

After Ordination: Deacons as Herald of the Gospel

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During this National Association of Deacons Biennial Conference (June 30-July 3, 2011) we have been reflecting on the rite of presentation of the Book of Gospels during the ordination of a deacon in the Latin or Roman Catholic Church. Each of our speakers has assisted us to reflect on the meaning and practical implications of each part of the prayer which accompanies the presentation. What I want to do is attempt to draw some of these themes together and cast an eye toward the future. I want to consider what happens after ordination from the perspective of the reception of the Second Vatican Council and its desire, prompted by the Holy Spirit, to restore the permanent ministry of deacon in the Latin Church.

Reception of a council means the way in which the teachings of a council have been taken up and reflected in the language, theology, liturgy, ecclesial practice and the general life of the Church. Some excellent and subtle theological work has been done on the theology of reception and the hermeneutics of reception to help us understand the processes involved. I don't have space in the limited time available to develop this, so I want us instead to focus on an image of reception.¹

Let's imagine a super tanker on the high seas cruising south toward Australia to deliver its load of oil. An order is received from Copenhagen, where the ship's owners are located, to deliver the cargo to Japan instead. So when the order is relayed to turn around it does appear that the ship has immediately turned as the forward momentum takes the ship in the same direction it was heading. That is on the old coordinates, before we perceive the ship to be turning back on the new course north toward Japan. That's what happens in reception of a council. The momentum of the old course carries the Church forward before we notice the turning happening. To make matters more complex, the Second Vatican Council had perhaps the widest scope of any council. Almost no element of Church life was left unexamined. John XXIII said the aims of the Council were to assist Catholics to live their faith more deeply, to heal the divisions among Christians and to bring all women and men into the Church of Christ through our proclamation of the Gospel and our holiness. Imagine that each element, e.g. the reformed liturgy, renewal of religious life, ecumenical engagement and restoration of the diaconate, are each a separate super tanker and receive the order to set a new course at slightly different times. The whole fleet experiences forward momentum and turning differently. Now you have some picture of the process of reception.

Before we begin the exploration more formally I want to make a few general remarks in order to set some real world context, the *sitz im leben*, in which the diaconate is received, or not, in our various local Churches. There are two kinds of deacons in the Roman Catholic Church; deacons intending to be presbyters, who are formed as future presbyters and deacons who intend to remain deacons.² I am not convinced many dioceses know what the second category of deacon is formed for.

¹ PPT slide 2

² PPT slide 3. Although the 'two' deacons in this picture look similar they are in fact quite different. One is a transitional deacon and the other a permanent deacon.

Deacons who are presbyteral candidates will have undergone formation in four elements, doctrinal, human, spiritual and pastoral. This will be more intensive than the other deacons because of their live-in status. Mostly this would have been all expenses paid formation over a six year period before diaconal ordination. This deacon, after ordination will be appointed full time to a pastoral ministry, normally a parish, where he will complete his apprenticeship for presbyteral ordination. In accordance with canon law, as a cleric incardinated into his diocese he will be supported from the clergy sustentation fund unless he chooses not to be supported because he has independent sources of income sufficient for his needs.³ After about a year he will complete the apprenticeship and be ordained a (permanent) presbyter and immediately appointed to parish ministry. His entire formation is directed to parochial ministry and to his eventually becoming the pastoral leader of a parish community, which is the proper and essential ministry of the presbyter.

The Australian Catholics Bishops Conference, using the *Ratio* or Norms for the Formation of Deacons has determined that the formation program required for our second type of deacon has four elements, doctrinal, human, spiritual and pastoral.⁴ This reflects the pattern of *Pastores Dabo Vobis* on the formation of presbyters, i.e. the first type of deacon.⁵ Doctrinal formation requires the completion of a bachelor degree in theology. In regional Australia where theological resources are scarce other provisions may be made. Most deacons will complete this study part time over six to eight years. For the spiritual, pastoral and human formation, deacons undertake in their own time and frequently on weekends, about three years of sessions. In my own diocese that was completed in seven weekend sessions each year and a weekend retreat. By the time a man is ready for ordination he has completed hundreds of hours of formation in all four areas and earned an academic qualification in theology. In most if not all diocese this will be at the deacons own expense. He has devoted considerable time, money and commitment to his formation and probably juggled work and family responsibilities as well.⁶ Not to mention the contribution and sacrifices made by his family if he is a married man.

