

# LITURGICAL GUIDELINES FOR DEACONS

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10-11

## FOREWORD BY THE BISHOP

During my time as Bishop of Portsmouth, the Permanent Diaconate has taken on an enhanced profile in the life of the diocese.

I hope that these Liturgical Guidelines will be of assistance to the deacons themselves and to all with whom they work in the parish communities and the Pastoral Areas.

I would like to thank most sincerely all those who have worked hard to produce these Guidelines.

+Crispian Hollis  
*Bishop of Portsmouth*

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*Where necessary, quotations from liturgical texts will be updated to reflect new translations as they come into use. This version dated May 2011.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 These guidelines have been prepared by the Portsmouth Diocesan Liturgy Committee, after widespread consultation. They acknowledge in particular the foundational work done by the Nottingham Diocesan Liturgical Commission in this area. They are intended for use with the ordinary form of the rite only. Users of the extraordinary form should consult Fortescue and O'Connell and other similar sources.

## 1.2

### The Ministry of the Deacon

Strengthened by sacramental grace [deacons] are dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the bishop and his body of priests, in the service of the liturgy, of the Gospel and of works of charity... Dedicated to works of charity and functions of administration, deacons should recall the admonition of St Polycarp: 'Let them be merciful, and zealous, and let them walk according to the truth of the Lord, who became the servant of all.'

*Lumen Gentium 29*

1.3 The founding purpose of the diaconate, as Acts chapter 6 traditionally understood it, is the ministry of charity. Alongside this are two other closely linked ministries of the word and of the table.

The Second Vatican Council synthesized the ministry of deacons in the threefold "diaconia of the liturgy, the word and of charity".<sup>1</sup> In this way diaconal participation through the ordained ministry in the one and triple *munus* of Christ is expressed. The deacon "is *teacher* in so far as he preaches and bears witness to the word of God; he *sanctifies* when he administers the Sacrament of Baptism, the Holy Eucharist and the sacramentals, he participates at the celebration of Holy Mass as a "minister of the Blood", and conserves and distributes the Blessed Eucharist; he is a *guide* in as much as he animates the community or a section of ecclesial life."<sup>2</sup> Thus deacons assist and serve the bishops and priests who preside at every liturgy, are watchful of doctrine and guide the people of God.

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Deacons 22*

1.4 Many would argue that charity remains the foundational characteristic:

In my view, the enduring value of the diaconate will only be truly recognised if we highlight the ministry of 'charity', the ministry of humble servant love, amidst the deacon's threefold ministry of word, liturgy and charity.

Bishop Michael Evans of East Anglia<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> cf. *Lumen Gentium 29*

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Allocution to permanent deacons (16 March 1985), n. 2: *Insegnamenti*, VIII, 1 (1985), p. 649; cf. *Lumen Gentium, 29; Code of Canon Law canon 1008*

<sup>3</sup> *Pastoral Review, vol. 2, issue 4, p. 28*

1.5 The effective exercise of the deacon's ministry will, clearly, depend on the successful integration of these three forms of ministry within his witness of life. They should not be seen as separate 'tasks' but as expressions of his unified ministry of being an example of Christ and bearing Christ's love to his holy people.

1.6 Following the long-established Christian principle *agere sequitur esse*<sup>4</sup>, the deacon should always rely on the promptings of his charitable instinct in instances where precise liturgical detail is not specified. Nevertheless it is fitting to have a degree of uniformity of practice within the diocese concerning the deacon's liturgical ministry. These guidelines are therefore intended to be a helpful resource, as well as providing answers to questions that frequently arise.



## 2 THE DEACON'S MINISTRY AT MASS

### 2.1

#### Broad Principles

[Clerics] are to nourish their spiritual life from the twofold table of the sacred Scripture and the Eucharist; priests are therefore earnestly invited to offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist daily, and deacons are earnestly invited to participate daily in offering it.

*Code of Canon Law 276 § 2°*

2.1.1 The chief source document is the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (England and Wales edition, 2005)<sup>5</sup>. Deacons should be familiar with this document and in particular Chapter IV, I. B.

2.1.2 These guidelines take the form of a commentary on the relevant sections of GIRM, augmented in part by subsequent documents of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, including *Guidelines for Concelebration* and *Celebrating the Mass*,<sup>6</sup> the companion volume to GIRM with which all deacons should also be familiar.

2.1.3 Adaptations may be necessary, depending on the degree of solemnity, the presence of the bishop and/or concelebrants, and other circumstances; but it is not envisaged that there should be a need for routine departure from the principles set out here.

2.1.4 GIRM 171 sets out the broad principles of the deacon's ministry at Mass.

2.1.5 The deacon should wear the sacred vestments consisting of alb, stole and dalmatic. However, GIRM para 338 indicates that "the dalmatic may ... be omitted out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity". In general, consistency of vesture

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<sup>4</sup> The way you act should follow from the person you are.

<sup>5</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, CTS and Colloquium, ISBN 1 86082 288 6

<sup>6</sup> *Celebrating the Mass*, CTS and Colloquium, ISBN 1 86082 290 8

between presiding priest and deacon is to be desired (see GIRM paras 346-7 re liturgical colours).

### 2.1.6

Only those deacons with particular functions to perform at a concelebration should be vested.<sup>7</sup> These deacons should ordinarily be seated separately from concelebrating priests.

*Guidelines for Concelebration in the Dioceses of England and Wales*

2.1.7 The deacon *“a) assists the priest and remains at his side”*.

2.1.7.1 The deacon should occupy a seat next to the presiding priest (if there are two deacons, one on either side). The deacon supports the presiding priest unobtrusively and receives direction from the MC or acolytes to ensure that the celebration proceeds smoothly and reverently.

