

## THE DIACONATE: RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Books Recommended:

- Barnett, James Monroe. *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995. [Not yet reviewed.]
  - Brown, Rosalind. *Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World*. New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2005.
  - Ditewig, William T. *101 Questions & Answers on Deacons*. New York: Paulist Press, 2004.
  - Hall, Christine, Ed. *The Deacon's Ministry*. U.K.: Gracewing, 1991.
  - Keating, James. *The Heart of the Diaconate*. New York: Paulist Press, 1994.
  - Keating, James. *The Deacon Reader*. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.
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**Brown, Rosalind. *Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World*. New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2005.**

*Being a Deacon Today* seeks to offer a vision for the diaconate as a full-fledged order in the church, rather than as a mere stepping stone to the priesthood. Brown's work is both theological and practical, grounding the diaconate in the incarnation as well as rooting the work of the diaconate in the realities of church life. She discusses the Church, the world, and the margins as the main places of diaconal work; liturgy/worship, pastoral care, and teaching/catechesis as the primary elements shaping diaconal work; and praying, loving, and remembering as the foundational actions of the deacon.

Brown's book is strongest in casting a "big picture" vision of the diaconate. I found the categories she uses (listed above) to be particularly helpful in my own understanding of what it means to be and to minister as a deacon. I also found the book to be personally and spiritually refreshing; it made me more excited to serve as a deacon. Brown's own context is the Church of England, but much of the book is still relevant for a North American Anglican context. One potential weakness of the book is that Brown often uses quotes originally about the priesthood to support what she is arguing to be a distinctive of the diaconate; I came away slightly confused about what Brown believes to be the differences between the two offices. Perhaps that is simply due to the fact that "once a deacon, always a deacon," but those who are discerning between the two offices might want to take note (Brown also wrote a book on *Being a Priest Today*, and I imagine comparing the two might resolve this confusion).

I recommend this book for those seeking to understand more fully what it means to serve as a deacon, as well as for those in need of renewal and refreshment in their diaconal call.

~Deacon Amanda Holm Rosengren

**Ditewig, William T.. *101 Questions & Answers on Deacons*. New York: Paulist Press, 2004.**

*101 Questions & Answers on Deacons* (Paulist Press, 2004, 113 pg.) is, as one would imagine, is exactly what it says it is. The book is divided into seven sections which focus on aspects of the diaconate: 1) Deacons and the Diaconate, 2) The Formation of Deacons, 3) Living Life as a Deacon, 4) The Relationships of a Deacon, 5) The Deacon as Minister of the Word, 6) Deacons as Ministers of the Liturgy, and 7) Deacons as Apostolic Leaders in Service. If you are looking for deep theology of the diaconate, this is not the book for you. But if you are interested in getting an accessible “fly-over” of what the diaconate looks like, this format is perfect. The questions addressed range from the common (i.e.: “How does a deacon balance, family, job, and ministry?”), to the practical (i.e.: “What liturgical vestments do deacons wear, and what is their significance?”), to the functional (i.e.: “What diocesan offices are open to deacons?”). Written to a lay audience, the curious reader thumbing through the table of contents will undoubtedly find something of interest to investigate. Each question has about a paragraph response. These kinds of books were organized to be read cover to cover, but they also serve as a helpful and accessible resource for all sorts of questions about the diaconate that can be looked up when the occasion arises.

The book is written from an unapologetically Roman Catholic perspective for lay Catholics to understand the revival of the diaconate in their church after Vatican II. As Anglicans, we have much more in common with Roman Catholics in our understanding of the diaconate than not. However, there is perhaps up to a third of the questions that specifically apply to the Roman Catholic context (i.e.: What did Pope Paul VI mean when he referred to deacons as ‘the driving force of the Church’s service?’ or “I always thought that members of the Catholic clergy had to be celibate. Why can a married man be a deacon?”) Even in these questions, the protestant can make relevant application for her context. So, while not all the questions will refer and address an Anglican context, the protestant reader walks away from the book with a broader and more ‘catholic’ appreciation of the diaconate.

This book is highly recommended especially for new deacons, spouses of deacons, and priests hoping to understand how the Roman Catholic diaconate is broadly understood. And while not all the questions addressed apply in an Anglican context, knowing something of the diaconate from the Catholic context can only but enrich our own understanding and embodiment of this ancient and apostolic office in the present.

~Deacon Ben Moore

**Hall, Christine, Ed. *The Deacon's Ministry*. U.K.: Gracewing, 1991.**

“*The Deacon's Ministry* is a collection of essays by a variety of authors from differing church traditions. They have in common the conviction that the diaconate has a vital part to play in clarifying the meaning of the ministry of the whole Church, ordained and lay. It is offered to the Church, in the hope that it will stimulate and encourage reflection on an Order which has been subjected to neglect for centuries.”

This synopsis of the book which appears on the back cover is a good general summary of the text. The authors of the essays hold a variety academic and/or ministerial positions and represent varied Christian traditions. Some of the topics include the history of the Diaconate, the pastoral role of the Deacon, the liturgical ministry of the Deacon, and the educational ministry of Deacons. In addition, there are essays about the Diaconate in the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Church.