After ordination what is our second type of deacon appointed to and by whom? He may be appointed to a part time role in a parish, possibly his home parish. He is frequently left to work out his own ministry in the parish and a lot of it will be sacramental and liturgical, possibly not through his own choice. It is unlikely that he will be appointed to a specific pastoral role in the parish, deanery or diocese. He may only be able to devote a few hours each week to this ministry if he is in secular employment and he is unlikely to receive remuneration and benefits from the clergy sustentation fund even if he has no other source of income. He is likely to have less time and fewer specific responsibilities in the parish than a lay pastoral associate who may or may not have any theological formation or the hundreds of hours of formation, but who will be paid out of parish funds.

³ Can 266 §1, 288§1, 2, 3. Directory 15-17.

⁴ Norms, section IV

⁵ John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Pastores dabo vobis*.

⁶ Unfortunately there are many deacons who have not experienced the fullest extent of this four-fold formation and that in itself presents a barrier to their full acceptance as sacred ministers along side of presbyters and undermines the confidence the bishop might have in them.

He may be appointed to this parish by his bishop, but clear pastoral responsibilities may not be indicated at the time of appointment. He may be appointed by the parish priest, perhaps just by a handshake agreement.

If he has a wider responsibility beyond the parish, in a Catholic agency or related work such as school chaplain, campus minister, Caritas director, etc it is likely that he found the appointment himself, applied for it along with lay people and was appointed to the position by a lay person who heads the Catholic agency. He would normally be assigned some title commonly used for lay ministries, such as Pastoral Associate or Sacramental Coordinator.

What's wrong with this picture?

What's wrong with this picture? Well a lot actually, both theologically and canonically. But perhaps the fundamental problem is that the formation required for diaconal ordination and the scope for ministerial placements made available to deacons after ordination is asymmetric. One deacon remarked to me once, "The formation is like a V8 engine and the ministerial placement options are like a golf cart. Do we really need a V8 engine fitted to a Golf Cart?"

This is the problem in a nut shell; while both the first and second type of deacon have a similar (though not identical formation) we (when I say 'we' I mean the Church) know what to do with the first type because they are "priests in waiting" and we know what a priest does and is in the Catholic Church. The second type of deacon we generally do not know what and who he is, what he does or what he could do. This lack of understanding applies to his theological and canonical status, his personal capacities for ministry and his valid aspirations for ministry, which are vital elements in the bishop's decision to appoint a deacon to a ministry.⁷ At the end of the formation period after we have ordained him we try to fit him into one of two patterns we understand, the presbyteral or lay ministry pattern both of which are focussed on parish. We do this as a church for a number of reasons, five of which we will explore in this presentation.

First we have a very constricted theology of diaconate which asserts service or charity work or social justice ministry, as the defining ministry of deacons. This is based on a false understanding of the *diacon* group of words including the incorrect link we have made between them and the caritative group of words.⁸ Allied to this is misunderstanding of some specific Scriptural texts; Acts 6:1-8, John 13 and Philippians 2:6-11.

Secondly we have a limited understanding of the theology of the sacrament of orders. This lack partly stems from four key factors; not understanding the significance of the renewed theology of episcopate emerging from Vatican II, not understanding the relationship of orders within an ecclesiology of communion, the persistence of a functionalist understanding of the sacrament or orders and finally an overly sociological understanding of the nature of Orders and the Church. These factors are also limits to the renewal of the episcopate and presbyterate sought by Vatican II and the cause of identity problems for both, but I will not address these issues here.

⁷ Directory 40 It is for the bishops alone, since they rule and have charge of the particular Churches as Vicars and legates of Christ, to confer ecclesiastical office on each deacon according to the norm of law.

⁸ The *diakon* words are all those NT Greek words that have diakon as a stem, such as diakonos or deacon. The caritative words are those associated with love and loving service to another.

A third factor is an inability to appreciate the intentions of the Second Vatican Council in restoring and renewing the permanent ministry of deacon. Vatican II did not want to restore a particular form or model of diaconate that might have been present in the past. The past offers an extremely varied picture. We have deacon Cardinal Pole from the Council of Trent who missed out on being pope by one vote, deacon pope Hadrian V, the last pope who remained a deacon, deacon Francis of Assisi a herald and troubadour of God, deacon Ephraim, doctor of the Church, theologian and poet, Deacon Lawrence the martyr of Rome and many other deacons with diverse charisms and ministries.