2.1.8 The deacon *“b) ministers at the altar with the chalice as well as the book”*.

2.1.8.1 The deacon is the ordinary minister of the chalice – see section 2.2.3.10

2.1.8.2 Ministry of the book (Missal) clearly illustrates the close bond between the deacon and priest or bishop within the sacrament of Holy Order. It is essential that the deacon become familiar with the structure and layout of the Roman Missal and that he clarify beforehand with the presiding priest which texts are to be used.

2.1.9 The deacon *“c) proclaims the Gospel and, at the direction of the priest celebrant, may preach the homily”*.

2.1.9.1 The deacon’s role in proclaiming the Gospel emphasises that this reading is pre-eminent among the scriptures proclaimed at Mass, and establishes within the assembly the importance of the deacon’s ministry of the word. At his ordination, the deacon was told by the bishop:

Receive the Gospel of Christ,  
whose herald you now are.  
Believe what you read,  
teach what you believe,  
and practise what you teach.

2.1.9.2 The ministry of preaching belongs pre-eminently to the bishop. It is shared by the priests of the diocese, though they do not ordinarily preach when the bishop presides. Similarly, preaching by deacons at Mass is envisaged by the Church as being the exception rather than the rule.

The Homily should ordinarily be given by the priest celebrant himself. He may entrust it to a concelebrating priest or occasionally, according to circumstances, to the deacon, but never to a lay person.

GIRM 66, also quoted in *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 64

However, in the Diocese of Portsmouth it is envisaged that deacons will preach regularly.

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<sup>7</sup> The one exception to this is at the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Maundy Thursday which takes place “with all the priests and clergy exercising their ministry” (Roman Missal [1975], p. 148).

**2.1.9.3** All preachers are reminded<sup>8</sup> that the homily should be "...an exposition of some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture, or another text from the Ordinary or from the Proper of the day, and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners". The latter point makes it clear that there is an integral link between ministry at the ambo and a deacon's pastoral work among the people.

**2.1.10** The deacon "*d) guides the faithful by appropriate introductions and explanations and announces the intentions of the Prayers of the Faithful*".

**2.1.10.1** In this, the deacon demonstrates his solidarity with the people of God and his role as a teacher of the faith. Introductions and explanations, when used, should always be brief and to the point and agreed with the presiding priest, and there should be no sense of the deacon attempting to enlarging his role in the celebration. A brief commentary on the Mass may be particularly useful in Masses celebrated with children or with significant numbers of uncatechised adults.

**2.1.10.2** It is the role of the deacon (rather than a reader) to propose the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. However, in order to ensure that these intercessions are genuinely the people's prayer, it is highly recommended that the deacon should work with representatives of the congregation to compose the intentions in the intercessions.

**2.1.11** The deacon "*e) ...assists the priest celebrant in distributing Communion and purifies and arranges the sacred vessels*".

**2.1.11.1** The deacon is properly the minister of the chalice and should distribute the sacred host only if Communion is given under one kind or if there are more deacons present than the number of chalices to be administered.<sup>9</sup> Deacons should always receive Communion under both kinds unless exceptional circumstances (e.g. medical conditions) prevent this.

**2.1.11.2** The deacon has a special care for the sacred vessels, arranging them at the presentation of the gifts and purifying them before returning them to a place of safety.

**2.1.12** The deacon "*f) ...as needed fulfils the duties of other ministers himself if none of them is present*".

**2.1.12.1** This catch-all directive is in fact one of the most visible liturgical expressions of the deacon's ministry of charity. The deacon only assumes other ministries at Mass – e.g. sacristan, MC, acolyte, reader, etc, if those who normally exercise these ministries are absent.

**2.1.12.2** It is part of the deacon's role to assist the priest in whatever way seems necessary (e.g. in cases of infirmity or illness). However, the unobtrusive moving of microphones or other equipment, dealing with accidents, etc, is the responsibility of the MC or another altar server.

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<sup>8</sup> GIRM 65

<sup>9</sup> See para 2.2.3.10 below, and GIRM 284a

## 2.2

### Points of Detail

#### 2.2.1 *The Introductory Rites*

2.2.1.1 The *Guidelines for Concelebration in the Dioceses of England and Wales* specify the order of the Entrance Procession at a major celebration:

- thurifer, carrying a thurible with burning incense
- acolyte carrying the cross, with the image to the front, walking between at least two but up to seven other acolytes carrying candlesticks with lighted candles
- the deacon (or in his absence a lay minister of the word) carrying the Book of the Gospels
- other deacons (if present and exercising a ministerial function – see para 2.1.6 above ) two by two
- concelebrating priests, two by two

If the main celebrant is a priest:

- the main celebrant

If the main celebrant is a bishop:

- the bishop, walking alone, wearing the mitre and carrying the pastoral staff
- a little behind the bishop, the two deacons assisting him [In some places the custom in the past has been for the assisting deacons to walk in front of the bishop]
- the ministers who assist with the book, mitre and pastoral staff

What now follows applies generally to celebrations of the Eucharist.

#### 2.2.1.2 *Reverence to the altar (if the deacon is not carrying the Book of the Gospels)*

The presiding priest and the deacon(s) bow to the altar on arrival. If the Blessed Sacrament is behind or near the altar, they genuflect to it instead of bowing. However, if, the priest cannot genuflect then it is better for both deacon and priest to bow, rather than doing different things. The presiding priest and the deacon(s) then reverence the altar with a kiss.

#### 2.2.1.3 *Book of the Gospels*

The deacon carries the Book of the Gospels (if there is one) slightly elevated,<sup>10</sup> preceding the celebrant. When carrying the Book of the Gospels, the deacon does not reverence the altar with a bow<sup>11</sup> but proceeds directly to place the Book upon it and awaits the celebrant to reverence the altar with a kiss. The Portsmouth Diocesan Guidelines for Readers (para 8) recommend that where possible the Book not be laid flat on the altar but be stood upright and open in a < shape. Other places use a special stand at the front of the altar. The underlying value is that the symbolic presence of the Book on the altar be visible.

