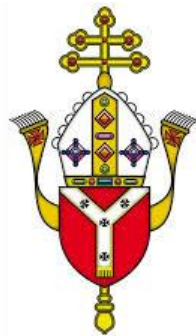


The Permanent Diaconate
in the
Archdiocese of Westminster



A Handbook

including
Guidelines for priest and deacon
working together

Aug 2020

This document draws heavily upon the Handbook issued by the Archdiocese of Birmingham in 2006 to whom we are grateful for permission to adapt their document for use in the Archdiocese of Westminster.

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ARCHDIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER

HANDBOOK ON PERMANENT DIACONATE

FOREWORD

I welcome the publication of this Handbook on The Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Westminster. I thank all who have worked hard in its preparation.

The purpose of the Handbook is to offer both a vision of the permanent diaconate and practical guidance about the role of the permanent deacon.

The Handbook will be updated from time to time but for now it is to be regarded as the agreed guidelines for all concerned with the Diaconate in the Archdiocese. Both practice and understanding develop. This format will enable new insight or practice to be inserted in the future. This is an important point as we strive to be responsive both to our experience and to the promptings of the Church.

I hope, then, that this publication is both useful and stimulating. The emergence of the permanent diaconate as a feature of the life of the Archdiocese is full of potential. To realise that potential will require our continuing reflection, enthusiasm and prayer.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols



✠ Vincent Nichols

Archbishop of Westminster

27 September 2009

Feast of St Vincent de Paul

PART 1 – The Restoration of the Permanent Diaconate

‘For the nurturing and constant growth of the people of God, Christ the Lord instituted in the Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body. From the apostolic age the diaconate has had a clearly outstanding position among these ministries. It has always been held in great honour by the Church.’ (Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Ad Pascendum*, 1972)

There has been a tendency to treat the permanent diaconate as a new idea. This is not so. Far from being an invention of the Second Vatican Council, the permanent diaconate has been a ministry in the Church from New Testament times. Whilst there is a certain ambiguity surrounding the classic Scriptural reference in Acts¹ which is seen as the foundational text for the diaconal ministry, deacons have been with the Church from the beginning and are essential contributors to a full realisation of the Church’s ordained ministry.

Conveniently, the Office of Readings provides us with those important texts from the Fathers especially St. Ignatius of Antioch which, tell us that within seventy years or so of Christ’s resurrection the structure of the church had so developed that it could be said that *‘no church was worthy of the name without the threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon’*.² In the re-establishment of the *permanent* diaconate the Church is saying to us that we must redevelop that structure and its ways of working.

Whilst by the seventh century the order of deacon was, with notable exceptions³, rarely entered into as a permanent state but had become reduced to an order passed through en route for priesthood, it was still part of the hierarchical order of the Church and never ceased to exist. The Council of Trent attempted to restore a permanent diaconate, but it was the Second Vatican Council and the Pope elected during the course of that Council, Paul VI, that managed to achieve this.

‘The permanent diaconate should be restored, as a driving force for the Church’s service (diakonia) towards the local Christian communities, and as a sign or sacrament of the Lord Jesus himself, who “came not to be served but to serve”. These words recall the ancient tradition of the Church as expressed by the early Fathers such as Ignatius of Antioch, who says that deacons are *‘ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ ... ministers of the Church of God’* (*Trallians*, 2.3).” (Pope Paul VI – Apostolic Letter *Ad Pascendum*, 1972)

The restoration of the permanent diaconate has presented the Church today with a new challenge. In the context of our own limited experience we have to develop a clear and shared understanding of the deacon’s role. In this country the restored diaconate has now been operating for many years, but in the Diocese of Westminster, with a few exceptions, only since 2005. Now is an opportune moment to reflect on it as an integral part of the ordained ministry and put forward a vision and give guidance for the future.

¹ Acts 6:1-6

² Prayer of the Church, vol. III p.616. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Trallians

³ St. Francis of Assisi was a permanent deacon in 13th Century

PART 2 – The Vision for the Permanent Diaconate

1 The Church

In order to have a clear vision of the permanent diaconate, we must begin with an understanding of the mind of Christ as expressed in the Church.

a) The early Christian hymn used by St Paul in his Letter to the Philippians takes us to the heart of the mystery of Christ. 'His state was divine' yet 'he emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave' and then 'was humbler yet'. (Philippians 2:6-11). These phrases fill out St Paul's injunction that in our minds 'we must be the same as Christ Jesus' and echo the words of Jesus found in Matthew's Gospel: 'anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' (Mt 20:28)

b) This same mystery of Christ is continued in the life of the Church which he 'established and ever sustains' as 'a visible organisation through which he communicates truth and grace to all' (*Lumen Gentium* 8).

c) A clear and contemporary vision of the Church is given by Pope Benedict in his Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*.

*The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.*⁴

The emphasis on the work of charity given in this Encyclical Letter is particularly relevant to our reflection on the diaconate. In recent decades the work of practical charity has been disconnected in many ways from the expression of faith in God and in Christ. It is vital that we work to re-establish that link, not only because it discloses the true selfless nature of charity but also because charity is a touchstone of authentic faith.

d) This three-fold responsibility belongs to all the faithful. Through baptism each one is united with Christ and so shares in the mission given to Christ by the Father, the mission of proclamation, prayer and charity. The exercise of these responsibilities is the key characteristic of the Christian way of life: letting the Gospel be known by what is said and done (martyria); praising God in prayer and liturgy (Leitourgia); serving those in need (diakonia). These activities are proper to every baptised person.

e) The 'diakonia' spoken of by the Pope is an essential dimension of the 'mission' aspect of our life. The source and inspiration of that service given in the name of Christ is our 'communion' in the life of God and with each other. Pope Benedict develops the link between 'communion' and 'diakonia' when

⁴ *Deus Caritas Est* (DCE) 25

he states: 'If you see charity, you see the Trinity', and continues by explaining that it is the Holy Spirit which transforms the heart of the ecclesial community to be a witness to the love of the Father. The love which comes from God is the source of the desire in the Church to attend to the suffering and needs of people today.⁵

f) This service needs to be an organised expression of the life and faith of the Church. It is, of course, first and foremost a responsibility of each individual follower of Christ. But it is also a responsibility for the entire Church at every level: parish, diocese, universal Church. The love which the Church is to practice needs to be organised if it is to be an ordered service to the community.⁶

In summary, the 'diakonia' of the Church is the criterion of the genuineness of the faith of the Church. The Church gains credibility when the corporal and spiritual works of mercy are performed. The Church loses credibility when they are not.

2 The Ordained Ministry

Within the life of the Church a key role is played by the ordained ministry. This, too, needs to be understood.

a) The service offered through the Sacrament of Holy Order is always for the benefit of the priestly, prophetic and kingly character of all the baptised. Holy Orders do not detract from the calling of the lay faithful, but seek to serve that calling, giving it sacramental expression so that it can be nurtured. Priests and deacons in a parish are there to enable the faithful to live the life of communion and mission. The work of prayer, witness and service is properly that of every baptised person. The ordained ministers serve that work. They are present not to carry it out on behalf of their parishioners, but to lead, in service, the entire community.

b) Priests and deacons, then, receive the particular sacramental grace of embodying and serving the deepest nature of the Church. This means that priests and deacons, as ordained ministers of the Church, are public witnesses to the life of the Church in its calling to worship God in prayer and liturgy, to proclaim the truth of the Gospel in contemporary society and to serve those in need. They must both serve the work of the Church carried out by the baptised and also embody it themselves.

c) The particular dimension of 'diakonia', the service of those in need, is integral to the ordained ministry, to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed, the bishop has primary responsibility for the Church's charitable activities, 'the programme set forth in the Acts of the Apostles (cf 2:42-44).' (*Deus Caritas Est* 32) These responsibilities are exercised in cooperation with the priests and the deacons.