A fourth factor is a genuine lack of knowledge and awareness about the *Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* and the *Directory for the Ministry and Life of (Permanent) Deacons*.⁹ Many of the questions bishops, priests, deacons and laity have about the diaconate are answered in these two documents.

The fifth and final factor I wish to consider is fear, expressed as a lack of faith in the sacraments and in the Spirit to provide gifts for the life of the Church.

Let's consider each of these five factors in turn and conclude by opening up possibilities for the deacon post-ordination.

1. Constricted theology of diaconate.¹⁰

The Introduction to the Norms states that

The almost total disappearance of the permanent diaconate from the Church of the West for more than a millennium has certainly made it more difficult to understand the profound reality of this ministry. However, it cannot be said for that reason that the theology of the diaconate has no authoritative points of reference, completely at the mercy of different theological opinions.¹¹

Among the points of reference are included; the mystery of Trinitarian communion, participation in the ministry of Christ, sacramental grace, theology of Orders, the ministry of the bishop, epiclesis and the role of the Holy Spirit in forming the Church and finally incardination. The Norms indicate that this is not a complete listing.

An extremely significant point introduces sections 3-9, in which the points of reference are developed;

The effectiveness of the formation of permanent deacons depends to a great extent on the theological understanding of the diaconate that underlies it. In fact it offers the co-ordinates for establishing and guiding the formation process and, at the same time, lays down the end to be attained.

If we do not start with the correct theological framework then our formation processes will not be effective. The correct theology of diaconate will lead us toward the end to which the formation leads but an incorrect theological framework will lead us to some other place.

⁹ Hereafter referred to as Norms and Directory.

¹⁰ PPT slide 4

¹¹ Norms, *Introduction* n3-8

I suggest that the reason we have such a stark difference between the two types of deacons described above is precisely because we have formation programs premised on a false theology of diaconate and so as a Church we are left confused about what to do with them. We do not know the end we wish to attain in deacon formation.

The dominate theology of diaconate is developed from four sources, the first source is a particular interpretation of some texts of Scripture; Acts 6:1-8, John 13, Philippians 2:4-11, a second source is semantic confusion about the *diacon* group of words, a third source is models of diaconal ministry particularly in the USA and Germany and a fourth source is confusion of emphases on diaconal ministry in official documents about diaconate.

I have dealt with Acts 6:1-8 in some length in an article in *The Pastoral Review*, Deacons and the Servant Myth.¹² Eusebius in his history of the Church is the first to refer to the Seven as deacons. Acts does not use the word *diaconos* (deacon) for the Seven, even though Luke-Acts uses the word *diaconos* for other ministers. Acts does say they are to undertake the *diaconia* with which the apostles have also been charged by Christ to undertake, that is the *diaconia* of the word or the proclamation of the Gospel. *Diaconia* is translated here and in other places as ministry, just as it is in *Lumen gentium* 24 when the Second Vatican Council describes the mission of the bishop as a *diaconia* or ministry. Vatican II does not refer to the Seven in its decision to restore the diaconate but in the Latin Rite ordination, the Seven, along with the Levites, are referred to as part of the diaconal ministry.

If the story of the Seven Hellenists or Greek speaking Jews is regarded as the foundation story of the diaconate then it is definitely not a foundation of a ministry of charity, defined as meeting the material needs of people. Most recent translators of the Bible try to make it so by adding food or funds as the source of the complaint of the Greek speaking community but food or funds are words simply not present in any Greek manuscript of Acts 6:1-8. All that we see of the ministry of the Seven involves preaching the word, catechising, baptising and martyrdom. The last, of which, most deacons are happy to avoid. That is why the section concludes, 'and the word of God continued to spread' (Acts 6:9). The interpretative key is included in the line most deacons ignore.

Although I don't have time to offer a complete exegesis of the remaining texts let's just note a few salient points. In John 13, when John describes Jesus' dramatic action of washing the feet of the disciples, he does not use any of the *diacon* group of words nor any of the Greek words available to him, and used elsewhere, for servant. Instead he uses *doulos* or slave because he knows as does his audience that one who is a *diaconos* would never wash the feet of guests. The *diaconos* was a position of honour at a *deipnon* or feast, and the men chosen for this position had to be free born men of good standing. In spite of the fact that during the washing of the feet ritual we will sing about servants and being of service to others, the word is not used in the text. Jesus has something much more profound to say about being a slave and giving himself over to the will of his Father. There is no institution narrative in John and it is this action of washing the feet that connects Jesus death with Eucharist. I know that jugs and towels are very popular diaconal symbols in many dioceses, including my own, but they have no part in the diaconal story at all.