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<sup>10</sup> GIRM 172

<sup>11</sup> cf. *Ceremonial of Bishops* 70: "Neither a genuflection nor a deep bow is made by those who are carrying articles used in a celebration, for example, the cross, candlesticks, the Book of the Gospels."

**2.2.1.3.1** In churches where the Book of the Gospels is placed before Mass in a place of honour near the main entrance to the church (see Portsmouth Diocesan Guidelines for Readers, para 8), it need not be carried in the entrance procession. The deacon walks ahead of the celebrant or alongside him on his right, depending on the width of the aisle.

**2.2.1.3.2** If incense is used, the deacon assists the celebrant in charging the thurible and in the incensation of the altar and cross before going to his seat at the side of the presiding priest.

## **2.2.2** *The Liturgy of the Word*

**2.2.2.1** The deacon should be attentive to the reading(s) before the Gospel, focusing his eyes on the reader at the ambo. He should also join in with the people in singing the response to the responsorial psalm. In the unlikely event of there being no other reader present, the deacon proclaims the non-Gospel readings.

**2.2.2.2** During the singing of the Gospel Acclamation, the deacon assists the presiding priest in charging the thurible (if used); then, standing before him, he bows low and requests a blessing, signing himself with the sign of the cross and responding "Amen". If the Book of the Gospels has been placed on the altar, the deacon collects it and carries it, slightly elevated, to the ambo, preceded by the thurifer and acolytes with lighted candles.

**2.2.2.3** The deacon greets the people with hands joined,<sup>12</sup> as indeed priests are mandated to do at this point in the rite.<sup>13</sup> He introduces, proclaims and concludes the Gospel in the usual way. At the beginning, he makes a small sign of the cross on the opening word of the day's Gospel and then does the same on his forehead, lips and heart. If incense is used, he incenses the Book with three swings after the announcement of the Gospel. At the conclusion, he kisses the Book without raising it. The Book is ideally left open on the ambo, or placed open on an enthronement stand, or placed on a shelf beneath the ambo if this is necessary, or carried to another suitable place.

**2.2.2.4** The deacon normally announces the intentions of the Prayers of the Faithful from the ambo.<sup>14</sup> If the deacon does not do this, a cantor may announce them, or if there is no cantor, a reader, or if no reader, another member of the congregation.<sup>15</sup>

## **2.2.3** *The Liturgy of the Eucharist* (GIRM 178-183)

**2.2.3.1** After the Prayers of the Faithful, the deacon lays the altar, assisted by an acolyte.

**2.2.3.2** The deacon assists the priest in receiving the gifts of the people, assisted by one or more acolytes. Neither he nor the acolyte(s) place any vessels received from the people on the

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<sup>12</sup> cf. GIRM 175

<sup>13</sup> cf. GIRM 134

<sup>14</sup> cf. GIRM 177

<sup>15</sup> cf. GIRM 71, 134

altar at this time.<sup>16</sup> The deacon hands the paten to the priest, and while the priest is presenting the paten the deacon pours wine into the chalice (if it does not already contain wine), preferably at the credence table<sup>17</sup>, and then a little water, saying the prayer “By the mystery . . .”. It is not necessary to add water to any other than the principal chalice if there is more than one.<sup>18</sup> The deacon then hands the chalice to the priest.

**2.2.3.2.1** If it is not possible to fill the chalice(s) at the credence table, the deacon should do this at one corner of the altar, as unobtrusively as possible.

**2.2.3.3** If incense is used, the deacon assists the presiding priest at the incensation of the gifts, altar and cross. Either the deacon or the thurifer may incense the presiding priest, any concelebrants who may be present, and the people.

**2.2.3.4** During the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon stands to one side of and slightly behind the presiding priest, assisting the priest with the missal and chalice as required. At concelebrations:

After the Prayer over the Offerings has been said by the principal celebrant, the concelebrants approach the altar and stand around it, but in such a way that they do not obstruct the execution of the rites and that the sacred action may be seen clearly by the faithful. They should not be in the deacon’s way whenever he needs to go to the altar to perform his ministry.

The deacon exercises his ministry at the altar whenever he needs to assist with the chalice and the Missal. However, insofar as possible, he stands back slightly, behind the concelebrating priests standing around the principal celebrant.

GIRM 215

This means that any concelebrating priests are ideally placed to either side of the altar, rather than directly behind it, when a deacon is present.

**2.2.3.5** From the epiclesis until the priest shows the chalice, deacons have often knelt down.<sup>19</sup> However, in cases of physical necessity or properly to assist the priest at the altar,<sup>20</sup> it is always permissible for the deacon to remain standing quietly, genuflecting or bowing with the priest when he does so. In the Diocese of Portsmouth, assisting deacons remain standing throughout the Eucharistic Prayer; this includes celebrations at which the Bishop presides.

**2.2.3.6** For the elevation at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon usually stands on the presiding priest’s right and elevates the chalice. At other times the deacon may stand on the presiding priest’s left to assist with the missal, or as the celebrant directs. Only one

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<sup>16</sup> cf. GIRM 75: “The bread and wine are placed on the altar by the priest to the accompaniment of the prescribed formulas.”

cf. also CTM 181: “It is most appropriate that the bread and wine are placed on the altar only when the relevant prayers are said.”

<sup>17</sup> cf. GIRM 178

<sup>18</sup> cf. GIRM 178, which refers to only one chalice.

cf. also CTM 182, 3rd bullet point: “When more than one chalice is being prepared the water is best added to the wine before it is poured into the chalices.”

<sup>19</sup> cf. GIRM 179

<sup>20</sup> For example, some editions of some Eucharistic Prayers require page-turns in the middle of the words of institution.

paten and the main chalice should be elevated. If there are two deacons, only the deacon on the presiding priest's right elevates the chalice.

