



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Pilgrims on the way of Hope: A Resource for the Jubilee of Deacons

Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope

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Jubilee of Deacons: Resource Packet

February 21-23, 2025

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Jubilee 2025 invites you to be a pilgrim of hope. For Christians, hope is anchored in the encounter with Jesus whose life, death, and resurrection reveals God's transforming love. Our hope in God is renewed constantly in the gift of the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father and the Son, who is given, even now, to the community of believers.


The Holy See has designated a number of Jubilee Days throughout 2025 to recognize and celebrate different groups of people and various ministries in the Church. The Jubilee of Deacons will be held from Friday, February 21, to Sunday, February 23, 2025; however, these resources can be used for engaging and celebrating deacons at any time throughout the Jubilee Year.

In the Catholic Church, the diaconate is one of three degrees in ordained ministry - bishops,

priests, and deacons. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Latin-rite Church has restored the diaconate "as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy". Deacons preparing for the priesthood are transitional deacons, while those not planning to be ordained priests are permanent deacons. Permanent diaconate can be conferred on a single or married man. If he is married, he must be so before receiving the diaconate.

[Lumen Gentium](#), after describing the function of presbyters as a participation in the priestly function of Christ, illustrates the ministry of deacons, "upon whom", it says, "hands are imposed not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service." The Sacred Order of Deacons is to be a "driving force for the Church's service or *diakonia* toward the local Christian communities and as a sign or sacrament of the Lord Christ himself, who 'came not to be served but to serve.'" This is at the very heart of the diaconate to which you have been called: to be a servant of the mysteries of Christ and, at one and the same time, to be a servant of your brothers and sisters. That these two dimensions are inseparably joined together in one reality shows the important nature of the ministry which is yours by ordination.





Deacons embrace the ministry of word, ministry of liturgy, and works of charity which, in their turn, are carried into daily life.

Depending on the circumstances, one or another of these may receive particular emphasis in an individual deacon's work but these three ministries are inseparably joined together as one in the service of God's redemptive plan.

This resource packet is for anyone who finds it useful. It can be used and/or adapted by dioceses, eparchies, parishes, schools, campuses, apostolates, movements, organizations, or individuals to plan their celebration of the Jubilee of Deacons. It might also serve as a catalyst or inspiration for the creation and development of local or year-round resources for those active in this ministry.

For members of the diaconate who are making a Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome or to a designated special place (or particular Jubilee celebration) in a diocese or eparchy within the United States during 2025, this packet can also serve as an aid in the preparation or experience of that trip.

Additional resources for the Jubilee Days of Deacons and other celebrations can be found online at the USCCB Jubilee Year web pages: available in English at <https://www.usccb.org/committees/jubilee-2025> and available in Spanish at <https://www.usccb.org/es/committees/jubileo-2025>.

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

The deacon is obligated to give priority to the spiritual life and to live his *diakonia* with generosity. His model *par excellence* is Jesus Christ, the Servant who lived totally at the service of his Father for the good of every person. It is necessary that each deacon must know Christ intimately to live out his ministry to

the fullest, whether he is celibate or married.

In his 2021 address to deacons, Pope Francis expressed a greater focus on cultivating humility and generosity in ministry. Speaking to them, the Holy Father says he expects humble deacons, letting all good be a secret between him and God; he expects deacons to be good spouses, fathers, and grandfathers, inspiring others with their witness of joy in everything without complaining; he expects deacons to be sentinels, to both know the face of the poor and also help the Christian faithful recognize Jesus in them.

The deacon exercises his ministry within the communion and mission of a diocesan Church and in direct relationship with his diocesan bishop, under whose authority he is assigned, as a collaborator in the service of God's people. As collaborators in ministry, serving alongside priests, deacons participate in the one apostolic ministry bestowed by Christ upon the Apostles and their successors. "The diaconate is not an abridged or substitute form of the priesthood; it is a full order in its own right."