⁵ DCE 19

⁶ DCE 20

3 The Deacon

The nature of the diaconate and the work of the deacon, especially the permanent deacon, are understood in this context.

a) The 'diakonia' of the Church is shown specifically in the Order of Deacons in two ways:

i) Firstly, the deacon embodies the truth that all ordained ministry in the Church is to be exercised as a service. Every priest and every bishop always remains a deacon, too. Everything a deacon does is to be characterised by this spirit of service. The model of service is Christ himself (Mk10: 43-45). The vocation of the deacon, then, is first of all to configure himself and his life to Christ the Servant and in doing so to give his life in service of the Church under the direction of the bishop. At the centre of his formation must be the task of forming a 'diaconal heart' so that he becomes a man who loves and serves the people with Christ's love. He is a "servant leader".⁷

ii) Secondly, the deacon embodies, in a particular way, the 'diakonia' of *service to those in need* which, as has been stated, is a fundamental characteristic of the life of the Church. Indeed it can be said that the deacon, while not replacing the lay faithful or the ordained priest in anything that is proper to them, serves the faithful most evidently in the activities which express the 'diakonia', the service of the poor, of the entire Church.

In speaking of the work of the deacon, the Acts of the Apostles pinpointed the key characteristic of the leadership in service to be offered by them. The deacons were not merely carrying out a mechanical work of charity or distribution. They were men 'full of the Spirit and of wisdom'. (Acts 6:3)

*In other words, the social service which they are meant to provide was absolutely concrete yet at the same time a spiritual service; theirs was a truly spiritual office which carried out an essential responsibility of the Church, namely, a well-ordered love of neighbour. With the formation of the group of seven, 'diakonia' - the ministry of charity exercised in a communitarian, orderly way - became part of the fundamental structure of the Church.*⁸

The deacon is the one who cooperates with the bishop and priest in directing the Church's diaconal *service to those in need*. The ordained deacon has a particular task of inspiring, motivating and leading others in the work of meeting both the corporal and spiritual needs of the people.

'The deacon is the specific sacramental sign in the Church, of Christ the Servant. His role is to express the needs and the desires of the Christian communities and to be a driving force for service, or diakonia'.⁹

⁷ cf Ch 7 Servant Leaders in a Servant Church in "The Emerging Diaconate" William T Ditewig, Paulist Press 2007

⁸ DCE 21

⁹ Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons 2.5

b) Within the work of the Church, then, the deacon stands as the one who serves. This is true for every aspect of his ministry.

i) As a minister of the Word he will ensure that every work of service in the Church, especially the service of the poor, is rooted in and motivated by the love of Christ and his saving Word. His preaching will pay particular attention to forming and nurturing the diaconal nature of the Church. As a 'herald of the Gospel' he will respond to the environment in which he lives and works, bringing to it the challenge of the Gospel, and bringing the challenge of contemporary culture to his preaching. His will be the task of attempting to bring together the truths of the Gospel and the assumptions of the age, particularly as those assumptions are experienced in the world of work and secular activity. In his preaching he will show forth that 'wisdom in action' of which the Acts of the Apostles speaks (cf Acts 6:1-6).

ii) As a minister of the Altar he will demonstrate by his presence the servant nature of the Church, bringing forward the needs of the people in the Prayers of the Faithful, assisting in the distribution of Holy Communion, issuing the invitation at the end of Mass that all should 'love and serve the Lord' in each other and in those in need.

iii) As a minister of Charity he will stimulate and coordinate the work of charity in a manner that responds to contemporary needs, in response to the appointment he has received from the bishop and in cooperation with the parish priest(s).

In these ways the permanent deacon will be a permanent sign of the servant Church. Furthermore, in response to the circumstances of our day, in which the work of charity itself has been rendered secular, there is a particular emphasis to be given to the permanent deacon in developing the charitable work of the Church.

4 Consequences of this Vision for the Archdiocese

In principle, the practical applications of this vision of diaconate for the diocese will be:

a) The clear recognition and promotion of the diaconate as a distinct vocation in the life of the Church and one appreciated and being developed within the diocese. This calls for more parish preparation and education in the nature and purpose of the permanent diaconate (cf. Appendix 1).

b) The choice and training of candidates according to this vision of the sacramental character and role of the diaconate.

c) The appointment of the deacon by the Bishop to tasks specific to the deacon, in which the deacon has a leadership role. When the appointment is to a parish or parishes, the tasks are to be fulfilled under the overall direction of the parish priest, but not simply seen as in support of the parish priest but in service of the parish.

d) An important role of the deacon is supporting, enabling and coordinating the work of charity and service of the Church, including both the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

e) A deacon's appointment to these tasks in some cases could be across a number of parishes.

f) A deacon's appointment also includes assisting the parish priest in specific liturgical and pastoral duties, but not as a 'poor substitute' for a priest.

g) Every parish might strive to have a deacon, thus establishing across the diocese a network of deacons whose task would be to build up the presence and activity of the Church in the service of the poor, in ways that are thoroughly ecclesial and in partnership with other service or charitable groups and initiatives. This would be done in cooperation with priests and bishop, in fulfilment of the ministry embraced in the ordination ceremonies.

† Vincent Nichols



Christ, who came "not to be served but to serve" washes his disciples feet at the Last Supper.

PART 3 – The Life of the Deacon

The Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons opens with the words: 'The origin of the diaconate is the consecration and mission of Christ, in which the deacon is called to share.¹⁰ Through the imposition of hands and the prayer of consecration, he is constituted a sacred minister and a member of the hierarchy. This condition determines his theological and juridical status in the Church'. All that follows are the practical implications of that status in terms of ministry and relationships in day-to-day diocesan and parish life.

1 Prayer and the Divine Office

The deacon is in a unique way an icon of Christ the Servant, and his life must therefore be focused on Christ.

The importance of the spiritual life in the ministry of a deacon cannot be overemphasised. It needs to be clear that a deep life of prayer, lived in close union with Christ the Servant, is the wellspring of their entire ministry. When they are at the altar, they are truly leading the people of God in worship, not just 'functioning as deacons', and so they must take care to bring a prayerful interiority to the celebration of the liturgy. On their prayer-life depends also the effectiveness of all their preaching and their exercise of pastoral charity.

Time each day for prayer, both liturgical and personal, is an essential ingredient in the deacon's life. In *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* Paul VI wrote: 'It is fitting for permanent Deacons to recite daily at least some part of the Divine Office – to be specified by the Episcopal Conference'.

In this country deacons are asked to celebrate the Principal Hours, namely, Morning and Evening Prayer and urged, insofar as their circumstances allow, to recite as much of the Prayer of the Church as they can. He should practise regular and suitably frequent Confession. Where possible the deacon should strive to assist daily at Mass.

2 Diaconal Fraternity

By virtue of ordination deacons are united to each other by a sacramental fraternity. Each deacon should have a sense of being joined with his fellow deacons in a bond of charity, prayer, obedience to the bishop, ministerial zeal and collaboration and should do all in his power to foster this sense of fraternity.¹¹ He specifically does this by attendance at ordinations of deacons, retreats for deacons and meetings of the diaconal fraternity, whether for the purposes of prayer, in-service formation, or to socialise with fellow deacons.

¹⁰ Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons (DMLPD) 1 also reference to *Lumen Gentium* 28a

¹¹ DMLPD 6. cf also 11.