**2.2.3.6.1** Both priest and deacon should keep the gifts raised until the assembly has responded "Amen". However, the deacon should take his lead from the priest so that the paten and chalice are raised and lowered at the same time.

#### **2.2.3.7**

After the priest has said the prayer at the Rite of Peace and the greeting *The peace of the Lord be with you always* and the people have responded *And also with you*, the deacon, if it is appropriate, invites all to exchange a sign of peace. He faces the people and, with hands joined, says *Let us offer each other a sign of peace*. Then he himself receives a sign of peace from the priest and may offer it to those other ministers who are closer to him.

GIRM 181

**2.2.3.8** GIRM 85 strongly encourages the distribution of Communion from hosts consecrated at the Mass which is being celebrated, with recourse to the reserved sacrament only in case of necessity.<sup>21</sup> If vessels are to be removed from the tabernacle, this should only be done before or after but not during the fraction. In this way the focus remains for as long as practicable on elements consecrated at that Mass and the solemn moment of the Lord's Prayer is not interrupted by distracting movement.

**2.2.3.9** If concelebrants are present, the deacon may assist in bringing part of the main host to them (or another small host if there are many concelebrants) so that they can hold a piece during the recitation of "This is the Lamb of God".

**2.2.3.10** The deacon receives Holy Communion under both kinds. Only a priest serves himself from the chalice.<sup>22</sup> Deacons, like lay people, always receive both consecrated bread and the chalice from the priest (or exceptionally from another minister who has received them him/herself from the priest). The deacon always administers the chalice<sup>23</sup>, unless there are fewer chalices than deacons, in which case he may administer the sacred host. (When no deacon is present, the chalice should normally be administered by a priest.)<sup>24</sup>

**2.2.3.11** After communion, the deacon is responsible for replacing any remaining hosts in the tabernacle, consuming at the altar any of the Precious Blood which remains (assisted, if necessary, by other deacons and priests), and purifying the sacred vessels. If Mass is still in progress, purification is carried out at the credence table<sup>25</sup> "briefly and inconspicuously"<sup>26</sup>. However, the preferred option is for purification to be carried out after Mass is over.<sup>27</sup> In this

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<sup>21</sup> and cf. CTM 206: "The faithful are not ordinarily to be given Communion from the tabernacle."

<sup>22</sup> cf. *Inaestimabile Donum* 9

<sup>23</sup> GIRM 182, 284a

<sup>24</sup> GIRM 284a

<sup>25</sup> GIRM 183

<sup>26</sup> CTM 214

<sup>27</sup> CTM 214, cf. GIRM 163, 183, 279

case, the vessels are left on the credence table on a corporal<sup>28</sup>, covered with one or more white cloths.

#### 2.2.4 *The Concluding Rites* (GIRM 184-186)

2.2.4.1 Following the Prayer after Communion, the deacon may make any necessary announcements to the people, unless the presiding priest prefers to do so. If a solemn blessing is to be given, the deacon invites the people to bow their heads and pray for God's blessing.

2.2.4.2 Following the blessing, the deacon dismisses the people, using one of the formulae given in the Missal. (NB: Additional formulae are provided in the Order of Mass in the third edition of the *Missale Romanum*.) He should not improvise or elaborate the given formulae (a general principle).

2.2.4.3 He kisses the altar with the presiding priest and then venerates it with a bow. If there is a tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament on the sanctuary, priest and deacon genuflect to it before departing, instead of bowing to the altar. The deacon leaves in a similar way to that of the entrance procession, either preceding or on the right of the presiding priest. The Book of the Gospels is not carried in the exit procession.

2.2.4.4 If another liturgical rite is to follow immediately, for example the final commendation at a funeral, the entire concluding rite following the Prayer after Communion is omitted because these other rites will have their own form of conclusion.<sup>29</sup>



### 3 THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN OUTSIDE MASS

3.1 The ordinary ministers of baptism are bishops, priests and deacons. Hence, when a deacon administers the sacrament of baptism outside Mass, in the absence of a priest, he presides. However, he does not occupy the presidential chair and does not use presidential gestures such as the extension of hands at "The Lord be with you".

3.2 The ritual appears to imply that where baptism takes place *during Mass* the presiding priest will normally administer the sacrament. However, in cases of necessity this may be delegated to the deacon.

3.3 Baptism should be celebrated in accordance with the *Rite of Baptism of Children*<sup>30</sup>. Deacons should be familiar with the general introduction to the rite and with the specific introductions for different circumstances. This is in addition to a thorough working knowledge of the rites themselves and the rubrics governing their celebration.

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<sup>28</sup> GIRM 183

<sup>29</sup> CTM 218

<sup>30</sup> Ritual edition, Burns and Oates, ISBN 0 86 012355 3. NB: the Burns and Oates website gives the final check digit of the ISBN number as 2 rather than 3.

**3.3.1** The Church's liturgical books are a model of clarity and pastoral sensitivity. They should be followed with care.

The following recommendations may be helpful.

**3.4** It is beneficial if the deacon has been involved in the pre-baptismal catechesis or preparation of the parents and godparents. This does not preclude members of parish baptism preparation teams from also being involved in the formation of the parents and godparents. One of the preparation sessions should be devoted to going through the rite with parents and godparents, helping them to understand the prayers as well as the sequence of events, and deepening awareness of the implications of their commitment to the spiritual life of their child.

**3.5** The following requisites should be arranged prior to the baptism:

- water in the font (tepid, to avoid shock)
- Holy Oils – of Baptism and Chrism
- baptismal candle, and taper
- vessel for pouring baptismal water
- towel

**3.6** Check that the parents or godparents have brought a baptismal garment, which is to be put on the infant at the appropriate point in the rite.