In this Jubilee Year, do everything with humility, with joy without complaining, and in radical hospitality to the poor and marginalized. Allow the love of Jesus to flow from you, as you humbly serve others as missionary disciples. Listen with tender care and affection to the needs of others, especially the poor in your community. In this way, you will be messengers of hope to the world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PILGRIM PREPARATION

One major element of the Jubilee celebration for Catholics is making pilgrimage. For some, that may involve going to Rome, where international pilgrims traditionally visit the Holy Doors of the four great basilicas (Saint Peter, Saint Paul



Outside the Walls, Saint Mary Major, and Saint John Lateran). For most others, though, local Jubilee pilgrimages can be made to diocesan or eparchial cathedrals, churches, and/or religious sites.

If headed to Rome for the Jubilee of Deacons:

Should you or the diocesan diaconate office decide to travel to Rome, in particular for the Jubilee of Deacons (February 21-23, 2025), the following may be helpful:

- You can develop a trip on your own or go through a licensed tour operator who specializes or has experience in religious travel. The latter option may cost extra, but it can save a local organizer time; additionally, those operators may have existing connections with vendors and may be able to advise on travel concerns. PLEASE NOTE: The USCCB does not endorse nor identify any licensed tour operator as the official U.S. tour operator.
- The official Jubilee events for the deacons include passage through Holy Doors and Mass with the Holy Father on Sunday, February 23. Pilgrims and groups may also consider taking part in additional activities, either planned on their own or events hosted by other apostolates/groups.
- Prepare for the trip with liturgies, retreats, devotional and service experiences, community building, catechesis, and fundraising, as needed. Take time for prayer, especially with the Blessed Sacrament, as well as practical travel planning (packing, supplies, water, etc.).
- Upon the return home, consider in advance ways to share the experience with others and put into practice the missionary lessons received during the Jubilee moments in Rome.

If coordinating a local pilgrimage within the United States:

It is highly recommended to make pilgrimage to one's own diocesan or eparchial cathedral or other church(es) or religious site(s) designated by the bishop or eparch. Pope Francis has invited every diocese and eparchy to designate their cathedrals or a popular Catholic shrine as special places of prayer for Holy Year pilgrims, offering opportunities for reconciliation, indulgences, and other events.

- Plan for a local pilgrimage which can take place at any time of year or can be done at the same time as the events for deacons in Rome (February 21-23, 2025). The timing, as well as the exact local destination, is at the discretion of the local organizer(s).
- Research the pilgrimage destination to ensure that your visit does not coincide with liturgical or local community events or is being done within the posted opening hours for the site. You may wish to contact someone in leadership at the location in advance, especially if you plan to bring a group.
- Before embarking on a local pilgrimage, consider taking time for prayer and community-building.
- After returning home (even if the trip was local), take time for prayer and theological reflection on the graces of God received during the pilgrimage experience. If you went as a group, continue to gather in the weeks and months following the trip to support one another and coordinate missionary actions.



SUGGESTIONS FOR CELEBRATING DEACONS LOCALLY

Suggestions for Prayers of the Faithful

- Use the weekend liturgies on February 21-23 to recognize all deacons: in the homily, general intercessions, with a special blessing. An example of a petition for the Prayer of the Faithful might include:

For the deacons of our parish, our dioceses and around the world, that they may be instruments of Christ loving service to our world, we pray to the Lord.

** Insert the names of the deacons in your parish to the Prayers of the Faithful.*

Suggestions of Parish Activities

- Have a reception or diaconate vocation awareness activity after all weekend Masses on February 22 & 23. During those gatherings, offer food and drink and opportunities for parish fellowship.
- Livestream or replay video of key Jubilee events (i.e., Mass with the Holy Father) taking place in Rome from February 21 to 23 at the parish (noting the time difference between Rome and your local area). You may also consider coordinating programs at the parish during the livestream viewings such as liturgies, Eucharistic adoration, confessions, catechesis, service projects, small groups, or socials.

