

February 14, 1977

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Concerning the role and function of deacon in the Armenian Church.

The order of deacon has its definite place in the hierarchical structure of the Armenian Church.

In the performance of the Divine Liturgy, the deacon has his distinct part in chanting, censuring, fan-bearing, and in general, assisting the celebrant priest. In the performances of religious ceremonies, sacraments and rites, the deacon's participation is very important. The ritual of the Armenian Church makes the participation of deacons essential.

There are various degrees in the order of deacons: there are those who are called stole-bearers or junior deacons who wear stoles which are the mark of the office of deacon and who generally perform the deacon's part; there are sub-deacons and senior deacons or arch-deacons, as they are called in the Armenian Church. The rank of senior deacon or arch-deacon is given only to those who have rendered many years service and are experienced in rituals in Parish Churches; also those who study in the seminaries for priesthood are ordained as deacons during their specialized theological studies.

The term deacon is presently applied to all those who generally assist the priest as Altar-servers. To be an Altar-server, it is essential to have the knowledge of the Armenian language, since the Liturgy is performed in the Armenian language, as well as some experience in the rituals, and a sufficiently good voice to chant.

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Without the assistance of deacons, the performance of the Liturgy will be incomplete in the Armenian Church, since the deacon's part cannot be left out.

In the performance of the Divine Liturgy, the assistance of several deacons is important, all with various functions to perform specially during major fast days.

There is always a great need for deacons in our parishes, and we are continually faced with the problem of providing enough such servers, qualified in language, music and Liturgy.

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian
Primate

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