

**Guide for preparation for ordination to the Diaconate in the
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR)**

Ordination to the Diaconate is a wonderful, yet serious and important step, in an Orthodox Christian man's life. Spiritually, it is extremely rewarding. In reality, it takes a lot of time and dedication away from home and family life when preparing for a service, and then again while participating in a service, and in parish life in general. It can be said that it becomes a new way of life for a man and his family to serve God's Church. In the beginning, serving as a newly ordained deacon can be very intimidating and stressful for a man and his family. Just as it is important to prepare for a service as a deacon, it is equally, if not more important, to prepare for ordination to the diaconate. This document will serve as a guide as to how to prepare from a practical perspective for ordination, and for service as a deacon.

Once you have received a blessing from your spiritual father and ruling Bishop for ordination to the diaconate, ***it is strongly recommended to immediately begin working with your parish priest/deacon, or the senior deacon in the diocese.***

- Obtain ALL necessary service books—Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, and the All Night Vigil, including a commemoration book which includes a moleben and a panihida. Perhaps also a book of prayers to prepare for Holy Communion, if you don't have one.
- Look thoroughly through all the service books, reading out loud the litanies and the red instructional print. Pay attention to your diction and volume of your voice. It is important to accommodate the volume of your voice to the size of the church you are serving in. You should be able to know the service books so well that when you open them up, you know exactly where you are and understand where you need to go. Each petition in each service book should be practiced not less than 100 times before ordination.
- Begin practicing how to cense with a censer under the guidance of your priest/deacon. This includes arm position, swing, and when to bow. When censuring sets of 3, think of it as an off-beat waltz. During a waltz, the beat is on "1"—ONE, two, three, etc. When bowing during censuring, the bow is on "2"—one, TWO, three, etc.
- Learn how to hold the orarion when intoning a litany. The orarion should be held at eye level. Holding too high, or too low, is improper. The orarion is symbolic of the wing of an angel, calling the people to sincere focused prayer to God. And this is the ministry of the deacon in a nutshell: to lead the people in their prayers to God together as a spiritual family.
- Begin to memorize the dialogue when coming up to the priest/Bishop to receive Holy Communion. At the same time, learn the dialogue between a priest/Bishop and deacon at the beginning of the liturgy, during the small entrance, and after the great entrance. Consider the following question: when will I be unable to hold the service book due to other duties? Then memorize those parts that you will need to speak during those times.
- With your priest/deacon, learn the movements of a deacon, as well as where to stand, such as small entrance, censuring order (which will be listed below), litanies, doing the sign

of the Cross with the Star over the diskos while holding your orarion during “Победную песнь... (Singing the triumphant hymn...)”

- When preparing the Gospel reading, it is much easier to find it by its “beginning/зачало”. They are all in numerical order for each evangelist. It is more difficult to search the reading by chapter and verses. Familiarize yourself in great detail with the Gospel book, just as you did with the Epistle book when preparing to become a Reader.
- Just like preparing the Gospel reading, it is even easier to find the epistle reading by its “beginning/зачало”. All the epistle readings are in numerical order from “1” to the “300’s”. For example, if the reading is to the Romans, beginning 111, chapter “13” and verses “1-10”, do not waste your time searching in what part of the epistle book the Romans are, then trying to find Chapter 13 and verses 1-10. Just look for beginning 111, as they are all in numerical order as it was stated, and once you find it, you will see that it will be to the Romans with the associated chapter and verses.
- Make sure you obtain a Russian style black ryassa and have it available in the Church to receive a blessing from the Bishop to wear it upon the conclusion of Liturgy on the day of your ordination.
- It is highly recommended that once you receive your service books, to stand in the Altar during the services and follow along to understand what is occurring and what/how to do it. Some prepare by even taking notes in pencil directly in the sluzhebnik.

Order of censings

First, receive a blessing from the priest/Bishop for the censer by crossing yourself either at the High Place or in front of the Royal Doors, bowing to them, raising the censer, and saying the dialogue. The dialogue is stated in the service book at the proskomide.

Great censings

1. Front of Altar table
2. Then each additional side of the Altar table. If it is Liturgy, go to step 3. If it is All Night Vigil/Vespers, go to step 4.
3. Table of Oblation where proskomedia has been prepared
4. High Place 3x.
5. Right side of High Place and rest of Altar (note we do not cense those standing present)
6. Left side of High Place and rest of Altar (note we do not cense those standing present)
7. Cross behind the Altar table (if one is there)
8. If Bishop is present in the Altar, him 9x (3 sets of 3). If no Bishop, then the serving priest 3x.
9. Clergy/altar servers on right side. (Do not overdo it here – 3 censings on each side is fine)
10. Clergy/altar servers on left side. Then walk out the left (north) door.
11. Royal doors 3x
12. Christ 3x. Then the rest of the iconostasis on the right side.
13. Virgin Mary 3x. Then the rest of the iconostasis on the left side. If no Bishop in the middle of the Church, go to step 15.

