



# SERVING THE PEOPLE OF GOD AS A DEACON



# THE DEACON

**By ordination a Deacon receives the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit which cannot be lost. This reality configures him to Christ in a particular way, consecrates him, and gives him a special share in Christ's mission.**

## THE DEACON'S MINISTRY

The Deacon serves the People of God in the Ministries of Altar, Word, and Charity. He exercises his ministry in accord with the canonical mission given to him by the Bishop.

### Altar and Word

As a Minister of the Altar, he prepares the Sacrifice and gives the Lord's Body and Blood to the community of believers.

As a Minister of the Word, he proclaims the Gospel and may preach the Homily to God's people.

It is also his duty, at the Bishop's discretion, to bring God's Word to the believer and unbeliever alike, to preside over public prayers, to baptise, to assist at marriages and to bless them, to give Viaticum to the dying and to lead the rites of burial.

### Charity

Works of charity may include evangelisation, promoting the lay apostolate, pastoral visiting, marriage preparation, social outreach, the promotion of vocations, ecumenical endeavour, and administration.

The Deacon will not necessarily be involved in every aspect of pastoral ministry, but will be well placed to respond to local need. His work should be seen holistically, the service of care being linked with the service of love and praise at the Altar. In the exercise of his ministry, he must bear in mind the need to strengthen the bond between clergy and laity and to make the Word of God, the Church, and her worship relevant to a secular world.

In his entire ministry, he is helped by the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

# CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE

In England and Wales, a candidate for the Permanent Diaconate, whether married or not, may be admitted to the diaconate only when he has completed his 35th year of age. He will usually be under 65 years of age at the time of ordination, although the Bishop may exercise his own discretion in terms of age.

He should be a mature man of proven character and good health, acceptable to the priests and laity of the parish. It must be evident that he can work collaboratively with others. He will need a living faith, a life of prayer and a spirit of charity. Humility with qualities of leadership, sound judgement and understanding are

essential. He will need the time to enable him to undertake the required studies.

Continual residence in the Diocese and financial independence are also required.

An unmarried man embraces a lifelong commitment to celibacy. He must understand what this means and be ready to accept it. A married man must be living in a stable marriage. His wife must consent to the Deacon's Ministry and actively support it. Together they should consider, with sensitivity, the attitude of any children and the effects the diaconate will have on their family.

If he believes that his family could be adversely affected, then the application should not be made.







## APPLICATION AND SELECTION

The Director for Permanent Diaconate Formation is appointed by the Bishop and has responsibility for forwarding applicants for selection and providing for their formation.

It is the responsibility of the local clergy and people to encourage and foster vocations to the Permanent Diaconate, and even to approach suitable candidates, asking them to reflect upon serving the People of God in this ministry.

If a man believes that he may have a vocation to the Permanent Diaconate, he should discuss this with a priest or deacon who know

him well. He must have the support of his parish priest and then make formal application to the Director for the Permanent Diaconate, whose details can be found on the diocesan website and in the diocesan Directory, to begin the selection process.

The Director will arrange for a member of the Diaconate Formation Team to visit the prospective candidate at home, to meet with him and his family. If he chooses to move forward with the application, then the Director will explain the application process.



# SPIRITUAL FORMATION

During the course of his journey towards making an application, the prospective candidate will be assisted in the choice of a Spiritual Director, who will guide him in his spiritual life.

He must attend Mass and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently. He should begin to form the practice of praying the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church, to which he will be obliged after ordination.

The Spiritual Director will guide him in the practice of personal prayer and meditation and spiritual reading, and counsel him on all spiritual matters. He should see his Spiritual Director at least once a month.

## **Period of Discernment**

The first year after selection is spent in guided discernment, ideally shared with his wife. This currently includes four formal days of input and a weekend retreat. This is a key aspect to be shared with his Spiritual Director as part of his ongoing discernment.

## **Theological and Pastoral Formation**

This aspect of formation takes place over a three-year period and is based upon a full day of lectures and practical inputs (approximately monthly) and personal guided study. Monthly Formation Days are arranged by the Inter-diocesan Committee for the Permanent Diaconate.

Personal study is guided by a personal tutor who will be allocated to him by the Director, in accordance with the programme that he is following. He will be expected to see his personal tutor monthly. The tutor will give practical guidance and act as a point of reference with parish clergy and the Diocesan Director.

There will be two residential weekends each year for study purposes, and an annual retreat.

The theological element of his studies will comprise of Theology, Scripture, Liturgy, Church History, Canon Law, and other subjects pertaining to the Deacon's ministry.

# MINISTRIES AND ORDINATION

Towards the end of the year of guided discernment, and after discussion with the Director of Diaconate Formation, application should be made to the Bishop requesting admission to Candidacy. A meeting with the Bishop is a necessary element in this application.

After the completion of the first year of his Theological and Pastoral Formation, he will apply to be accepted for the Ministry of Lector. As part of the application process references will be taken by the Bishop.

After a further year, he will apply for the Ministry of Acolyte. As part of the application process references will be taken by the Bishop.

At all stages of the process, references are required from the Dean of Studies, the student's tutor, and parish priest.

Towards the end of his third year of formation, the time will come for the candidate to make formal application by personal letter to the Bishop, offering himself for ordination. The Bishop will meet with the candidate as part of this application.



## APPOINTMENT

At ordination the Deacon is admitted to the clerical state and incardinated into the Diocese. He promises obedience to the Bishop and is given faculties for the exercise of diaconal ministry in accordance with Canon Law.

The Bishop will appoint the Deacon to his own deanery, and he will usually be based in his home parish. The Bishop may ask him to take on an additional role in the life of the Diocese, always following consultation with the Deacon.

"I URGE YOU TO LIVE A  
LIFE WORTHY OF THE  
CALLING YOU HAVE  
RECEIVED."

Ephesians 4:1







## DO YOU FEEL CALLED TO THE DIACONATE MINISTRY?

**If you believe you have a call to the Diaconate, whether as a single or married man, please contact the diocesan Director of Diaconate Formation:**

**Deacon Tim Murrill**

**E: [tim.murrill@abdiocese.org.uk](mailto:tim.murrill@abdiocese.org.uk)**



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

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