¹² Anthony Gooley, Deacons and the Servant Myth, *The Pastoral Review*, Nov/Dec 2006, pp3-7 The article may also be found on the website www.ausdeacon.org.au

Philippians 2:4-11 contains that beautiful hymn to Christ who though in the form of God emptied himself and took on the form of a slave (*doulou*) and even accepted death, death on a cross. Yet many have attempted to construct a theology of diaconate founded on this text, which does not contain a single *diakon* word. There is nothing in this text to connect it with deacons. A so called kenotic theology of diaconate is an attempt to rework the servant myth.

I believe the reason why the interpretations of these texts go so horribly wrong is that they represent examples of eisegesis or reading into the text meanings that are not found there. The texts are not allowed to speak for themselves but a pre-existing theological bias that diaconate is about humble charitable service, to the poor and marginalised is imposed on them. The texts are made to fit the theology and not to inform theology.

We cannot get anywhere with a theology of diaconate if we conflate of the various words for love and loving service, the caritative words, with the *diakon* words. As Collins has shown the *diakon* words never indicate this kind of service and Brodd has shown that the New Testament Greek and early Church sources never use any *diakon* or caritative words as synonyms.¹³ They have an entirely different semantic scope.

2. Theology of the Sacrament of Orders¹⁴

Vatican II was the first Council to solemnly define that Episcopal Ordination is a sacrament and that this sacrament contained the fullness of the sacrament of orders.¹⁵ It was the first Council to apply a theology of communion or *koinonia* as a means of understanding the relationships among the three apostolic orders (deacon, presbyter and bishop) and also the relationship between laity and ordained members of the Church.¹⁶

It also established a descending theology of orders. All ordained ministry is the ministry of Christ handed on to and through the Apostles in the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ The bishops succeeded the apostles in making present the one apostolic ministry in the Church.¹⁸ The bishops have a *diakonia* or ministry as shepherds of the whole local Church and they share this with their helpers, the deacons and priests.¹⁹ The ministry of all the ordained is directed to the one purpose, the building up of the Church, which is Christ's Body, for life and mission in Christ.²⁰ Obviously there are nuances here that I will not have space to address but we have to acknowledge that this is a radical recasting of the theology of the sacrament of Order that was dominant in the period from the 16th century to Vatican II.

I believe that the theological vision of the sacrament of Orders which was made possible by a recovery of the ecclesiology of *communio/koinonia* has not been received by the Church.²¹ As a consequence the renewal of the ordained ministry and the relationship between the lay

¹³ John N Collins, *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990. Sven Brodd, *Ecclesiological Investigations 2*. Nordic Lutheran Churches, Uppsala, 2000.

¹⁴ PPT slide 5

¹⁵ *Lumen Gentium* 21

¹⁶ LG 20, 21

¹⁷ LG 20

¹⁸ LG 20 and *Christus dominus* 2,4, 11

¹⁹ LG 24, 21, 29

²⁰ LG 32,

²¹ PPT 7

and ordained members of the Church in the mission of the Church has been hampered. Bishops still think of their primary identity as priests, priests rarely think of themselves as presbyters belonging to a presbytery, and the diaconate is regarded as just one of the stages on the way to priesthood. Few have grasped that the bishop (who presides at all liturgies in the diocese) presides at the Eucharist because *he is a bishop* but a priest presides at the Eucharist *because there is a bishop*.²²

Prior to Vatican II the theology of orders had not developed substantially from the 13th century and Peter Lombard's definition of the fullness or highest power of orders as being the ability to consecrate the elements of bread and wine, since through this action not only was Christ's Body in the Eucharist made manifest but also his Body the Church.²³ Therefore the priest and not the bishop were at the top of an ascending order of ranks. These ranks had seven steps; porter, exorcist, lector, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, priest. Note there is no bishop in this picture at all and a man became a cleric at first tonsure between lector and acolyte. There is no bishop because there was in their thinking no power higher than the power to consecrate the elements, therefore the bishop was a priest with some additional powers of governance, but his primary identity was that of a priest. The ones with the pointy hats were in effect priest-bishops and so it was possible for them to use the phrase "we priests". A man progressed through each of these ranks in what is called the *cursus honorum* or course of honours. All but presbyteral ordination and what was called, and still sometimes referred to as episcopal consecration happen in the seminary chapel with perhaps only seminarians and possibly family present for some of the minor orders.