**3.7** The deacon should be vested in alb and stole, or cassock, cotta and stole. A cope may be worn. The liturgical colour should reflect the paschal nature of baptism.

**3.8** The altar candles and paschal candle are lighted for the beginning of the celebration.

**3.9** There are four distinct locations within the church or oratory which are of importance for this sacrament: the door, the ambo, the font and the altar. The minister should ensure, when arranging the celebration, that the action of the rite includes each of these four separate locations.

**3.9.1** The pre-baptismal anointing at the door may have taken place during a previous parish Mass on a different day.<sup>31</sup>

**3.10** It is essential that the parents and godparents are provided with copies of the rite. It is recommended that these be available to the congregation as a whole.

**3.11** The homily should be grounded in the scriptural texts proclaimed during the celebration. However, the homilist should remind parents and godparents of their duties in

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<sup>31</sup> This is a long-established practice in many parishes, and appears to take its rise from para 28 § 1 of the Rite, which allows the presentation and pre-baptismal anointing of infants to be baptised at the Easter Vigil to take place at a separate time.

bringing up their children in the practice of the faith. The homily also provides an important opportunity for evangelisation among those present as the mystery of salvation is explained.



#### 4 THE BAPTISM OF ADULTS

The baptism of adults should normally take place at the Easter Vigil. If celebrated at another time, it is celebrated by the bishop or a priest, since confirmation follows as an integral part of the rite. See also under “The Ministry of the Deacon during Holy Week”, section 10 below.



#### 5 THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

5.1 Where a deacon is the celebrant, the rite to be used is the *Rite for Celebrating Marriage outside Mass*. (ICEL, 1969)

5.2 If the deacon is not an authorised person for the registration of marriages, the registrar or an authorised person must be in attendance to register the marriage.

5.3 When a deacon officiates, he does not occupy the presidential chair and does not use presidential gestures such as the extension of hands at “The Lord be with you”.

5.4 It is beneficial if the deacon has been involved in preparing the couple for marriage. This does not preclude members of the parish marriage preparation team from also being involved in the formation of the couple.

5.5 As part of their formation, it should be made clear to the couple that they themselves are the ministers of the sacrament: they administer it to each other. The role of the ordained minister is to act as the Church’s witness and to officiate at the celebration, but not to confer the sacrament himself. It may also be helpful to refer to this in the homily on the day.

5.6 As with all liturgical celebrations, the minister must have an in-depth, working knowledge of the ritual. Special attention should be paid to the General Introduction which explains the rite, and the rubrics which guide its celebration. It can be most helpful to attend a marriage as a “spectator” in order to grasp some of the practicalities.

The following recommendations may be helpful:

5.7 The deacon should be vested in alb and stole, or cassock, cotta and stole. A cope may be worn. The liturgical colour is white.

**5.8** Shortly before the wedding, a rehearsal should be held with the bride and groom (and others *directly* involved with the ceremony). The words of the exchange of vows should not be pronounced in full during the rehearsal, for legal reasons.

**5.9** The key locations in the liturgy are the entrance to the sanctuary/foot of the altar, and the ambo. Suitable chairs should be provided for the couple during the liturgy of the word. Prie-dieux are not necessary, though their use is traditional in many places. For example, older couples who have difficulty in kneeling may receive nuptial blessings standing with bowed heads. If Communion is to be administered, this too is received standing, as at Sunday Mass. (NB: Communion is not administered at all if either bride or groom is an unbaptised person.)

**5.10** Readers should be persons who are used to proclaiming the scriptures in church, and not chosen because they happen to be friends or family members. (If they are *also* friends of family members, so much the better.) Readings at weddings need to be intelligible and taken at a pace that is reasonable and not too rapid. It is important that the word of God be properly communicated on occasions such as this, when a proportion of those attending may be quite unfamiliar with scripture. It may be beneficial to have the reader(s) attend the wedding rehearsal.

**5.11** Since the deacon is presiding, he need not announce the intentions for prayer in the intercessions himself. When a lay person does this, the same sort of considerations as in para 5.10 above are in order concerning the choice of reader. The text of the intentions should be given to the reader in advance, and the reader should be encouraged to leave long enough pauses for those present to pray about the intentions announced.

**5.12** In certain places, illustrative rituals additional to those in the rite itself are customary. This is especially (not exclusively) true of members of the community from different ethnic traditions some of whom have different customs attached to the celebration of the sacrament. Their wishes should be treated with respect, but it is important to explore the symbolism of these customs with them ahead of time. The guiding principle is one of not obscuring the rite by disproportionate additions.

**5.13** The minister should establish a policy with photographers beforehand. Photographs or video-recording during the celebration must be unobtrusive.

**5.14** It is important that all copyrighted material included in orders of service have been granted the proper permissions. Proper acknowledgements should be printed in the order of service, and the number of the parish's copyright licence if this covers some of the material.

**5.14.1** In the case of video-recording, those making the videos must be in possession of a valid MCPS wedding video licence<sup>32</sup>. Failure to do this could result in prosecution of all the "principals" involved in the service, including the deacon and organist.

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<sup>32</sup> For private individuals, obtainable inexpensively via the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society website. Professional video-recordists should already have a multiple-use MCPS licence. Parishes with a CCL copyright licence may already be covered for video-recording.

**5.14.2** Similarly, the playing of pre-recorded music through the church's PA system or by some other means is unlawful unless the requisite licence for the public performance of recorded music is already held by the church (not the same as the wedding video licence).



## 6 CELEBRATIONS OF WORD AND COMMUNION

**6.1** In the Diocese of Portsmouth, the preferred option is to celebrate some part of the Divine Office, with or without distribution of Holy Communion. In this case, the scripture is taken from the lectionary of the day, to enhance communion with the wider church. A second option is to have just a Liturgy of the Word.

