

Current Church Documents

“The diaconate is conferred through a special outpouring of the Spirit (*ordination*), which brings about in the one receiving it a specific conformation to Christ, Lord and servant of all. Quoting a text of the *Constitutiones Ecclesiae Aegyptiacae, Lumen gentium* (n. 29) defines the laying on of hands on the deacon as being not “*ad sacerdotium sed ad ministerium*,” that is, not for the celebration of the eucharist, but for service. This indication, together with the admonition of Saint Polycarp, also taken up again by *Lumen gentium*, n. 29, outlines the specific theological identity of the deacon: as a participation in the one ecclesial ministry, he is a specific sacramental sign, in the Church, of Christ the servant. His role is to “express the needs and desires of the Christian communities” and to be “a driving force for service, or *diakonia*,” which is an essential part of the mission of the Church.”
([Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons](#), 5)

“The ministry of the deacon is characterized by the exercise of the three *munera* proper to the ordained ministry, according to the specific perspective of *diakonia*. In reference to the *munus docendi* the deacon is called to proclaim the Scriptures and instruct and exhort the people. This finds expression in the presentation of the Book of the Gospels, foreseen in the rite of ordination itself. The *munus sanctificandi* of the deacon is expressed in the solemn administration of baptism, in the custody and distribution of the Eucharist, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in presiding at the rites of funeral and burial and in the administration of sacramentals. This brings out how the diaconal ministry has its point of departure and arrival in the Eucharist, and cannot be reduced to simple social service. Finally, the *munus regendi* is exercised in dedication to works of charity and assistance and in the direction of communities or sectors of church life, especially as regards charitable activities. This is the ministry most characteristic of the deacon.”
([Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons](#), 9)

“The three contexts of the diaconal ministry, depending on circumstances, may absorb, to varying degrees, a large proportion of every deacon's activity. Together, however, they represent a unity in service at the level of divine Revelation: the ministry of the word leads to ministry at the altar, which in turn prompts the transformation of life by the liturgy, resulting in charity. ‘If we consider the deep spiritual nature of this *diaconia*, then we shall better appreciate the inter-relationship between the three areas of ministry traditionally associated with the diaconate, that is, the ministry of the word, the ministry of the altar and the ministry of charity. Depending on the circumstances, one or other of these may take on special importance in the individual work of a deacon, but these three ministries are inseparably joined in God’s plan for redemption.’ ”
([Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons](#), 39)