3 The single man¹²

Whilst the majority of men called to the diaconate are married, 'it should be noted, however, that the council maintained the ideal of a diaconate open to younger men who would devote themselves to the Lord with the commitment of celibacy as well. It is a life of evangelical perfection which can be understood, chosen and loved by generous men who want to serve the Kingdom of God in the world, without entering the priesthood to which they do not feel called, but nevertheless receiving a consecration that guarantees and institutionalises their special service to the Church through the conferral of sacramental grace.' John Paul II.¹³

4 The married man¹⁴

For the married man, his wife is a partner with him in the exercise of much of his ministry although she does not share his mandate. Indeed his whole family is inevitably caught up with him as he strives to live out his diaconal vocation.

As his vocation to marriage comes, at least chronologically, prior to his call to the diaconate, the first duty of the married deacon must be to his wife and family. His first call then - as with all the baptised, but as one who participates in the apostolic teaching office - must be to live his married, family and working life in the light of the Gospel.

Should the deacon's wife predecease him, the widowed deacon must be helped to discern and accept his new personal circumstances, which in normal circumstances¹⁵ precludes remarriage in accordance with the constant discipline of the Church in the East and West.¹⁶

It is in his working and family life that the deacon must first and foremost bring the Gospel to bear; his ministry of charity must be worked out there too. When he comes to the altar, the summit and source of his Christian life, the deacon brings with him his wife, family and working life, not to mention his pastoral ministry, and offers it to the Lord.

In this light the deacon must see his wife and family and his responsibility to provide for them via his working-life, as his first priority. This takes precedence over all ecclesiastical functions and activities.

Therefore, should the deacon and his wife feel that their marriage is under undue stress, it would be right to seek leave of absence from diaconal duties

¹² Cf. DMLPD 59-62

¹³ John Paul II Audience 6 Oct. 1993

¹⁴ cf. Pope John Paul II Audience of 5 Oct. 1993 '...the Council, while not totally rejecting the idea of celibacy for deacons, permitted this order to be conferred on "mature married men"..."

¹⁵ cf. Congregation for Divine Worship & Discipline of the Sacraments, Circular letter 6 June 1997, *Origins* 27 (1997): 171

¹⁶ DMLPD 62

in order for them to dedicate more time to each other and to reflect on those issues which might be undermining their relationship. Equally, should there be some other family or personal difficulty, it might be appropriate to seek leave of absence for a time. Any such matters should be raised with the Director for Permanent Diaconate in the first instance.

The married deacon is the one minister from within the threefold hierarchy who can live as most of the baptised, as a married working person – and like the rest of the baptised bring this to the altar. He is rightly described then as a bridge between the sanctuary and the wider world. He is at the interface between the secular and sacred and so is a primary agent of evangelisation and mission, configured to Christ the Servant in the midst of contemporary culture.

5 On-Going Formation¹⁷

It is a requirement that candidates for the diaconate understand that their formation does not end with ordination but is the task of a lifetime.¹⁸ It is therefore incumbent on all deacons to take part in the various in-service days organised by the diocese.

A deacon should seek out a suitable spiritual director with whom he can establish regular contact.

It is expected that the deacon will make an annual retreat. Where one is arranged, he will make this retreat with fellow deacons of the diocese ¹⁹. Should a deacon choose to organise his own retreat he should notify the Director for the Permanent Diaconate as to what arrangements he has made. The cost of the annual retreat should be borne by the parish, or the diocesan office to which the deacon is attached.

If he has undertaken a specialised ministry he should seek appropriate training.

To help promote diaconal fraternity, attendance at regular meetings of deacons should be seen as a priority.

¹⁷ DMLPD 63-82

¹⁸ Directory for the Formation of Permanent Deacons in England and Wales (DFPDE&W) chapter 4.

¹⁹ Canon 276 esp. §2, 4^o

PART 4 – Working together

1 The Bishop and the Deacon

Like the priest, the deacon's primary relationship is with the bishop, so much so, that one of the earliest references to deacons tells us that deacons are ordained '*not for priesthood but for service to the bishop.*'²⁰ Elsewhere deacons are described as being as close to the bishop as father and son in the care of the people – so close in fact that they are '*like one soul dwelling in two bodies*'.²¹

Deacons (again like priests) are ordained first and foremost for the diocese and then appointed to a specific role within the diocese, which normally involves being assigned to a parish. There is no reason therefore why a deacon, whilst being appointed to a particular parish, should not also have a wider commitment to minister in a group of parishes or within a deanery²². His skills, circumstances and experience might be such that the bishop could ask him to take on a diocesan role e.g. in the Curia, the Marriage Tribunal or as his secretary.

2 The Deacon and the Diocese

A The Ministry of the Word

The Bishop, during the rite of ordination, gives the book of the Gospel to the deacon saying: '*Receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you now are.*' A principle function of the deacon is to collaborate with the bishop and the priests in the exercise of this ministry.

- i. The deacon through his ordination has the faculty in accordance with the conditions established by law to preach everywhere.²³ This should be exercised with at least the tacit consent of the rector or parish priest of the parish concerned and also 'with the humility proper to one who is servant and not master of the Word of God.'²⁴
- ii. According to GIRM the homily is ordinarily given by the priest who presides at the Eucharist – but a deacon or concelebrating priest may be invited to preach.²⁵

It would not be unusual for a deacon to be asked to preach at Sunday Mass on a regular basis, but there is no rigid rule on the matter.

²⁰ *Traditio Apostolica* 1,9; trans. B.S. Easton. The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (Macmillan) 38-39

²¹ R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1929) pp 109, 148.

²² DMLPD 41 & 42

²³ DMLPD 24 also Canon 764

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ GIRM 66

- iii. Homilies should be prepared in prayer, in study of the Sacred texts, in harmony with the Magisterium and in a way that is relevant to those to whom they preach.²⁶
- iv. This Ministry of the Word also embraces assisting the people to grow in their knowledge of their faith in Christ and to express it in their family, professional and social lives. For this reason a deacon must give attention to catechesis at all stages of Christian living.²⁷
- v. The ministry of the Word is also essentially a ministry lived out beyond the church building. The deacon especially is seen as the herald of a new evangelisation transmitting the Word in his working and professional lives either explicitly or merely by his active presence in places where public opinion is formed and ethical norms are applied, such as social services or organisations promoting the rights of the family or the right to life.²⁸
- vi. Through his working life the deacon, 'to the extent that he is present and more involved than the priest in secular environments and structures, should feel encouraged to foster closeness between the ordained ministry and lay activities, in common service to the kingdom of God.'²⁹

B The Ministry of the Altar

a) After the priest, by virtue of his ordination, the deacon holds first place among those who minister at the altar; it is preferable that he usually assists daily at Mass if possible³⁰. The degree of his diaconal participation in both dress and style would be determined by the solemnity of the celebration.

b) The celebration of Mass

At Mass it is the deacon's role to:

- i. Carry the book of the Gospels prominently.
- ii. Proclaim the penitential litany (at the discretion of the celebrant).
- iii. Proclaim the Gospel.
- iv. Give the homily (occasionally at the discretion of the celebrant).
- v. Prepare and proclaim the Intercessions.
- vi. Prepare the altar and assist the celebrant to receive the gifts.
- vii. Mix the water with the wine and hand the bread and wine to celebrant (saying the accompanying prayer quietly³¹).
- viii. Incense the celebrant and people.
- ix. Stand near (slightly behind) the priest during the Eucharistic Prayer.
- x. Either kneel or bow profoundly from the epiclesis until after the elevation of the chalice (physical ability will determine which).

²⁶ Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons (DMLPD) 25

²⁷ *ibid* (DMLPD) 25.

²⁸ DMLPD 26

²⁹ Pope John Paul II General Audience 13 Oct.1993.