**6.1.1** The diocesan source book is *Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*, available from the diocesan offices at Park Place, which contains directives for deacons as well as lay ministries at these celebrations. Since the book was first published in 2002, the diocese has changed its policy concerning these celebrations. *These are now no longer permitted on Sundays except in cases of emergency.* If a celebration of Mass is taking place in a neighbouring church that weekend, the faithful should be encouraged to go there when possible. On weekdays, the diocesan policy is one of gentle discouragement of services with distribution of Holy Communion, in accordance with the provisions of para 166 of the instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2005). Supplementary sheets are now issued along with the diocesan source book.

**6.1.2** The diocesan source book makes it clear that for celebrations without the distribution of Holy Communion a lay person may always lead. In the case of the Divine Office, this is the case even if a deacon happens to be present. For celebrations with Holy Communion, the deacon will lead if he is present, but he is not obliged to be present.

**6.1.3** At all celebrations, a team leadership will be exercised. A leader will lead; a reader will read; when Holy Communion is distributed, one or more ministers (who are not the leader) will distribute Communion. Thus each one carries out his or her own ministry and no more. If a deacon presides, he need not read, though he will proclaim the Gospel and preach a homily. If Holy Communion is to be distributed, the deacon will take the lead in the distribution.

**6.1.3.1** In addition to the basic triad of leader – reader – minister of communion, other ministries are appropriately used – e.g. musicians.

**6.1.4** Care must be taken that these celebrations in no way resemble a Mass.<sup>33</sup> Thus, if a deacon presides, he does not do so from the presidential chair. If Holy Communion is distributed, the altar is not used but instead a separate table covered with a white cloth. Nevertheless, celebrations in the absence of a priest should be celebrated as rites with their own dignity and proper formality.

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<sup>33</sup> cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 165

**6.2** The deacon should be vested in alb and stole of the appropriate liturgical colour, or cassock, cotta and stole. For solemn celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours on major solemnities, a dalmatic may be worn.<sup>34</sup>

**6.3** Lighted candles are used on the table (not the altar, as specified above). A Missal and lectionary should be in position. If Holy Communion is to be distributed, additionally a corporal will be required. If deacons wish to purify their fingers after replacing the ciborium in the tabernacle, water and a towel should be provided.

**6.4** Presidential gestures – e.g. the extension of hands at “The Lord be with you” – are not used by deacons.

**6.5** It is desirable that there be prayers of intercession after the homily or reflection, since there is no Eucharistic Prayer to include them.

**6.6** If prayers from the Roman Missal are used and Holy Communion is to be distributed, the deacon should re-phrase any prayer which suggests that the Eucharist is being celebrated. (For example, the word “celebration” might be substituted for “Eucharist”, “sacrifice”, “meal”, “banquet”, etc, none of which take place at celebrations in the absence of a priest.) On the other hand, prayers which refer to God’s word or to the gathered community are very appropriate.

**6.6.1** It is most advisable to look at texts from the Missal beforehand, checking them to see if they need adaptation as outlined above.



## **7 COMMUNION TO THE SICK AND HOUSEBOUND**

**7.1** Deacons are recommended to familiarise themselves with the Diocesan Guidelines for Lay Ministers of Holy Communion.

**7.2** The rite from the ritual should be used, adapted to the individual circumstances as necessary. This is most conveniently available in the publication *Communion of the Sick*.<sup>35</sup>

**7.3** It is most desirable that the consecrated bread be taken directly from the Mass, as a sign that those unable to be present are united to the sacrifice itself, and as a sign of the supporting prayers and love of the community gathered for Mass. (The perception that the sick and housebound are part of the community will also be aided by including them in the intercessions.)<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, 255

<sup>35</sup> McCrimmons, 1975, revised ed. 1966, ISBN 0 88597 488 5

<sup>36</sup> Diocese of Portsmouth Diocesan Guidelines for Lay Ministers of Holy Communion, para 13

**7.4** After communion, before the end of Mass, at a suitable time when the people's attention can easily be drawn to what is happening, the priest distributes one or more pyxes filled with pieces of bread consecrated at that Mass, and may use suitable words as the minister is sent forth.<sup>37</sup> Lay ministers may depart there and then, or after the final blessing and dismissal, but a deacon will always remain and depart in the concluding procession. If there are several lay ministers, it is fitting that they too join in the concluding procession of the other liturgical ministers as it leaves.<sup>38</sup>

**7.5** Those taking Holy Communion to the sick and housebound should be sensitive to the traditional signs associated with this practice, and their value in fostering reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. A table should be prepared with a white cloth, lighted candles, etc., if possible before the minister arrives with the Blessed Sacrament. If this is not possible, the deacon or minister may assist the sick or housebound person in preparing the table. Some ministers take their own 'kit' with them, but this is not obligatory and many do not.

**7.5.1** Deacons should administer Holy Communion wearing a stole over everyday clothes. The stole does not need to be worn outside the actual time of giving Communion, and should not be worn between visits to more than one communicant (e.g. in a hospital).

**7.5.2** In a hospital or residential home, it will frequently not be possible for any of the traditional signs (table, white cloth, candles, etc) to be used, and the deacon or minister may simply sit by the side of the bed or chair and give Communion from a pyx.

**7.5.3** Hospitals may have specialized requirements, and ministers should always liaise with them ahead of time, particularly if several patients are to receive on the same occasion or during the same visit.

**7.6** Deacons and lay ministers may also be requested to take Communion to the dying as Viaticum. The rite for Viaticum should be used,<sup>39</sup> adapted as necessary to the individual circumstances.

