisters and brothers, are called to serve the Church by the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist). They exercise the *charismatic gifts* of the Spirit in various ministries to build up the Body of Christ for the common good of all. Some are employed or volunteer at their parishes. Others who are specifically educated, appointed and installed in a ministry are designated *lay ecclesial ministers* to distinguish them from *hierarchical ordained clergy*. Only priests and bishops preside “in the person of Christ,” the head of the Body of Christ, for all of the members of the Body of Christ.

Bishops and priests share in the ministry of teaching, governing and sanctifying in their dioceses and parishes. Deacons serve in liturgical capacities at the pulpit and the altar as well as perform charitable works in their parish and community. Deacons may be either transitional or permanent depending on how God is calling them to service in the Church. Deacons who will continue in their studies to be ordained as priests are called *transitional deacons* because they remain deacons only temporarily. However, those who serve in their ministry as ordained deacons throughout their lives are called *permanent deacons*. Transitional deacons do not marry, but prepare for a lifetime of celibacy in service to the Church as ordained priests. On the other hand, the permanent deacon may marry before his ordination, but not afterwards. In dioceses throughout the United States, permanent deacons serve in collaboration with priests. At Good Shepherd Catholic Community, we are privileged to have permanent deacons, formed and ordained in our diocese. Deacons are to assist the priest at Mass on the weekends by proclaiming the Gospel, preaching the homily, leading intercessory prayers, being a Eucharistic Minister of the Cup, and also by purifying the vessels used during the Mass. In addition, they preside at the Sacraments of Baptism and Marriage. They do all of this by virtue of their ordination to the diaconate.

Permanent deacons may assist in many other ministries. In our parish they preside at all Christian Wake and Graveside Services, at Benediction and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and at weekday Communion Services in the absence of a priest. They also direct Wedding rehearsals in preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage. Deacons are the Ordinary Ministers of the Eucharist and lay persons are Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. Therefore, deacons are given priority to preside at Communion Services whereas lay persons may do so if a deacon is not available. Two deacons may assist the Bishop at special Masses where one is Deacon of the Word and the other Deacon of the Altar. Deacons may also bless houses and offer various other blessings. However, only the priest or bishop may celebrate Mass and presides at Liturgies of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and Confirmation. And, bishops only may ordain deacons, priests and bishops in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Liturgies and Sacraments are proper to the hierarchy of the Church and these ministries are ordained to the deacon, priest and bishop. This is their sacramental identity for the good order of the Church.