³⁰ Canon 276 also John Paul II General Audience 20 Oct.1993 n.4. quoting Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Letter *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* n.26. GIRM 94 also 116: 'If a deacon is present at any celebration of Mass he should exercise his office.' GIRM 171 'When he is present at the Eucharistic celebration, a deacon should exercise his ministry wearing sacred vestments.'

³¹ GIRM 178

- xi. Hold the chalice aloft at the same level as the priest holds the paten during the doxology.
- xii. Invite the people to exchange the sign of peace after the priest has said the words: 'the peace of the Lord be with you always'.
- xiii. Assist the priest, if necessary, with the fraction. (At a concelebration the deacon does not distribute the Body of the Lord to the other concelebrants but leaves that to one of the other concelebrants).
- xiv. Receive Holy Communion under both kinds.
- xv. Assist in the distribution of Holy Communion and administer the chalice if communion is given under both kinds.
- xvi. Purify the vessels, ensuring the sacred species are consumed. Alternatively the vessels may be left on a credence table to be purified after the Mass is finished.
- xvii. Make any announcements after the post-communion prayer, unless the celebrant prefers to do this himself.
- xviii. Instruct the people to bow their heads if a solemn prayer of blessing is used.
- xix. Dismiss the people after the final blessing.
- xx. Venerate the altar with the priest and accompany the priest and other ministers as they leave the altar.³²
- xxi. He should no longer act as MC or take on any other role within the sanctuary other than deacon. However if no other server is present, he fulfils the duties of other ministers.³³

c) Liturgical Dress

The appropriate dress for a deacon depends on the solemnity of the occasion and his role within the specific celebration.

- i. For ordinary weekday Mass, an alb and stole is appropriate.
- ii. For Solemnities and Sunday celebrations, alb, stole and dalmatic is correct³⁴
- iii. For Liturgies of the Word, Baptism, Funerals, the Liturgy of the Hours and Marriages, a cassock, cotta and stole, or alb and stole would be appropriate; with more solemn celebrations an alb, stole and dalmatic may be worn.
- iv. For exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction it is appropriate to wear a cope over the alb and stole.

d) Clerical dress

This may appropriately be worn when carrying out specifically diaconal duties: attending funerals, visiting the sick in hospital, prison visiting, ecumenical occasions, formal visiting of homes in the parish or attendance at parish or diocesan functions specifically as a deacon. It is not considered appropriate to wear clerical dress at a place of secular employment.

³² GIRM 171 -186

³³ GIRM 171.f.

³⁴ GIRM 338 *The vestment proper to the deacon is the dalmatic, worn over the alb and stole. The dalmatic may however be omitted out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity.*

e) The Deacon as an ordinary minister

- i. As an ordinary minister of baptism, marriage and communion³⁵ and as one able to preside at Benediction,³⁶ funeral services³⁷, the Hours and Liturgies of the Word, it is right, depending upon the needs of the parish, that the deacon take his turn at presiding at these liturgical celebrations. In the case of marriage and funeral liturgies it is only in the absence of a priest that the deacon should preside³⁸.
- i. When there is no priest available to celebrate Mass, the deacon should gather the people at an appropriate time to celebrate either Morning or Evening Prayer or a Liturgy of the Word from the Mass of the day, with or without the distribution of Holy Communion according to norms laid down by the diocese.
- ii. It is important to keep in mind that the deacon is not ordained to replace participation by the lay faithful but to facilitate it³⁹. So deacons appropriately give formation to altar servers, readers, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

f) Blessings

It is quite appropriate that, when presiding, a deacon give a blessing in accordance with the prescribed liturgical norms. He may also bless people who present themselves for a blessing at Holy Communion. It is also appropriate, in the absence of a priest, that he imparts a blessing at the end of a meeting or parish gathering. He may also bless water, crucifixes and other religious artefacts, bless homes and all objects as specified in the book of blessings.⁴⁰

C The Ministry of Charity

a) As the Servant of Charity,⁴¹ the deacon should lead the way in making the parish in which he serves, aware and sensitive to the needs of the poor and to issues of Justice and Peace.

b) Even though the deacon according to the provisions of Canon 288 (unlike a priest or bishop) is not forbidden from running for public office or playing an active role in a political party or a trade union, the teaching of Pope Benedict in '*Deus caritas Est*' is especially relevant. Pope Benedict distinguishes between Christian charitable activity and programmes of social action driven by political parties or ideologies: 'The Christian's programme - the

³⁵ Canons 861, 1108, 1116 §2, 910

³⁶ Holy Communion & Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass 91

³⁷ Order of Christian Funerals 14

³⁸ DMLPD 36 which cites *Rituale Romanum – De Benedictionibus*, n.18

³⁹ 'Again according to the Council, the functions assigned to the deacon can in no way diminish the role of lay people called and willing to co-operate in the apostolate with the hierarchy. On the contrary, the deacon's tasks include that of "promoting and sustaining the apostolic activities of the laity..." ' Pope John Paul II General Audience 13 Oct. 1993

⁴⁰ In the absence of a Book of Blessings drawn up by our own hierarchy, we are authorised to use the Book of Blessings authorised by the American or Canadian Bishops' Conference.

⁴¹ '*Deus Caritas Est*' Benedict XVI especially sections 19-27. Indeed, the whole of this document should be studied by deacons as a manifesto for their ministry.

programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus - is "a heart which sees". This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly. Obviously when charitable activity is carried out by the Church as a communitarian initiative, the spontaneity of individuals must be combined with planning, foresight and cooperation with other similar institutions.' If an ordained deacon is considering putting himself forward for such public office, he should first discuss this with the Director for the Permanent Diaconate.

c) As a minister who is especially called to promote harmony and unity, the deacon should have a special interest in promoting ecumenical and interfaith collaboration⁴².

d) The deacon's ministry of charity should lead him to have a special concern for the young and the vulnerable and for those pushed to the margins of life through addiction and poverty. Again, the teaching of Pope Benedict is pertinent: '*Charity*, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practised as a way of achieving other ends. But this does not mean that charitable activity must somehow leave God and Christ aside. For it is always concerned with the whole man. Often the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God. Those who practise charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others. They realise that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love. A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak. He knows that God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8) and that God's presence is felt at the very time when the only thing we do is to love'.⁴³

e) A deacon might be asked by the Bishop or Episcopal Vicar to take on a special responsibility of pastoral care for certain groups of people that do not fit within parish categories such as 'travellers', asylum seekers and immigrant groups, for ex-prisoners, young offenders, those suffering from drug or alcohol abuse, the mentally sick, single parent families, the divorced and remarried, and other groups that need special support and care.

f) Deacons may be hospital and prison chaplains, in which case a special relationship with all the priests of an area is necessary for them to carry out their ministry. Whilst providing pastoral care and support, the deacon would rely on the collaboration and good will of local priests to ensure the celebration of the Mass, Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. If a deacon is intending to visit a hospital or a prison, he should first consult the existing chaplain.

g) Deacons must avoid anything that might cause confusion as to the nature of their ministry. They should not attempt to anoint people with oil, as this might be perceived as the sacramental Anointing of the Sick. They should not invite a person to confess their sins as if they were going to confession – but only in the general sense, as with the 'I Confess...' in the penitential rites.

