



St. Joseph	Mother of Sorrows	Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
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The three Catholic parishes in the city of Ashtabula enjoy a truly cooperative relationship. Many of our programs, policies, and Sacramental celebrations are done together, as is our support and dedication to Catholic education through Saints John and Paul School.

Parishes of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio

The Mission of the "Transition Team" is to preserve the integrity, autonomy, and traditions of each of the three Catholic Parishes in Ashtabula, while working to ensure that the faithful of the entire Catholic Community is pastorally well-served.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PERMANENT DEACONS

Who is a Deacon?

A deacon is an ordained minister of the Catholic Church. The Sacrament of Holy Orders has three "orders" of ordained ministers in the Church: bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Deacons are ordained as a sacramental sign to the Church and to the world of Christ, who came "to serve and not to be served." The entire Church is called by Christ to serve, and the deacon, in virtue of his sacramental ordination and through his various ministries, is to be a servant in a servant-Church.

What are these "various ministries" of the Deacon?

As ministers of Word, deacons proclaim the Gospel, preach, and teach in the name of the Church. As ministers of Sacrament, deacons baptize, lead the faithful in prayer, witness marriages, and conduct wake and funeral services. Deacons are "Ordinary" ministers of the Eucharist, and when serving at Mass will typically serve as a Eucharistic Minister. As ministers of Charity, deacons are leaders in identifying the needs of others, then marshaling the Church's resources to meet those needs. Deacons are also dedicated to eliminating the injustices or inequities that cause such needs. But no matter what specific functions a deacon performs, they flow from his sacramental identity. In other words, it is not only WHAT a deacon does, but WHO a deacon is, that is important.

Why do some deacons become priests?

Prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) there were seven (7) levels within the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and ordained ministers "ascended" from one office to another, culminating in ordination to the presbyterate, or priesthood. The Second Vatican Council, however, authorized the restoration of the diaconate as a *permanent* order of ministry, instead of a phase that priests passed through on their way to being ordained as priests. Although students for the priesthood are still ordained as "transitional" deacons prior to their ordination as priests, there are more than 13,000 deacons serving in the United States alone who minister in this Order permanently (hence, "Permanent Deacons"). There is no difference in the sacramental sign or the functions between these so-called "transitional" and "permanent deacons."

May married men be ordained deacons?

Yes. The Second Vatican Council decreed that the diaconate, when it was restored as a permanent order in the hierarchy, could be opened to “mature married men,” later clarified to mean men over the age of 35. This is in keeping with the ancient tradition of the Church, in which married men were ordained into ministry. Also in keeping with ancient practice is the expectation that while a married man may be ordained, an ordained man, if his wife should die, may not marry again without special permission.

Is a Deacon ordained for the Parish or the Diocese?

Whenever a person is ordained, he is to serve the diocesan Church. Deacons are no different from priests in this regard. Deacons are assigned by the bishop to ministries for which the bishop perceives a great need, and for which the deacon may have special gifts or talents. Most often, this will be within a parish setting, just as most priests serve in a parish. Once assigned to the parish, the deacon and any other clergy assigned to the parish minister under the immediate supervision of the pastor. However, this assignment may be changed at the request of the deacon or the initiative of the bishop.

How do I find out more about becoming a Deacon?

The best place to start is with your pastor, who can put you in touch with the Director of Deacons for your diocese. The process for becoming a Permanent Deacon involves three (3) years of classes on theology, the scriptures, homiletics, and other areas of Church teachings and ministry. It is also an intensive time of spiritual formation in the call to service in the Church. The Director can provide more specifics regarding the various requirements and processes for becoming a Deacon.

The director of the Permanent Diaconate for the Diocese of Youngstown is Msgr. John Zuraw. He can be reached at (330)744-8451 or jjzuraw@youngstowndiocese.org

In brief, Permanent Deacons are ordained members of the Church. By virtue of their ordination, they are authorized by the Church to:

1. *Carry the Book of the Gospels, proclaim the Gospel reading at Mass, and give the Homily (even if a priest is present);*
2. *Function as “Ordinary” Ministers of the Eucharist at Mass or in bringing Communion to the sick or homebound;*
3. *Preside at Prayer Services or Communion celebrations in the absence of a priest for Mass; and*
4. *Preside at the celebration of Baptisms, Marriages, and Funeral Liturgies (where there is no Mass).*

The ministries of Priest which a Deacon cannot do are:

1. *Celebrate the Mass;*
2. *Celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (i.e., hear confessions and give absolution);*
3. *Celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (previously known as the “Last Rites”)*

As all three parishes begin to share the pastoral ministry of the three Permanent Deacons currently assigned to St. Joseph Parish (Deacon Don Johnson, Deacon Rich Johnson, and Deacon Alan Prasek), it is our hope that you will welcome them as invaluable members of the Tri-Parish staff, and welcome their ministry when they are called upon to celebrate Baptisms, Marriages, and Funeral Liturgies (where there is no Mass). This is part of their ministry, and although it may not be familiar to some, this ministry is perfectly acceptable in the eyes of the Universal Church.