

St. Stephen



Jesus had gone up to heaven. The Holy Spirit had come to the apostles to help to spread the Good News. Every day more and more people came to them wishing to become followers of Christ. They formed a community where everyone helped each other. The apostles were very busy teaching and caring for the people. They needed help, particularly to serve each day's food supply.

"Let us appoint seven helpers to work in the community." Everyone was pleased with the idea.

"Stephen. Philip. Prochorus. Nicanor. Timon. Parmenas. and

Nicolaus have been chosen,” the apostles announced. Then they put their hands on each one of the seven and said prayers for them. The seven did their work well.

Stephen was blessed by God in a special way. He performed many miracles. He was also a very good speaker and teacher. His old friends who were not Christians started arguing with him. But Stephen spoke so well about God and Jesus that his old friends were jealous. They decided to get Stephen into a lot of trouble. They paid some men to tell the Jewish Council that Stephen said wrong things about God and Moses.

Stephen was arrested and put on trial. The false witnesses told their lies and the Council members got angry at Stephen. When it was Stephen’s turn to speak, he told the truth. But the Council was afraid of Stephen because he was so holy and blessed by God. They took Stephen out of the city and had him stoned to death. It was a terrible way to die! But Stephen loved Jesus so much he would not save himself by turning against Jesus. Instead, Stephen began to pray. “Lord Jesus, take my spirit.” And then he knelt down and said, “Lord! Do not remember this sin against these men who are killing me!” and he died.

Stephen became the first martyr. (A martyr is someone who is killed because he or she will not give up believing in Jesus.) After Stephen’s death, the Council and other leaders of the land of Judea tried to wipe out Christianity by killing the followers of Christ. Christians had to hide their religion to keep from being killed. Many were killed, but many more became followers of Jesus. The persecutors could not stop Christianity from growing and spreading all over the world!

Our church still remembers Stephen. We call him the protomartyr. He is a saint whom we mention every Sunday in church. He is the patron saint of all altar servers, especially the deacons!

The Priest:

Of the Mother of God the holy virgin Mary, and of John the Baptist, of the protomartyr Stephen, and of all the saints, to be mindful in this holy sacrifice we beseech the Lord.

Hi! My name is Joseph. As you can see, I'm deacon. This is the *shabig* (robe) I wear when serving in the church. This long piece of material I wear over my shoulder is called a stole. The *shabig* is like my uniform and the stole tells my rank. It means I am allowed to do certain things in the service because I have participated in the sacrament of ordination to become a sub-deacon.

When I was a little boy about your age, I used to love to watch the altar servers. I used to think how nice it would be to hold a candle or do the poorvar (cense). When I got a little older, I asked my priest if I could become an acolyte. He said I could if I came to church every Sunday one hour before church started to take lessons from the deacon. I agreed and started to learn what I had to do. It was more than just holding a candle and standing still! I had to learn what the Divine Liturgy was all about and how it went so that I would know when to do what!

Little by little I learned how to hold the candle properly. Then I learned to say some of the psalms. I listened carefully and tried to memorize what the choir sang, what the deacon said, and what the priest said. I received the four minor orders and took turns with the other acolytes serving at the altar each week. When I was about 14, I started learning the sub-deacon's job. When I was 17 years old, I was ordained a sub-deacon.

Now I am allowed to read the Gospel, do the poorvar, light candles and care for the church, sing the litanies, bring the Gospel book around the altar, bring the wine and bread to the altar, and direct the worshippers. I can assist with most of the sacraments. And I even help train new acolytes!

I always loved being part of the worship service. The badarak is still my favorite



service, but I had to learn other services too. The morning service is a nice, quiet service that I try to be in church for each Sunday. The services during Lent are sort of sad, but they are very special in their own way too. Sometimes I help the priest at a funeral or a wedding or a baptism. I even go with the priest when he visits people who are sick once in a while.

I think someday I might want to become a full deacon, then maybe a priest! I pray and ask God if that is what he wants for me. One day I'll know his answer. For now, I'll continue to go to college and serve my church as a sub-deacon.

A Deacon's Job

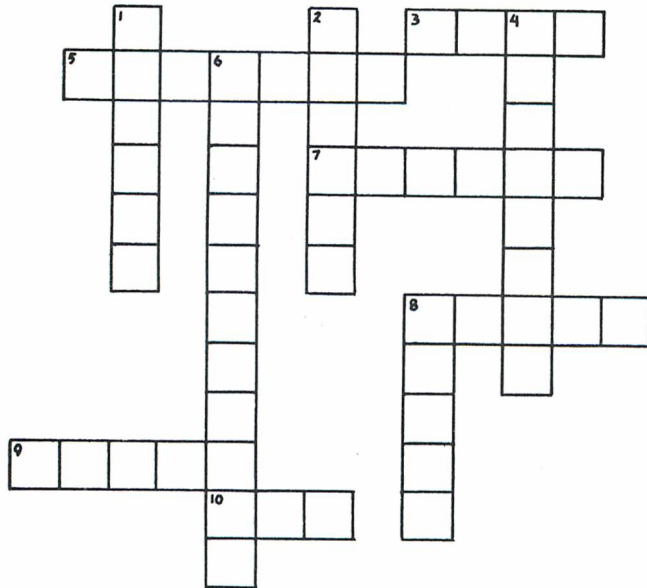
What were the jobs a deacon did in St. Stephen's time? What are the jobs a deacon does now? Put S before those jobs which deacons did in Stephen's time. Put N before those jobs which deacons do now. Put SN if the jobs were done then and are still done now.

- ___ Serve the Christian community.
- ___ Do poorvar (cense).
- ___ Tell others about Jesus.
- ___ Teach others.
- ___ Direct the worshippers.
- ___ Help the apostles.

deacon
SARGAVAK
սարկաւակ



St. Stephen
SOORP SDEPANOS
Սուրբ Ստեփանոս



Across

- 3. When we ____ we talk to God.
- 5. ____ was the first deacon.
- 7. Jesus ____ started Christianity.
- 8. Stephen could ____ well.
- 9. Stephen was the ____ martyr.
- 10. Stephen said ____ to God.

Down

- 1. Stephen was ____ to death for believing in Jesus.
- 2. The apostles made him a ____ to help serve the Christian community.
- 4. The ____ put their hands on Stephen to make him a deacon.
- 6. Because Stephen was the first person to die for believing in Jesus, he is called the ____ .
- 8. Stephen's job as deacon was to ____ .

Stephen's Stole: Stephen was a very special person. In this list are some of the words that could describe Stephen. Write the words *you* think describe Stephen on the picture of a stole.

bossy helpful trusting loving loyal brave afraid happy
 forgiving martyr prayerful