⁴² DMLPD 22

⁴³ *Deus Caritas Est* 31 b&c

h) Where a priest is unavailable and a person is in danger of death, the appropriate rite for a deacon to use is a penitential rite such as those used at the beginning of Mass with its prayer for absolution: 'May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.' As part of the preparation for this the deacon should urge the dying person to be truly contrite for their sins, and help them to make a gesture of repentance such as kissing a crucifix or an act of contrition. If possible this should be followed by Viaticum.

i) Many functions, especially administrative functions that were originally diaconal functions, were taken over by the presbyterate when the diaconate ceased to be a permanent ministry. It would be wise therefore for Parish Priests with a deacon to reflect and discern which functions could better be given back to the deacon so that as a priest he might have more time to devote himself 'to prayer and to the service of the Word'.⁴⁴

j) Whilst a deacon may act as a spiritual director or have some other pastoral role in relation to the SVP, Legion of Mary or some other lay sodality, as a member of the clergy it may not be appropriate for the deacon to remain simply as an ordinary member of such a group.

k) The deacon as ordinary minister of Holy Communion is ideally suited to organising in collaboration with the priest the care of the sick. So he could train extraordinary ministers to take communion into homes, care homes and hospitals. Where possible, Communion should be taken to the sick directly from the celebration of Mass.

D Other Diocesan Issues:

a) **Incardination into the diocese** is brought about by ordination to the diaconate, prior to which the intention to serve the church in the diocese will have been expressed in writing. A deacon wishing to move from the diocese and exercise his ministry in another diocese should obtain authorisation both from the Archbishop and from the bishop of the diocese into which he is moving.⁴⁵

b) **Upkeep and Insurance:** In this diocese it is a condition of acceptance onto the Permanent Diaconate Formation Programme that the diaconal student and later the ordained deacon can provide for his own and his family's financial upkeep. When a deacon who is not on a pension or is without an income from a secular source and is engaged formally by the diocese in full-time ecclesiastical ministry, the diocese will make suitable arrangements with the deacon concerned in accordance with Canon Law.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ cf Acts 7:4

⁴⁵ cf Canons 267-268c §1. also DMLPD 2-3

⁴⁶ DMLPD 15-20 also Canon 281

Resignation: As with priests, upon reaching their 75th birthday, deacons shall offer their resignation from active ministry to the Archbishop, notifying the Director that they have done so.

3 Priest, Deacon and the Parish

Of course, all priests are ordained to the diaconate en route to the priesthood and so diaconal service is part of their ministry too. However, once a deacon is ordained for, or sent to, a parish, then the bishop has a minister present in that place whose sole role is to be an icon of service for that community.

Both priest and deacon are sent by the bishop⁴⁷ and are in a parish under obedience to the bishop.⁴⁸ The bishop speaks to both and exercises his ministry directly through both.

- i. It is essential that both priest and deacon collaborate with each other, in their different roles, for the good of the community they both serve.
- ii. The Parish Priest has the canonical responsibility and authority for leading the parish and ensuring its pastoral care.⁴⁹ It is he who normally presides in the name of the bishop at the liturgy and over the parish community. The deacon should do all in his power to facilitate and serve the legitimate exercise of that leadership.
- iii. The deacon, sent by the bishop, is the priest's closest collaborator – this should be evident in their relationship with each other and with the parish as a whole.
- iv. It is the Parish Priest's role to set the tone of the parish in the celebration of the liturgy. Both he and the deacon must be guided by the norms laid down by the General Instruction on the Roman Missal. (GIRM)
- v. Where a deacon is appointed to the pastoral care of a parish which, because of a shortage, does not have its own parish priest, Canon Law requires that a priest be appointed as the moderator of the parish, who is given the powers and faculties of a parish priest and is its proper pastor. The deacon assists him in the care of the parish.⁵⁰
- vi. The deacon's specific task is that of inspiring, motivating and leading others in diaconal service of both corporal and spiritual needs. He should be in his own ministry 'a driving force for service, or diakonia.'⁵¹
- vii. Priest and deacon should be loyal to one another, remembering that they are clergy together collaborating for the good of the people within their

⁴⁷ Canon 835

⁴⁸ cf Rite of Ordination of a Deacon 16

⁴⁹ Canons 519, 530, 532 536 & 537

⁵⁰ Canon 517§2

⁵¹ Basic norms ...2.5

- care. All gossip concerning each other with parishioners should be shunned.
- viii. The priest should remember that in the deacon he has a colleague who by ordination is there to serve Christ in his people and who has himself pledged obedience to the bishop.
 - ix. Where possible, Parish Priest and deacon should spend time in prayer together.
 - x. Priest and deacon should meet regularly and keep each other informed in a professional and respectful way.
 - xi. Priest and deacon should meet regularly with the rest of the pastoral team to plan and reflect on their pastoral work in the parish.
 - xii. The Parish Priest should ensure within the circumstances of that parish that the deacon has adequate opportunity to exercise his ministry.
 - xiii. As a member of the parish clergy it is fitting, as recommended in our diocesan guidelines, that the deacon be actively involved with all parish structures, e.g. the parish finance committee and, if one exists, the parish council.⁵² The deacon, when his employment and family circumstances permit, should attend all deanery meetings.
 - xiv. Canonically, all offerings belong to the parish.⁵³ However, where a deacon receives a stole fee for presiding at a particular liturgy, he should receive this, any excess above £100 may be paid to the parish.
 - xv. Parish Priests should note that in-service training and retreats and any meetings at which attendance is required or expected are a legitimate charge against the parish. This applies both to the cost of the event and the travel involved. There are other events too, such as National Diaconal Assemblies where it is appropriate for the parish to meet the costs involved. However, in smaller parishes where the income is likely to be low the deacon may apply to the Director of Permanent Diaconate to seek a contribution toward the cost of attendance. Deacons who draw any form of salary from their ministry, such as hospital or prison chaplains, should pay a contribution toward the cost of such an event in proportion to the salary they draw and their own personal circumstances.
 - xvi. Whilst deacons are normally not remunerated for their ministry, they are entitled to reclaim any legitimate expenses their ministry might incur, e.g., mileage or petrol allowance.⁵⁴ With regard to parish activities this will be from the parish, with regard to diocesan activities, this will be from the diocesan agency or the Director for the Permanent Diaconate.

⁵² DMLPD 41

⁵³ Canon 531

⁵⁴ DMLPD 20

- xvii. Upon ordination at the latest, the deacon should have made a will and should notify the Director for the Permanent Diaconate where this is kept.
- xviii. Upon the death of a deacon the Parish Priest should notify The Archbishop, the Vicar General, the Director for the Permanent Diaconate and the Dean. Whilst normally the deacon's family would make the necessary arrangements for his funeral and meet any normal funeral expenses, it would be right and appropriate that the parish would meet the cost of any additional hospitality expenses incurred or expenses relating to the funeral liturgy itself.
- xix. During the Funeral Liturgy, it is appropriate that the body of the deacon, as with priests and bishops, be placed in the position, which as a sacred minister he occupied in the liturgical assembly, viz., facing the people.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ The Rites vol.1. Rite of Funerals 38.

Part 5 – Moves and Changes

1 New Parish Priest

a) Where there is a change of parish priest it would be helpful for the new priest and deacon to meet together as soon as possible. Together they should go through this handbook and clarify any issues they perceive as presenting a difficulty for each other. The Director for the Permanent Diaconate would be happy to attend such a meeting given sufficient notice.

b) When a new parish priest arrives it would be helpful for the deacon to ask him what would be his preferred way of doing things.

c) New parish priests need to be aware that the deacon can often be seen to represent continuity in the clergy of the parish. It would be good and wise management to consult with such a person in trying to understand the nature of the community that makes up the parish.

d) Difficulties may arise if the new priest perceives the deacon as being the previous parish priest's man, especially if the deacon had been put forward for ordination by him. The deacon needs to avoid giving this impression and should, as always, present himself as a deacon of the diocese and a man of the Church. The deacon must be the one who helps the parish to embrace their new priest and assists him in taking up the reins of leadership.