The contemporary material in the book is a little bit dated. The essays were written at a time when the Church of England was wrestling with implications of the newly formulated Diaconate (especially as it pertained to women) and before the vote that allowed women to be ordained as Presbyters. This made some of the parts a little difficult to get through, and I found myself skimming over some parts of it.

However, I found the historical references very interesting. For example:

“The letters of St. Ignatius, c. AD 107, which he wrote on his way to martyrdom in Rome, reveal for the first time within each local church the clearly distinguishable orders of bishop, elders/presbyters and deacons, and that these deacons had a high place in his regard. Writing to the Magnesians, Ignatius calls them ‘my special favourites’, to the Philadelphians ‘my fellow-slaves’ and to the Trallians he says that the deacons of the mysteries of Jesus Christ do not serve mere food and drink, but minister to God’s Church.”

Even though there is only one essay specifically devoted to the history of the diaconate, several of the articles also mention important historical aspects of the Diaconate that I had not previously read about, such as that some nuns in the historic Armenian Church were also ordained as Deacons and wore a Deacon’s stole as a part of their habit.

Reading this book made me so much more aware of the rich history of the diaconate and the importance of the Order to the Church from its very beginning. Each section also has a wealth of footnotes for further exploration. Overall, I would recommend this book as a worthwhile resource.

~Deacon Sarah W. Anderson

**Keating, James. *The Heart of the Diaconate*. New York: Paulist Press, 1994.**

“The Heart of the Diaconate: Communion with the Servant Mysteries of Christ” by James Keating does exactly what it sets out to do - recapturing the heart and importance of the diaconate. Although written for an American, Catholic, and male audience, there is much of the book that transfers to an Anglican context. The reader must wade through a few aspects that are strictly meant for the intended audience (such as the question of celibacy, the assumption that only men are called as deacons, and some of the Roman Catholic structure for Holy Orders), but outside of these, the book offers a deep well focused on spiritual formation for those considering ordination to the diaconate and encouragement and conviction for current deacons.

The book is broken up into three sections: *Calling, Formation and Ordination*, and *Ministry*. In each of these sections, the focus is not on what a deacon must do, but on who a deacon must be, someone fully committed to Christ, leaving behind the temptations of our culture and living in the reality of the Gospel in order to share this message with the world. The book also does a great job of distinguishing the role of the Priest and Deacon, emphasizing the importance of both. While the Priest (especially in a Catholic context) has specific roles that they do and are often seen as more valuable and needed in the church, the Deacon, according to Keating, has an important role of sacramentally embodying the scriptural truth that apart from Christ we can do nothing. The deacon must embody the servant mysteries of Christ, live this out in their own lives while loving and serving those God places before them.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone considering ordination or currently ordained, whether as a deacon or priest. It draws the reader into a deeper reality of Holy Orders and the diaconate specifically. It encourages the deacon in the high calling of loving Christ above all else and to live out of the transformative power of the gospel to love and serve others.

~Deacon Katie Gayle

**Keating, James. *The Deacon Reader*. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.**

*The Deacon Reader* (Paulist Press, 2006, 280 pg.) is an anthology of essays edited by John Keating. Fourteen essays have been organized into three sections: *Historical and Theological Foundations for Diaconal Identity*, *Pastoral Foundations for Diaconal Identity*, and *Sociological Foundations for Diaconal Identity and Marriage*. Each section affords readers a "springboard" into a variety of theological perspectives. The book is decidedly "Anglo-Catholic" in its persuasion. The contributors serve as deacons in local parishes, produce scholarly work as academics, minister as priests or bishops in their respective dioceses, and serve as laity.

*The Deacon Reader* is excellent, but suffers from a common blemish in anthologies of this scale and ambition. Limited real estate prevents authors from plumbing the depths of their theses to the degree that some readers might anticipate. At best, *The Deacon Reader* is an sterling introduction, an invitation to explore the nuances of the diaconate, church history, and practicum in greater detail. A useful "Theological Bibliography" is included for readers who wish to explore the themes of this text in greater detail.

Part One: *Historical and Theological Foundations for Diaconal Identity* offers a robust survey of the historical development of the diaconate from Stephen to the present day. Part Two: *Pastoral Foundations for Diaconal Identity* is recommended for readers interested in pragmatic approaches to the diaconate. Part Three: *Sociological Foundations for Diaconal Identity and Marriage* explores the impact of the diaconate on the larger community, the church, family, and the deacon's spouse. Fortunately, *The Deacon Reader* is not merely a cerebral exercise. Without exception, every author in this anthology invigorates his and her subject with a passion clearly born out of their own sense of calling to ministry and the church. They are not simply theorists of the discipline, academic sophists, but sincere practitioners.

*The Deacon Reader* is highly recommended for both seasoned deacons and for those just starting the discernment process.

~Deacon Jeremiah Webster