**7.7** Some sick persons can only take a tiny sliver of the host. In the event of a sick person rejecting a host from the mouth, the minister places the host in a cloth and, returning to the church, leaves it in a bowl of water in the tabernacle. When the host has dissolved the contents can be emptied into the sacrarium or poured direct on the earth.<sup>40</sup>

**7.8** Some sick persons can only receive under the form of wine, and a suitable phial or sealed container is used. The minister is responsible for purifying the vessel before leaving the house.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> e.g. "Take the bread of life to our sister(s)/brother(s) who cannot be with us and assure her/him/them of our love and prayers." Other suggestions are found in *Celebrating the Mass* 221.

<sup>38</sup> *Celebrating the Mass* 220, bullet point 2

<sup>39</sup> cf. *The Rites*, vol I, pages 855-859 (Pastoral Care of the Sick, paras 197-211). A simple schema on two sides of A4 is also available from the Diocesan Director of Liturgy, as is a schema for Communion to the Sick.

<sup>40</sup> cf. Diocese of Portsmouth Diocesan Guidelines for Lay Ministers of Holy Communion, para 14

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

**7.9** Some of those receiving Communion may be confused and think that the deacon is a priest. They may ask to have their confession heard. The deacon should make it clear that he cannot do this, but instead should offer to pray with the person for God's forgiveness (and may listen to whatever they happen to say).

**7.10** Similarly, some may ask for anointing. The deacon should make it clear that he cannot do this, but should lay hands on the person and make the sign of the cross on their forehead, as well as holding their hand(s) or laying a hand on their arm while praying with them.



## 8 FUNERALS AND RELATED RITES FOR THE DECEASED

**8.1** These are to be celebrated in accordance with the *Order of Christian Funerals*.<sup>42</sup>

**8.2** Where a funeral Mass is celebrated, the bishop or a priest presides, and the deacon exercises his usual ministry at Mass.

**8.3** All other funeral rites apart from Mass may be celebrated with a deacon as presider or a lay person as leader.

**8.4**

### General Principles

**8.4.1** In keeping with his ministry of charity, where a deacon is to preside at a funeral service it is appropriate that where possible he should already have been involved in the ministry of consolation to the bereaved and in the planning of the funeral with them.

**8.4.2** Times of bereavement, including the service itself, demand great pastoral sensitivity from ministers. The presider may have to deal with inappropriate requests regarding music, readings or the embellishment of the coffin.

**8.4.2.1** During the rite itself, the guiding principle is that secular music should not be used, but only liturgical music which "expresses the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death and triumph over death and [which] should be related to the readings from Scripture."<sup>43</sup>

**8.4.2.2** Other choices of music, not themselves appropriate for the liturgy, could find a place after a Vigil for the Deceased the previous day, or at the crematorium.

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<sup>42</sup> Geoffrey Chapman, 1990, ISBN 0 225 66631 6

<sup>43</sup> *Order of Christian Funerals*, 30

**8.4.2.3** As with weddings, the playing of pre-recorded music through the church's PA system or by some other means is unlawful unless the requisite licence for the public performance of recorded music is already held by the church.<sup>44</sup>

**8.4.3** Readings which form part of the Liturgy of the Word must be taken from Sacred Scripture.

**8.4.4** The coffin should be unadorned. In many places the coffin is covered with a pall, a large white cloth symbolising the white baptismal garment that all Christians bear, and in turn indicating their equality before God. Also placed on the coffin should be a cross, the Book of the Gospels (or, in the absence of one, a Bible, especially one that had been used by the deceased person).

**8.4.4.1** Flowers and cards are best placed on one or more separate tables near the coffin, not on the coffin itself, and flags or other insignia have no place in the funeral liturgy.<sup>45</sup>

**8.5** Such situations are challenging, and it may be helpful for a deacon to remind himself that the ministry of charity is paramount.

**8.6**

### **Prayers and Vigils for the Deceased**

**8.6.1** A degree of flexibility may be incorporated into these rites, especially those which are not celebrated in a church.

**8.6.2** For the celebration of a Vigil with Reception of the Body at the Church, the deacon should be vested as for the funeral service (see below, para 8.7.1). The altar candles and paschal candle should be lit.

**8.6.3** Reflecting the loss of any Christian soul to the whole community, others should be involved as fully as possible within the rites, as readers, etc. Preference should be given to members of the family of the deceased where they are capable and willing to be involved.

See paras 8.4.2 and 8.4.2.1-3 above regarding music at the Vigil, and paras 8.7.6 and 8.7.6.1 below concerning music at a funeral service outside Mass.

**8.7**

### **Funeral Liturgy outside Mass**

**8.7.1** The deacon should be vested in alb and stole, or cassock, cotta and stole. The cope may be worn. The colour of the vestments will be white, violet or black. "White expresses the hope of Easter, the fulfilment of baptism, and the wedding garment necessary for the kingdom." (It is also always used for the funeral of a child.) "Violet recalls the eschatological expectation of Advent and the Lenten preparation for the paschal mystery. Black is used as a

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<sup>44</sup> cf. paras 5.14.1 and 5.14.2, above

<sup>45</sup> *Order of Christian Funerals*, 38

token of mourning, but, in our society, increasingly without the association of Christian hope."<sup>46</sup>

**8.7.2** Altar candles and paschal candle should be lit. Outside the Easter season, the paschal candle should, as practicable, be placed near the coffin. There should be adequate space for the coffin, which should be located centrally, at the entrance to the sanctuary. Space should be reserved at the front of the church for the chief mourners. The Lectionary should be placed on the ambo, with readings marked.

**8.7.3** Readers should be persons who are used to proclaiming the scriptures in church, and not chosen because they happen to be friends or family members. (If they are *also* family members or friends, so much the better.) Readings at funerals need to be intelligible and taken at a pace that is reasonable and not too rapid. It is important that the word of God be properly communicated on occasions such as this, when a proportion of those attending may be quite unfamiliar with scripture.