2 Induction of a Deacon into a Parish

When a deacon moves from one parish to another, or where a deacon's formation and ordination has taken place outside the parish where he is to serve, there needs to be a process of induction. The parish priest should speak about the diaconate at Masses prior to the deacon taking up his appointment. A proper catechesis needs to be given to the people on the role and function of a deacon in a parish. It would be appropriate to hold a ceremony of welcome for the deacon during which the deacon could proclaim his commitment to serve the Church in that parish.

The Director for the Diaconate has a responsibility for overseeing the process by which a deacon is introduced into a parish and should be contacted by the Parish Priest as soon as the latter becomes aware that he is to have a deacon attached to his parish. cf. Appendices 1 and 4.

In a parish that has put forward and sponsored a candidate for the diaconate, it is important that, as the candidate proceeds through the formation process, so too the parish community is aware and to some extent participates in the formation process. In this way the parish will be properly catechised on the role and function of the deacon and be the more able to benefit from his ministry after ordination.

3 Deacons from outside the Diocese

When a deacon moves into this diocese from another, it would be normal to have a period of at least two years before formal incardination into the diocese takes place. Any formal appointment to a parish would need to be for a limited period, renewable on a regular basis and made permanent by the process of incardination. Before even a temporary appointment is made, some form of induction process needs to take place whereby the Director for Diaconate meets the deacon and discusses with him the customs and policies of the diocese and introduces him to other deacons in the area where he resides.

A deacon coming from another diocese should study the Diocesan Handbook on the Diaconate.



Permanent Deacons renew their ordination vows as part of the Mass celebrated by Cardinal Vincent Nichols at Westminster Cathedral.

PART 6 – Selection and Formation

1 Discerning a Diaconal Vocation

All priests must look to the future and be alert for good men of faith in our parishes who would be able and generous enough to respond to a diaconal vocation. We need to pray for such vocations and then actively seek out potential candidates.

Any good Catholic man from thirty onwards who is capable of carrying out his family duties, holding down his job and, in addition, is capable of giving the time necessary to enter into the diaconal formation programme is potentially a suitable candidate. An inability to offer much time in the short term to church work (e.g. because of family and work commitments) need not be a deterrent to choosing men who can give some time and otherwise seem well suited to diaconal ministry. Sowing the seeds of a vocation is important, for when work and family commitments have diminished, the seed sown some years back may begin to flourish. Often the best candidates are those who first considered the possibility of a diaconal vocation because the priest or some other member of the parish community suggested it to them.

- The candidate must be intelligent enough to follow a normal course of studies without being unduly weighed down by it, healthy enough to carry out the duties of a deacon, with the sort of generosity of character that is still open to being formed, and with a soundness and stability of character that invites trust.
- He must have the right intention – to model himself on Christ the Servant who came not to be served but to serve.
- He must be accepting of the call of the Church – that he be willing to put himself in the hands of the bishop and those the bishop has chosen to carry out the discernment and formation process. No one can claim the right to be ordained. His desire to be ordained is never sufficient in itself; rather he must wait on the decision of the Church.

It normally takes a minimum of one year from the time the Director for the Permanent Diaconate is given a candidate's name to the time that person is presented to the diocesan interview board. If he is perceived as having a possible vocation and accepted for the Diaconate Formation Programme, it will normally take another four years before he is ordained as a deacon.

Minimum Admission Requirements

An applicant must:

- a) be a baptised man who is confirmed and has received his first Holy Communion;
- b) have been a Catholic for a minimum of five years;
- c) be legally a permanent UK resident;
- d) be at least 31 at the time of admission to the Formation Programme;
- e) normally be no more than 65 by the time he is due for ordination;

- f) enjoy good physical and mental health with no condition that would impede his ministry;
- g) have the necessary ability to complete the formation programme;
- h) be reasonably financially secure;
- i) understand that permanent deacons who are employed or who have been employed are bound by Canon Law to support themselves from their own funds;⁵⁶ (The diocese will meet the cost of the formation programme and reimburse the candidate for travelling expenses.)
- j) be a parishioner domiciled in a parish within the Westminster Diocese for normally at least 3 years.
- k) if single, have a settled stable life with a good reputation within the community. He must fully understand the charism of celibacy. He must understand that ordination would mean a life-long commitment to celibacy;
- l) if married, to have been validly married for at least 5 years;
- m) should his wife predecease him, be willing in normal circumstances to remain celibate for the rest of his life;⁵⁷
- n) have the full support and consent of his wife, her consent expressed in a handwritten letter accompanying his application;
- o) enjoy with his family a good reputation within the community;
- p) be able to give the necessary time to both the formation programme and the diaconal ministry without it being detrimental to his family or working life;
- q) be presently active and accepted within the Church and parish community;
- r) be willing to undergo the diocesan formation programme and be involved in on-going formation after ordination;
- s) be willing to make a life-long commitment to serve the Church according to the model of Christ who came not to be served but to serve;
- t) be willing to promise obedience to the Archbishop and his successors and be willing to accept any pastoral assignment that may be given to him;
- u) be highly recommended by his parish priest or those who have worked with him in ministry;
- v) be willing to undergo psychological assessment as to his suitability and to undergo all checks required by the Diocesan Child Protection Policy prior to formation;
- w) be willing to undergo a full medical examination;
- x) be orthodox both in belief and practice, and be willing to take the Oath of Fidelity and make a profession of faith according to the formula approved by the Apostolic See;⁵⁸
- y) be dedicated to our Lord in the Eucharist;
- z) above all he must be a man of faith and prayer.

⁵⁶ Canon 281§3

⁵⁷ cf footnote 16 page 11

⁵⁸ Canon 833

During the formation programme his parish priest must be willing to co-operate with the formation team in his training.

Once a parish priest has decided in the light of the above requirements that he has a suitable candidate to put forward, the next step is to contact the Diocesan Director for the Permanent Diaconate. Alternatively, the prospective candidate, having spoken to his parish priest, may contact the Diocesan Director for the Permanent Diaconate or his assistant.

2 Selection and Formation

The process of discernment will include gathering together all the necessary information to complete an Official Application form, the candidate being medically and psychologically assessed, and a review to ensure there is no canonical impediment to the candidate being accepted.

The selection panel meets each year between May and June. Should the candidate be accepted, he would join the Permanent Diaconate Formation Programme the following September.

3 The Westminster Formation Programme

This is a four-year programme. The first year is a propaedeutic year, initiating the aspirants into a formal prayer life, basic liturgy and a way of thinking with the Church. At the end of the year there is a major assessment and, depending upon the outcome, the student is formally admitted as a Candidate for the diaconate. There follow three more years of formation focused on the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development of the candidate in all appropriate areas of theology, scripture, catechesis, liturgy, Canon Law and other related subjects.

Each year there is an assessment process in which the Parish Priest and three parishioners nominated by him, are expected to make an input. If all is well, the candidate is instituted as a reader at the end of the first year of formal training, the following year as an acolyte, and finally ordained a permanent deacon at the end of the fourth year. The man himself will also provide a self-assessment each year. All of the assessments will be read and discussed by the formation team with a view to deciding whether or not the man should proceed in formation. It needs to be said that the whole programme is part of the discernment process and the purpose of the assessments each year is to facilitate the process of discerning God's call to the individual candidate. Therefore, acceptance of an individual into the formation programme does not mean acceptance for ordination.

Finally, before ordination, the candidate will draw up a written covenant with the priest to whom he is responsible and the Vicar General. This is not a contract of employment but a document to facilitate and clarify mutual expectations. A template for such a covenant is attached as Appendix 3.