From 1969, following the wishes of the Council, Paul VI revised the process by suppressing the minor orders and making ordination to the diaconate the beginning of the clerical state as it had been in the ancient Church.²⁴ The ministries of lector and acolyte were restored as instituted lay ministries. Any priest or bishop ordained before 1969 would not have considered diaconate anymore than one of the steps to climb on the way to priesthood.

I am not convinced that the *cursus honorum* has come to an end or that the perception that priesthood as the pinnacle has been substantially changed. This is due in part to retention of the practice of sequential ordination and the requirement that the lay ministries of lector and acolyte are received by men intended for clerical life. It seems the course has been merely shortened not abolished. Nor has the lay character of lector/reader and acolyte been affirmed in most dioceses because they do not form lay people for these ministries or use the rite of institution in a public ceremony or have restored the ministries at all. Ironically some dioceses don't have these ministries because they 'don't want to clericalise the laity', which betrays their clerical attachment to the *cursus honorum* and their failure to receive the intentions of the Council that a lay ministry be restored to the laity. Further, in the system

²² PPT 6

²³ From the 13th century to Vatican II the sacrament of orders was defined in terms of the celebration of the Eucharist and presiding at the Eucharist was understood to be the highest power of orders, therefore all the lower orders served the priesthood. The consecration (they tended to avoid the word ordination) of a priest as a bishop was to signify the transferral of certain powers of governance over the local Church. This model came under question during the late 19th and 20th centuries as new historical resources from the earliest centuries of the Church became available and provide new evidence to challenge the prevailing theology.

²⁴ Paul VI *Ministeria quaedam*: Apostolic Letter: On first tonsure, minor orders, and the subdiaconate. 1972

prior to the Council, the Church did intentionally 'clericalise' the laity because the lector and acolyte were clerics before they ever had an ordination.

This problem will not go away as long as we maintain the sequential ordination system and require candidates for ordination to be instituted as lectors and acolytes. Our ecclesial practice is out of line with our ecclesiology and sacramental theology. We should return to the ancient practice of direct ordination, so that men are formed for the diaconate or the presbyterate and we select our bishops from among suitable deacons and presbyters and if the Spirit leads us to do so, also lay men. The proposal might seem provocative but sequential ordination was not the practice of the Church until the 12th century and even after that time some bishops were still chosen from among the deacons and lay men had been chosen as bishops.²⁵ Sequential ordination and institution into the lay ministries is not an essential element of the sacrament of orders. To do justice to the issues raised here would require a paper devoted solely to this question but I hope the outlines of the issue are at least visible to you.

The continued presence of deacons intended for presbyterate in the Church will always hamper the perception and development of the permanent ministry of deacons. Combined with the persistence of an ascending theology of ministry which diminishes the episcopate as the fullness of Orders, the diaconate as a permanent Order will struggle to find its place in the Church.

3. The intentions of Vatican II²⁶

One of the important elements shaping reception of the diaconate is the intention of the Second Vatican Council in restoring the permanent ministry of deacon. In its report, *From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diaconia of the Apostles*, the International Theological Commission outlined what it believed to be this intention.²⁷ Its intention has three aspects; to restore the principle of a permanent ministry of deacon and not any particular form of that ministry, to allow that form to develop over time through the experience of the Church and to establish the principle that both deacon and priest assist the bishop no longer considering the diaconate as a subordinate rank to the priest.

Call for the restoration of the permanent ministry of deacon at Vatican II did not emerge in a vacuum nor were such calls without precedent. The Council of Trent, in response of the Reformers denial of a threefold ministry, agreed that the truncated version of diaconate then extant did not witness to the doctrine the Church believed and so ordered its restoration.²⁸ One can speculate on the influence of the presence of Cardinal Pole, then a deacon, might

²⁵ Pope Hadrian V remained a deacon after his election as pope. Cardinal Pole was a deacon and cardinal and later bishop. Ambrose of Milan was a lay man chosen as bishop and ordained directly to that office. St John Chrysostom, Ignatius of Antioch and most bishops were deacons never ordained presbyters prior to episcopal ordination until 10th century. Exceptions, as we see above, occurred.

