

Journey of Faith



The Sacrament of Holy Orders

"Do priests ever get lonely?" Terrence asked. "I only ever see our priest at church, and he lives all by himself. I think I'd be pretty lonely."

"I met a deacon who was married! He even had kids! Why don't priests get to have families?" Lisa asked.

"Priests do have families, most especially they are part of Christ's family, the Church, and they lead all of us in our faith," Mrs. Evans answered.





What questions do you have about being a priest or deacon?

The Work of the Apostles

Jesus called twelve apostles to share his work on earth. He taught them a lot! Then he gave them power and sent them out to share the good news, help the poor, heal the sick, and forgive sins.



Men who choose to serve God and his Church with their lives receive the sacrament of **holy orders**. During holy orders, these men are **ordained**. That means they have been chosen, and the Holy Spirit will prepare them for their work. Priests carry Jesus to the world in three special ways:

1. They Celebrate the Mass

"Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and [gave] it to his disciples.... Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them...."

Matthew 26:26–28

At the Last Supper, Jesus told his apostles to "do this in memory of me" (Luke 22:19). Every day, priests around the world speak and act in memory of Jesus. They act through the power and person of Christ. Just as Jesus commanded them to. When the priest says, "This is my body" and "This is my blood," Jesus is speaking to us through him.

2. They Forgive Sins

After Jesus was raised from the dead, he appeared to his apostles and said:

"As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.'"

John 20:21–23

In a similar way, when a priest absolves you by saying the words of forgiveness in the sacrament of penance, that sin isn't just forgotten. It is removed by the power of God's mercy. Just like Jesus speaks through the priest during the Eucharist, God forgives us through the priest during penance and reconciliation.

3. They Care for God's Flock

Jesus said:

"I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.... I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep."

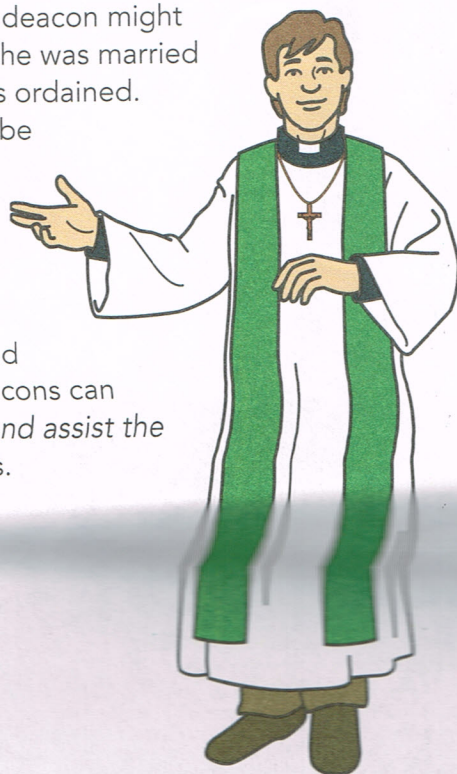
John 10:11, 14–15

When Jesus said, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17), he was making Peter the leader of the apostles. Deacons and priests promise to obey their local bishop, and all bishops promise to obey the pope.

Degrees of Holy Orders

All ordained men are called **clergy**. Because ordination has been passed down from Jesus, to Peter, to the apostles, on and on, every member of the clergy is connected to our Christian leaders and ancestors. There are three degrees of ordination.

- Bishops are the successors of the apostles. They lead a diocese or special Church office. They explain God's teachings in ways their community can understand. Bishops can celebrate all the sacraments and cannot be married.
- Priests are assistants of the local bishop. They lead God's people in worship and give them spiritual guidance. Priests can celebrate the sacraments of baptism, Eucharist, penance, the anointing of the sick, marriage, and sometimes confirmation. Priests cannot be married.
- There are two types of deacons. Some deacons are training to be priests. They are called **transitional deacons** because they are transitioning from being a deacon to being a priest. Transitional deacons cannot get married. Some deacons want to remain deacons for life. They are called **permanent deacons**. A permanent deacon might have a wife if he was married before he was ordained. Deacons can be the official Church leader, or witness, at baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Deacons can *also preach and assist the priest at Mass.*



What Happens During the Sacrament?

During the sacrament of holy orders, some special things happen to the person being ordained:

- **Vesting**, or dressing, in a stole or chasuble. A deacon is vested in a stole and dalmatic. A priest is vested in a chasuble. Wearing this over their clothes is a sign that deacons and priests take on a new identity with their ordination.
- **Laying on of hands**. Jesus laid his hands on his apostles to give them power to carry on his work. The Church has done this ever since! This action shows that Jesus is sharing his power.
- **Anointing of hands**. In the Bible, people were anointed with blessed oil before beginning a special task. The ordained person will also do many special tasks for God.
- **Presentation of chalice or Gospels**. A priest is presented with the chalice he will use at Mass. A deacon is presented with a book of the Gospels he will read at Mass.





THE RIGHT STUFF!

What do you think it takes to be a priest or deacon? In the first column, list things a priest or deacon might need. In the second column, list qualities of a good priest or deacon. The first row is done for you.

Things a priest or deacon needs	Qualities of a priest or deacon
A copy of the Bible	Good listener

In Short



- Holy orders has three separate degrees.
- Holy orders is rooted in the Bible and the early Church.
- Holy orders is the first step of the ordained priesthood.

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