4 Directorate for The Permanent Diaconate

As indicated in the 'Directory for the Ministry and of Life of Permanent Deacons' section 80, there should be a diocesan organisation for the co-ordination of deacons, either presided over by the bishop himself or by a priest delegated by him for this purpose. Its purpose is to 'supervise the diaconal ministry from the discernment of vocation, to the exercise of ministry and formation – including ongoing formation'.

In this diocese, the formation team consists of the director for the permanent diaconate and two assistant directors.



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Appendix 1

Involvement of the Parish in the formation of a Deacon

1 Selection and Ongoing Appraisal

The Parish Priest has a key role in this area. It would be unusual for a man to be accepted for formation without the full support, encouragement and commitment of his Parish Priest. Whether the man had come to the notice of the Director and the Bishop as a result of his own initiative or that of the Parish Priest, usually it is the Parish Priest who will act as the man's pastoral formator in the years that lead up to his Ordination. After that he is usually his colleague and collaborator in the Pastoral Ministry.

The Parish Priest will have given a very strong reference to the Director asking that the man be accepted for formation and he will testify that the man has the qualities needed to be an ordained minister (see part 6). He should know the man and his family well and be prepared to assist the man towards Ordination. He will do this once the man has been accepted by following the three year plan of pastoral formation in the parish (see Appendix 2). He will, over the course of the three years, write an assessment each year, of how the man is doing and he will invite three parishioners who know the candidate well and who work with him in the parish community to do the same.

2 Marking the Stages from Candidacy

During the period of the Propaedeutic Year, which will include sessions on Prayer, Spirituality, Formation and Human Development, the man may be invited to go through to the selection process. If he is accepted he will begin the formation course at Womersley and will shortly afterwards receive Candidacy. The Parish Priest will inform the parish community and invite them to the celebration of Candidacy at which the man is liturgically acknowledged as a candidate for the Permanent Diaconate. Over the next three years there will be homilies, notices at Mass, articles in the parish newsletter and on the parish website about the Permanent Diaconate helping the community towards a better understanding of this important ministry in the Church.

The Parish Community should be invited to the man's institution as Reader at the end of his first year in training, as Acolyte at the end of the second year, and finally to the Ordination itself. In his final year the community will be able to witness the candidate publicly take the Oath of the Profession of Faith at a public Mass two or three months before Ordination. However, whilst these stages are being celebrated there is a need for the Parish Priest to initiate the man in all aspects of what will be his ministry.

3 The Three Year Pastoral Programme

The role of a Deacon, once Ordained will depend on the individual, their skills, the time available to them in the light of their family and work commitments as well as the needs of the Diocese and the Parish. However all Deacons need to be able to work within their Parish if called to do so and it is the responsibility of the Parish Priest as the Pastoral Director, with the help of the Formation Team, to ensure that Candidates for the Diaconate receive the appropriate Formation in Liturgical and Pastoral Parish Activities.

During the years of his formation it is important that the Candidate gains some experience of all the areas into which he might be called. Appendix 2 sets out a checklist of activities which should have been experienced before the end of the period of formation and other activities which it is desirable for him to have experienced. It includes specific Individuals and Groups with whom he needs to make contact as part of parish ministry. These activities are grouped into three years corresponding broadly with the threefold ministry of the Deacon - Word, Altar and Charity.

It is stressed that this is an outline of what is necessary and that the approach should be adjusted as required to take account of the circumstances of the specific individuals and the parish. In particular those Deacons who are in full time employment, especially those working as teachers, doctors, nurses, in evangelisation, social care, charitable work or engaged to work at Diocesan level, may not be able to carry out certain Diaconal duties very often within the Parish. However, irrespective of the frequency with which they may occur a man once ordained will be expected to be able to be proficient in the key aspects of his ministry. His formation should reflect his likely future role.

Deacons are not "Assistant Priests" but have a separate identity as a group performing actions which require specialist skills, connected to the life of the Church, but not always related to a particular parish.

To assist proper planning of the activities being undertaken the Candidate and his Parish Priest should meet several times each year to review progress - preferably monthly. The meetings should be times of review and encouragement and are, in part, to consider how best to balance the demands of family, work and the formation programme.

4 The Covenant

Finally, before Ordination, if the man is to be assigned to his own parish, he will sit down with the Parish Priest and draw up a Covenant which will clarify mutual expectations and outline the main duties, rights and privileges of the ordained deacon in this particular pastoral situation. (See Appendix 3) Once the content is agreed upon they will take it to the Vicar General and all three parties will sign it and work to it for the coming year. This will usually be revisited and adapted in the light of experience every year.

After Ordination the Parish Priest should meet regularly with the deacon at least every month, but preferably every week. Both of them should meet with the rest of the Pastoral Team regularly to plan and reflect upon Pastoral initiatives. Important matters should be discussed with the deacon so that he might be able to make a consultative contribution to any important decision that needs to be made. He should not be left to find out such things or any major parish event from the newsletter.

Parish Priests should inform themselves on the deacon's role, especially in the liturgy, as is spelled out quite clearly in GIRM. This Diocesan Handbook for Parish Priests and Deacons also gives guidance.

The Director and his Assistants are available to help the Parish Priest and his community address all of these, as each step is taken, and for any other advice and help that is needed.



Three deacons to be ordained lie prostrate as a sign of submission to the will of God.

Appendix 2

Three Year Parish Formation Plan for a Permanent Deacon (The full three-year Pastoral, Practical and Liturgical Formation Portfolio is contained within the “Three-Year Assessment” document)

Year One - Ministry of the Word - Appointment as Lector

Essential Activities

Appointment and practice as Reader at Mass
 Preparing Altar for Mass
 Registration for, and completion of, first module in safeguarding training

Desirable Potential Activities

Preparation of the Bidding Prayers
 Leadership of a (non-Eucharistic) Liturgy - Stations of the Cross, Advent or Lent Reflection Service
 Be involved with Liturgical Music - planning and/or performance,
 Attendance at, or leadership of, Parish study group

Meetings with Individuals and Groups Meet Parish secretary/treasurer/administrator, Attend Parish Council Meetings
 Meet leaders of Sacramental Preparation Groups: RCIA, Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation

Year Two- Ministry of the Altar - Appointment as Acolyte

Essential Activities

Appointment and practice as Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist Presiding at a Eucharistic Service
 Practice preparing the Altar for Mass and Serve at Mass
 Presence at and Assistance with (including use of the Thurible) at least one of each of the following: Baptism, Wedding, Funeral Mass, Funeral Service, Ceremony at Graveside and Ceremony at Crematorium
 Safeguarding training update

Desirable Potential Activities

Leadership of Morning and/or Evening Prayer in the Parish
 Taking Holy Communion to the Housebound or Sick,
 Presiding at a time of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament,
 Involvement in School or Children's Liturgies,
 Involvement with RCIA
 Become familiar with Sacramental preparation programmes

Meetings with Individuals and Groups

Meeting with Funeral Directors
 Meet Local Dean and Hospital/Prison/School Chaplains

Year Three - Ministry of Charity - Appointment as Deacon

Essential Activities

Shadow Priest at meetings with: Couples preparing for Marriage, Parents wanting Baptism for their Children, and those arranging Funerals.
 Being present at the above services
 Become familiar with the Paperwork for the above, incl. details of fees etc.
 Safeguarding training update

Desirable Potential Activities

Lead a school liturgy and Rosary. Assist at Benediction.

Gain appointment as an Authorised Person for Marriage

Become involved in Evangelisation, Charitable events and Social concerns

Meetings with Individuals and Groups

Attendance at SVP, Justice and Peace, etc. meetings

Attendance at Deanery Meetings and Ecumenical Ministers Meetings

Appendix 3

Diaconal Agreement for [name] in his service in the Diocese of Westminster

I **[name]**, acknowledge with gratitude the call of God to serve as an ordained deacon in the Diocese of Westminster and by the Grace of God I willingly respond to that call. I promise obedience to my Ordinary, Archbishop Vincent Nichols and his successors, in service of the People of God in this Diocese.