**8.7.4** Since the deacon is presiding, he need not announce the intentions for prayer in the intercessions himself. When a lay person does this, the same considerations as in para 7.6.3 above are in order concerning the choice of reader. The text of the intentions should be given to the reader in advance, and the reader should be encouraged to leave long enough pauses for those present to pray about the intentions announced.

**8.7.5** A holy water sprinkler and thurible should be readily available.

**8.7.6** It is important that all copyrighted material included in orders of service have been granted the proper permissions. Proper acknowledgements should be printed in the order of service, and the number of the parish's copyright licence if this covers some of the material.

**8.7.6.1** The playing of pre-recorded music through the church's PA system or by some other means is unlawful unless the requisite licence for the public performance of recorded music is already held by the church.



## **9 WORSHIP OF THE EUCHARIST OUTSIDE MASS**

**9.1** Eucharistic adoration should take place in accordance with *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*.<sup>47</sup>

**9.2** The deacon should be vested in alb and stole, or cassock, cotta and stole. The stole is to be white or gold. For more solemn periods of exposition and for Benediction, a white or gold cope should be worn. Dalmatics are not worn.

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<sup>46</sup> cf. *Order of Christian Funerals*, 39

<sup>47</sup> Vol. 1 – Rites, pub. John Neale, ISBN 0 9543 0315 6

**9.3** The humeral veil should be worn during the act of Benediction and also for taking the Blessed Sacrament to and from the altar, if it is reserved elsewhere.

**9.4** Benediction is given by making the sign of the cross once over the congregation with the monstrance. (Lay persons may not give Benediction in this way.)

**9.5** The hymns, readings, prayers, litanies, etc, used during all periods of adoration should be in accordance with the Rites. Some audible act of devotion must always be included in any period of adoration.<sup>48</sup> In order to facilitate the full participation of the faithful, it is advantageous to have service sheets or other aids available.

**9.6** Eucharistic adoration may take place using either the ciborium or the monstrance, but for Benediction the monstrance is to be used. When a ciborium is used for adoration, it does not need to be unveiled, nor the lid removed.



## **10 THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON DURING HOLY WEEK**

**10.1** The deacon's primary focus during this solemn week is his care for those who are entering the church at the Easter Vigil by baptism or reception, the honoured guests at the Triduum liturgies. It is to be hoped that he will have been involved in the RCIA process in his parish.

**10.2** On Passion (Palm) Sunday, the deacon proclaims the Gospel of the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem. He does not need also to take one of the readers' parts in the solemn reading of the Passion.

**10.3** The deacon, when possible, attends the Mass of the Oils.

**10.4** The rites do not provide for anyone except a presbyter or bishop to preside at any part of the Easter Triduum. In particular, therefore, deacons may not preside at the solemn Good Friday liturgy in the absence of a priest, but only at a prayer service that afternoon.

**10.4.1** If services take place in the absence of a priest during the Triduum, it must be made clear that they are alternative services of prayer which do not form part of the official rites of the Triduum.

**10.5** The priest carries the Blessed Sacrament in procession to the altar of repose on Maundy Thursday evening. However, it is the deacon's role to place the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle at the end of the transfer to the altar of repose,<sup>49</sup> and to bring the Blessed

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<sup>48</sup> Vol. 1 – Rites, para 58

<sup>49</sup> *Ceremonial of Bishops*, 308

Sacrament back from the altar of repose at the Good Friday solemn Afternoon Liturgy of the Lord's Passion and Death.<sup>50</sup>

**10.6** The dalmatic is worn at the Good Friday solemn Afternoon Liturgy, but not at a prayer service substituting for this liturgy.

**10.7** Deacons only have the faculty to baptise infants, not to baptise adults. Therefore, even if a deacon has been responsible for or involved with the preparation of one or more adult catechumens, he may not baptise the catechumen(s) at the Easter Vigil. The priest, in turn, may only confirm someone that he has himself baptised at the same celebration. Nor may a deacon baptise an infant at the Easter Vigil, even if the deacon has been responsible for the preparation of the parents.

**10.7.1** Similarly, even if a deacon has been responsible for or involved with the preparation of a candidate to be received into the full communion of the Church, he himself may not carry out the reception, since only priests are delegated by the bishop to carry this out and to confirm the candidates that they receive.

**10.7.2** It is therefore suggested that deacons who have been responsible for or involved with the preparation of catechumens or candidates for reception may very fittingly present them to the priest at the appropriate points in the rites of the Easter Vigil, and that they should minister the chalice to them when they receive Holy Communion for the first time.



## APPENDIX

### Key references in GIRM (General Instruction of the Roman Missal) and CTM (Celebrating the Mass)

Ministry of the Deacon	GIRM 94 CTM 25-32, 39
Role at Mass	GIRM 171-186, 59-60, 65-66, 71, 116, 284-287 CTM 141, 166, 169, 173, 180, 181, 182, 206, 211, 219, 220, 225
Role at Concelebrations	GIRM 212, 215, 239-240, 246-249
Vesture	GIRM 119, 336, 338, 340 CTM 111

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<sup>50</sup> *Roman Missal* (1975), Good Friday, para 21

Seating

GIRM 310  
CTM 95, 99

Other documents which can be studied with profit include the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, especially 23-26, 67-81, 86-96, 99-103, 107, and the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Deacons*.

Guidelines for the Diocese of Portsmouth referred to in the text will be found at:

<http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/userfiles/Guidelines%20for%20Readers%20Mar%2007.pdf>

<http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/userfiles/Ministers%20of%20Communion%20diocesan%20guidelines%2009%20revision.pdf>

<http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/pastoralformation/liturgy/guidelines.php>

and

<http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/userfiles/Notes%20on%20diocesan%20booklet%20for%20non-eucharistic%20services%20Mar%2009.pdf>

Other guidelines, e.g. for Liturgy of the Word with Children, will also be found on the diocesan website.