



## From Deacon Mark Miller's Desk

**You may have noticed something a bit different** at Mass this summer. We have an additional [no, not a spare] person on the altar. We have a priest, an altar server, and a deacon, and a deacon. Yup, two deacons. They are the same, but different. We have Deacon Mark and Deacon Matt. Deacon Mark's vocation is to serve the Church as a deacon – something he's been doing for 34 years. Deacon Matt's vocation is to serve the Church as a priest.

Both men are ordained as deacons. It's a permanent state. Both will be deacons until their death. Only Deacon Mark, though, is called a permanent deacon. Deacon Matt is a "transitional" deacon; his diaconal vocation marks the "transition" to the priesthood – his "permanent" vocation.

There is no difference between our two deacons in terms of what they can do. This summer, both our deacons will proclaim the Gospel, announce the petitions, and distribute communion. They will both Baptize babies and conduct grade-side services.

Since this is his permanent vocation, Deacon Mark owns the vestment appropriate for a deacon, the dalmatic. It makes little sense for Deacon Matt to purchase dalmatics [he only needs them for one year], so you will notice he wears a stole; worn across his body from the left shoulder to his right side.

Deacons have been with the Church since its beginning. Acts 6:1-6 explains the need for and call of the first deacons. As early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the deacon as a permanent vocation began to fade as it became one of the steps leading to priestly ordination. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the deacon as a permanent vocation disappeared. It would remain that way until 1967, when Pope Paul VI reinstated, the diaconate as called for in the documents of Vatican II.

**This year marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Bishop Robert Baron and the Word on Fire ministry present a free, one-hour video biography on the saint. The program is [available here](https://bit.ly/deacon23) [bit.ly/deacon23]. There is also a Spanish version.

**No one is busier at this time of the year** than "the boys of summer." The poet Dylan Thomas came up with the phrase, and Roger Kahn adopted it for his 1972 book of the same name. Today, we have the boys and girls of summer, and they play more than baseball. We have T-ball, softball, and baseball for people of all ages. Our neighborhoods are filled with soccer and lacrosse players. Competitive swimming and diving are a summer staple.

Pope Francis is an ardent supporter of these sports programs. Since 2013 he's used sports over 40 times in audiences and letters. He sent videos for the opening of the World Cup and Superbowl LI. He sent special greetings to the athletes of the Olympics and Paralympic games. In 2020 he invited officials and players from the NBA to the Vatican to discuss the role of sports in addressing social justice.

In the 2018 document "Giving the Best of Yourself," the Vatican explained the value of sports.

"If sport runs the risk of being the occasion to divide a family and to diminish the sanctity of Sunday as a holy day to uphold, it also can help integrate a family with other families in the celebration of Sunday, not only in the liturgy but in the life of the community...such events must not excuse families from attending Mass and should also promote the life of the family within the community."

In Baptism, parents accept the responsibility of being their child's first teacher; Pope Francis carries this thought one step further. Parents are often the first teachers of sport for their children. "If parents are not directly teaching their children, they at least play the role of signing them up for recreational sports teams, encouraging them to try out for a competitive team, or transporting them to their practices and matches. They are often in the crowd cheering for their athlete. Parents educate their children about virtues and the human values inherent to sports through their support and participation. Suppose sport runs the risk of being the occasion to divide a family and diminish Sunday's sanctity as a holy day to uphold. In that case, it also can help integrate a family with other families in the celebration of Sunday, not only in the liturgy but in the life of the community."