In accepting incardination into this Diocese, I am aware that I serve in accordance with the faculties bestowed upon me by the Bishop so that, carefully safe-guarding and fostering **[my first vocation to marriage and]** my family life, I will generously commit myself to the three-fold service of Charity, the Altar, and the Word in the diaconal ministry. It is expected that I will, in turn, receive full support, training and encouragement in my ministry from my Ordinary **[and from those to whom I am accountable]**.

In fulfilling my service and living my diaconal ministry, I will carefully attend to the duties set out overleaf and agreed with **[name of dean, parish priest(s), or chaplaincy appointment.]**, to whom I am accountable as the priest delegated by my Ordinary to direct my ministry. These are intended to clarify expectations to facilitate good relationships between all the members of the pastoral team including **[parish priest, curate(s), other deacon(s) and pastoral assistant(s)]**, with my family, and with the parish community as a whole.

I accept that the Diocese is not required to provide any salary or remuneration for my services as a deacon beyond the payment of agreed expenses associated with my ministry and stole fees for specific sacramental service. (These are usually less than a total £100 for any one liturgy at which the deacon presides; any excess over £100 will be given to parish funds.)

I understand the need for ongoing formation and commit to participating in any opportunities for this that are given by the Diocese. I will make an annual retreat and attend all meetings of ordained deacons when possible in order to build up the fraternity of deacons in the diocese. I will also try to attend Deanery meetings where possible. I am aware that the parish will meet the expense of my annual retreat and ongoing formation.

In the event that employment opportunities or social needs arise which would necessitate moving from the Diocese of Westminster, I undertake to seek the permission of the local Ordinary to relinquish my duties in the Diocese of Westminster and either, with his approval, to seek diaconal service in another place through negotiation with the Ordinary of that place and through the provision of suitable references, or to offer my resignation from diaconal service.

In any event, I will offer my resignation from ministry at the age of 75 years.

My agreed duties are as follows **[these points indicate areas that it could be useful to discuss. Not all points need always be included]:**

- To remain diligent in fulfilling commitments to my family and employer.
- To undertake pastoral work in [...**specific area: deanery, parishes, parish or other organisation(s)**]. mainly on....when?...It is understood that this work involves helping people as need arises, and therefore I will be as pragmatic and flexible as possible. I will seek to meet regularly [monthly] with the [parish priest / team] to discuss parish matters and current and anticipated commitments.
- To spend no more than about [...] hours per week on pastoral work and have [...] day / evening a week and [.. one ...] weekend a month free of diaconal duties.
- To assist with sacramental preparation for [...**specify sacraments...**] when requested.
- To assist at the Sunday Liturgies ...[..**specify ..**] preach at and / or preside at liturgies [..**specify as appropriate..**] when requested, and if needs be to arrange for a supply priest as the need arises.
- **[When work commitments allow,]** I will endeavour to attend the local deanery meetings.
- In all aspects of this ministry, to collaborate with My Ordinary and [...**parish priest or chaplaincy appointment....**] and to defer to their final decision in a given matter, and to collaborate with other members of the pastoral team.
- To continue with my work on [significant diocesan, charitable or other commitments].
- To participate in an annual review of this agreement.

Should age, health, family, parish or diocesan circumstances require it; changes to my duties as stipulated above will be agreed in writing and appended to this agreement.

Signed by

The Deacon elect

_____ Date _____

The one to whom he is pastorally responsible day by day

_____ Date _____

The Vicar General for Clergy

_____ Date _____

Appendix 4

Preparing a Parish to which a Deacon is to be transferred

The Director for the Diaconate has a particular responsibility for overseeing the process given below. A parish priest who is to have a deacon transferred to his parish is asked to make contact with the Diocesan Director as soon as he becomes aware that a deacon might be appointed to the parish.

1 Remote preparation of the parish community

In some cases, deacons may carry out their ministry around a whole deanery area to ensure that parishes that do not have a deacon at least have some familiarity with the deacon's role. So, for instance, a deacon could be invited into a neighbouring parish to assist at Mass occasionally or to preach, to assist with Benediction or indeed preside at a Holy Hour or be invited to carry out any ministry that he is authorised to do in the absence of a priest.

Preaching about the diaconate can help to prepare the community.

Articles may be placed in the parish bulletin or on the parish website, explaining for example:

- the diaconate's history and place in the Church;
- the deacon's relationship to bishop and priest;
- the deacon's potential usefulness in the life of the parish;
- the deacon's role in the liturgy, proclaiming the Gospel, etc;
- the deacon's role in the ministry of charity;
- that the deacon is a cleric, not a layman;
- that the deacon may be a family man, or celibate.

2 Immediate Preparation

The Parish Priest should invite the deacon over to the parish to discuss his future role in the life of the parish and to enable them to get to know each other. Here the Handbook could be a helpful guide to any such process.

He should arrange to meet with the deacon's wife and family – some sort of meal is good way of relaxing and getting to know one another.

He should arrange for the deacon to meet with key people in the life of the parish in a relaxed and informal setting.

He should arrange that, at the first Sunday Mass at which the deacon exercises his ministry, there be a short rite of welcome within the Mass which helps people understand the deacon's role. Some sort of refreshments after the Mass would give the people an opportunity to meet the new deacon and his wife and family.

The incoming deacon, for his part, should draw up a covenant and agree it with the Parish Priest and the Vicar General, which makes clear how much time he can give to his ministry, given his responsibilities to his family and working life. It is wise to err on the side of prudence, remembering that raising expectations too high will eventually cause stress to everyone.

3 The first few months

The deacon would be unwise, indeed misguided, to attempt to take over any role in the parish that is currently occupied by a lay parishioner. His role should be to stimulate and facilitate lay involvement and participation in the life of the parish.

The exception to this rule would be in the liturgy – where the deacon should purify sacred vessels⁵⁹ and bring the Blessed Sacrament from and to the tabernacle. Again, it would be wiser to take over these functions slowly and gently rather than making a big issue of them.

The deacon should spend time observing what goes on already in the parish, making himself aware of those areas where the parish is functioning well and evaluating those areas where help might be needed, and improvements made. Gaining the confidence and trust of people already working in these areas is vital before any suggestions or changes are made. The deacon advances the Kingdom through his humble service rather than by any attempt to bulldoze or force through change or perceived improvements. Even where things are happening which are in conflict with best practice, or GIRM or Canon Law, this is often through ignorance rather than defiance and should be changed with gentleness and tact, respecting the dignity and good will of all involved.

When assisting at Mass it is desirable that the Deacon wear a dalmatic on Sundays, Solemnities or other special occasions. On weekdays, an Alb and Stole is sufficient.

After six months working in a parish the deacon should arrange with the parish priest for a meeting in which the deacon's role is reviewed and where ideas which flow from a working knowledge of each other might be exchanged. It would be from this point that the direction of the deacon's ministry could be more clearly worked out.

It would be wise to hold such a review at least every twelve months.

The Parish Priest for his part should meet regularly with the deacon at least every month, but preferably every week.

Important matters should be discussed with the deacon so that he might be able to make a consultative contribution to any important decision that needs to be made. He should not be left to find out such things or any major parish event from the newsletter.

Parish Priests should inform themselves on the deacon's role, especially in the liturgy, as is spelled out quite clearly in GIRM. This Diocesan Handbook for Parish Priests and Deacons also gives clear guidance.

The Director for the Diaconate is always available should a priest or deacon wish to consult.

⁵⁹ GIRM 183, 279

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