²⁶ PPT 8

²⁷ ITC *From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diaconia of the Apostle* 2003. This document examines the motivations of the Council in restoring the permanent ministry of deacon in the Latin or Roman Catholic Church and also the evidence for the ordination of women as deacons.

²⁸ Council Trent session IV.

have had on this.²⁹ As we know that call did not eventuate in restoring a more complete form of diaconate. Later in history Pius XII consulted among experts and bishops about his proposal to restore the permanent ministry of deacons as a full time ministry alongside that of priest, mainly for the care of remote communities and assistance with diocesan programs and ministries. Developments in France and Germany, especially during World War II and after also propelled the consideration of restoration.

In the consultation prior to the Second Vatican Council, John XXIII through the Central Preparatory Commission issued an open invitation to the bishops to indicate to the Commission the pastoral and doctrinal issues they believed were important for this Council to consider. When all the various returns were categorised and tabulated three items came to the top of the list of the world wide episcopate; clarification of the theology of episcopate, greater use of the vernacular in the liturgy and the restoration of the permanent ministry of deacons. Clearly it was a significant issue for the bishops.

The International Theological Commission also outlines what it calls the key motivations for the restoration of the permanent ministry of deacon.³⁰ The first motive of the Council concerns affirming the faith of the Church in the reality of the threefold nature of the Sacrament of Orders instituted by Christ. That is we need a permanent sign of the permanent reality of the threefold order, therefore we need permanent deacons as much as permanent priests and permanent bishops. The second motive of the Council is to provide for the pastoral care of communities which do not have a priest and to assist in the new evangelisation especially through diocesan initiatives. The third motive of the Council was to open the grace of diaconal ministry to the Church. Not only does this affirm the Catholic understanding that the sacraments contain the grace they signify but that grace is given through Christ in the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Church. Taken together these motives affirm that the sacred ministry differs from the ministry of laity because it is a participation in the apostolic ministry instituted by Christ and signifies Christ's continued presence as head and shepherd of his Body the Church.

I suggest that the intentions and motivations of the Council are not well known and have not informed the thinking in dioceses about the ministry of deacons. They should be a key element of the formation of clergy and laity in every diocese before the ministry of the deacon is restored and they should inform the consideration of those who make the decisions about clergy placements, including placement of deacons.

4. Lack of knowledge of the Norms and Directory³¹

I suggest that there are few bishops, definitely fewer priests, and some deacons who are not aware of the two documents issued in 1998 by the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Congregation for Clergy, the *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* and the *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* (I am very happy to be proved wrong on all counts). The Norms were developed in response to reflections on the experience of dioceses which had deacons and also so as to provide a companion

²⁹ Cardinal Reginald Pole from England was made cardinal while he was a deacon, in fact a permanent one, until after Trent when he was made a bishop.

³⁰ PPT 9

³¹ PPT slide 10

document to the norms of priestly formation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. The Norms were provided to assist bishops in developing a consistent approach to the formation of deacons throughout the world by developing local norms for formation. Bishop's conferences were asked to submit formation norms based on the document which take account of local circumstances.

The Directory tells us about what the ministry of the deacon is in the Church. The Directory tells us about their rights and responsibilities, about their remuneration, about how they should be appointed and by whom, the scope of diaconal ministry and instructs bishops and others how to interpret canon law with regard to deacons. The Directory does not ask that local churches or Bishop's Conferences to develop their own directory in the same way it requests them to use the Norms to develop local formation guidelines. After all it seems rather redundant because the Directory for Deacons like that of Priests is considered a general executory decree when it interprets canon law.

I quote from the joint introduction to the documents:

The *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*, as in the case of the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, has, together with its hortative character, juridically binding force where its norms "recall disciplinary norms of the Code of Canon Law" or "determine with regard to the manner of applying universal laws of the Church, explicitate their doctrinal basis and inculcate or solicit their faithful observance". In these specific cases, it is to be regarded as a formal, general, executory Decree (cf. canon 32).

In the Directory we find that great possibilities are opened up for diaconal ministry in a diocese, some of which we explore shortly. Many of the fundamental questions bishops, priests, deacons and laity have about diaconal ministry are already answered in its pages. I have as a kind of hobby, not a particularly sane one I know, collecting diocesan deacon's directories and guidelines. I have encountered in a number of them content which totally contradicts the Directory and its interpretation of canon law. Some diocesan directories or handbooks seem blissfully ignorant of the juridically binding force of the document.