14. If the Bishop is standing in the middle of the Church—him 9x (3 sets of 3) then go to step 15.
15. Right kliros, left kliros, choir loft (if there is one), then the people, beginning with the right side and ending on the left side, following the shape of an arc.
16. Walk down. If there is a festal icon in the middle of the Church, go to step 17. If not, go to step 18.
17. Festal icon 3x
18. Start with the first icon and make your way around the entire Church, censuring the icons and the people. Once you finish at the icon at the bottom of the stairs on the left side, walk up the stairs.
19. Royal Doors 3x, Christ 3x, Virgin Mary 3x. If there is a Bishop in the middle of the Church, him 3x, then turn around, cross yourself, and bow to him, and enter the Altar through the right (south) door. If no bishop, then just walk in after the censuring.
20. Front of Altar table.
21. Go to High Place. Cense either the Bishop or the serving priest 3x. Turn around, cross yourself with your right hand while you hold the censer with your left, bow to him.

Small censuring for epistle reading

1. Steps 1-7 to begin with as in the great censuring.
2. Royal Doors will be open so cense each door 3x from inside the Altar. Walk to the ambo through the Royal Doors. As we exit the altar, we turn around towards the icon of XC (turn to your left to face the iconostas).
3. Royal Door space 3x, Christ 3x, Virgin Mary 3x
4. If there is a festal icon, walk down and cense it 3x. Then go to step 5. If no festal icon, go straight to step 5.
5. Walk back in through the Royal Doors. Cense Bishop 9x. If no Bishop, senior priest 3x, then rest of priests on right side. Then rest of priests on left side.
6. Deacons/altar servers on right side
7. Deacons/altar servers on left side
8. Walk out through the Royal Doors. Cense the reader reading the epistle 3x.
9. Right kliros, left kliros, choir loft (if there is one), then the people, beginning with the right side and ending on the left side, following the shape of an arc.
10. Royal Doors 3x, Christ 3x, Virgin Mary 3x.
11. Walk in through the Royal Doors. Cense the front of the Altar table 3x
12. Bishop/senior priest 3x
13. Cross yourself with your right hand while you hold the censer with your left and bow to Bishop/senior priest/hand off censer.

Small censuring during Cherubic hymn

1. Steps 1-7 as during censuring during epistle reading.
2. Walk out through the Royal Doors

3. Step 9-13 as during censing during epistle reading.

Censing after the consecration of the Gifts during “Достойно есть.../It is Truly meet...”

The Bishop/senior priest will first cense the Gifts/front of the Altar table. Then....

1. Remaining 3 sides of the Altar table (cense 3 times for each side)
2. High place. If the Bishop is serving, go to step 3. If no Bishop, cense the right side of the High Place and rest of the Altar. Then the left side of the High Place and rest of the Altar. Then go to step 3.
3. Bishop 9x/senior priest 3x
4. Priests on right side. Priests on left side.
5. Deacons/altar servers on right side
6. Deacons/altar servers on left side
7. Front of Altar table
8. Walk up to the High Place
9. Bishop/senior priest 3x
10. Turn around, cross yourself with your right hand while you hold the censer with your left, and bow to Bishop/senior priest

Vesting as a deacon

It is stated in the service books how to vest as a deacon and what prayers to read while you vest.

- Neatly fold your vestments and receive a blessing from the Bishop/priest. The dialogue as to what to say is in the service books.
- During the liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, you say “Let us pray to the Lord” and then read the prayer for that vestment. For the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, all you say is “Let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mercy” for every vestment. The prayers are NOT read at the presanctified. For All Night Vigil/Vespers/Matins/moleben/panihida, nothing is said for each vestment, or you can say “Let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mercy” for each vestment.
- After you are done vesting for the liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, wash your hands and read the prayer for the washing of the hands. For the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, wash your hands **WITHOUT** reading the prayer.
- The rules for vesting and washing of the hands are all written in red print for all 3 liturgies in the service books.

Unlike secular jobs where one has to constantly stay current with the latest trends/techniques, the services do not change. They are a constant. With continuous serving, repetition, and practice, only then will you be able to learn the service of a deacon better. Use your parish priest/deacon or diocesan senior deacon as a reference. Do not be afraid to ask questions. We are all here to help one another. May your service to the Church as a deacon be just as rewarding as it has been for those who came before us, and may the Lord grant them and us His Kingdom.