Suggestions for Dioceses and Eparchies

- Celebrate a liturgy or host a prayer service for deacons in the area at the diocesan/eparchial cathedral between February 21 and 23, concurrent with the Jubilee celebrations happening in Rome.
- Hold a diocesan/eparchial-wide Jubilee walking pilgrimage for deacons from the cathedral (or another site of your choosing) to religious sites, churches, and/or to a Catholic-led social services center or institution. Consider also inviting the bishop or eparch.
- Post stories of deacons on the diocesan or eparchial website, social media channels, and communications (magazine, newspaper, newsletter, etc.) prior to and/or during the Jubilee of Deacons in February 2025.
- Host a special diocesan/eparchial-wide dinner or reception for deacons, highlighting the charitable, devotional, or spiritual ministries and services of deacons during the Jubilee Year. Consider an award or recognition program for those who make key contributions to the life of the diocese/eparchy and/or society at large.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & DOCUMENTS

- [National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States of America](#), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (2022): an essential document from the USCCB to dioceses to assist in the growth and sustaining of permanent diaconate programs.
- [Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons](#), Congregation for Catholic Education Congregation for the Clergy (1998).
- [Address of His Holiness to the Permanent Deacons of the Diocese of Rome](#), with their Families, Pope Francis (2021).
- [Lumen Gentium, Second Vatican Council \(1964\): Dogmatic Constitution on the Church](#), outlining the role the laity plays in the life and mission of the Church.
- [Evangelii Gaudium](#), Pope Francis (2013): an apostolic exhortation on evangelization and missionary discipleship, ideal for the lay faithful. Available in print and in e-book from several Catholic publishers and online.
- [Meeting with the Men Ordained to the Permanent Diaconate Address of His Holiness John Paul II](#) (1987).

KEY SAINTS

Holy Companions for Transitional and Permanent Deacons

- **St. Stephen (1st century A.D., feast day December 26)**, first Christian martyr, whose death closely mirrored the death of Christ.
- **St. Philip (1st century A.D., feast day June 6)**, one of the original seven deacons mentioned in the Book of Acts, converted the Ethiopian eunuch of Queen Candace's court bringing Christianity to the East African region.
- **St. Lawrence of Rome (d. c. 258, feast day August 10)**, remembered for presenting the poor, the lame, and the infirm as the "Treasure of the Church", was sentenced to death by public execution on a slow-burning griddle; his cheerful martyrdom converted many in Rome.
- **St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226, feast day October 4)**, chose not to be ordained to the priesthood out of humility, the first recorded recipient of the stigmata, and founder of the religious order of the Franciscans.



PRAYER OF ORDINATION

Draw near, we pray, almighty God, giver of every grace, who apportion every order and assign every office. While remaining unchanged, you make all things new and, setting all things in order with everlasting providence, you make due provision for every age, through your Word, your Power, and your Wisdom, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

You grant that your Church, his Body, adorned with manifold heavenly graces, drawn together in the diversity of her members, and united by a wondrous bond through the Holy Spirit, should grow and spread forth to build up a new temple.

As once you chose the sons of Levi to minister in the former tabernacle, so now you establish three ranks of ministers in their sacred offices to serve your name.

Thus, in the first days of your Church, your Son's Apostles, led by the Holy Spirit, appointed seven men of good repute to help them in the daily ministry, so that they might devote themselves more fully to prayer and the preaching of the word. By prayer and the laying on of hands they entrusted to those chosen men the ministry of serving at table.

Look favorably also on these your servants, we pray, O Lord, whom we humbly dedicate to serve at your holy altars in the office of the Diaconate.

SEND FORTH THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON THEM, O LORD, WE PRAY, THAT THEY MAY BE STRENGTHENED BY THE GIFT OF YOUR SEVENFOLD GRACE TO CARRY OUT FAITHFULLY THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

May every evangelical virtue abound in them: unfeigned love, concern for the sick and the poor, unassuming authority, the purity of innocence, and the observance of spiritual discipline.

May your precepts shine forth in their conduct, that by the example of their manner of life they may inspire the imitation of your holy people. In offering the witness of a good conscience, may they remain firm and steadfast in Christ, so that, imitating your Son on earth, who came not to be served but to serve, they may be found worthy to reign with him in heaven.

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

*(from Ordination Prayer, Libreria Editrice Vaticana
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