I cite two examples to illustrate. The first concerns pastoral leadership of a parish community. It is both sound theology and ecclesial practice that a priest should always be appointed as pastoral leader of a parish community because he is the one who presides over the Eucharistic assembly in the name of the bishop. It is the bishop who celebrates or causes to be celebrated all sacraments in the local church (diocese). It is not the task of a deacon or lay person to normally lead a parish. If a bishop is truly unable to appoint a priest as pastoral leader of a parish, because of an extreme shortage, he may appoint a deacon as pastoral leader and name a priest who has the *cura animarum* in that locality. If he cannot appoint a priest and there are no deacons he may appoint a suitably qualified lay person or group of lay people but he can never appoint such lay people if there is a deacon available. That is the universal law of the Church as interpreted by the Directory and also other documents.³² This interpretation is sound theologically but I won't go into all of the

³² Can 517§ 2, as interpreted in Directory 41 Where permanent deacons participate in the pastoral care of parishes which do not, because of a shortage, have the immediate benefit of a parish priest, they always have

arguments here. Yet I have found in many local directories that in this situation extreme need the bishop may invite applications from deacons or laity and appoint the most suitable candidate from among these.

A second example concerns a deacon finding a ministerial appointment. Some local directories suggest that a deacon can apply for any position available in a diocese or parish along with suitable lay candidates. That is DIY appointment. Clerics are not employees of a diocese, ordination and incardination is an entirely different relationship and clerics must be appointed by their bishop to a position.³³ They should not be searching the positions vacant notices in the diocesan newspaper and putting in a CV and going for interviews as employees. The bishop through his clergy appointments board should be appointing deacons. If it is not possible to write a diocesan policy requiring priests to apply for jobs in a diocese alongside of lay competitors, like employees, than it is not possible for deacons to be treated as employees either.

If ever there is a doubt about interpreting the law the Directory provides an important rule;

The Diaconate brings with it a series of rights and duties as foreseen by canons 273-283 of the *Code of Canon Law* with regard to clerics in general and deacons in particular.³⁴

Therefore whatever can be said of priest with regard to canon law can be said of deacons apart from those specific exemptions granted by the law to deacons.

5. Fear³⁵

The final factor which makes the outcomes different for the two types of deacons I have named fear. One deacon, who had been ordained for several years, said to me during my formation, "Priests and the people in a diocese find the idea of deacons more frightening than the reality of deacon." Deacons in the abstract can seem to create imagined problems but when a flesh and blood deacon is competent, pastoral and engaged with his ministry and the priest and people, it seems the fears simply fade away.

I want to very briefly touch on some fears which hamper the reception of the second type of deacon. Some women, including women religious, fear the diaconate because they think deacons will take their positions or it's unfair that men can be deacons and not women at the present time. As to the first fear there is not such shortage of pastoral work that the appearance of a deacon will suddenly corner the market. Fear of competition is only made more reasonable when local directories have clerics/sacred ministers and laity competing for the same positions. That is deacons apply for their jobs.

precedence over the non-ordained faithful., and interpreted in *Mysterio ecclesiae* In any event, the preference which this canon gives to deacons cannot be overlooked.

³³ Directory 40. Commentaries on the right of clergy to the financial support of the diocese stress that incardination and ordination establish a relationship between the local church and clergy which is not one of an employee-employer relationship. It is a spiritual and theological bond. In Australian taxation regulations deacons, like priests, can be paid as religious practitioners so that a combination of cash stipend and non-reportable fringe benefits creates the total sustentation package.

³⁴ Directory n7

³⁵ PPT 11

As to the second fear, it is true that once we had women deacons and I believe that this ministry should be restored, there is certainly no church teaching preventing this. But we should not oppose men being ordained as deacons because women can't, because the motivation for not doing so comes from spite. Spitefulness may close us off to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our Church regards each vocation, of deacon, priest and bishop (I am just focusing on orders) to be a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church for its nurture, not an individual prize or possession.

To digress just for a moment we as a Church need to recover the ecclesial dimension of ordination. When we ordain a man we as a Church are recognising and accepting a gift the Holy Spirit gives to the local Church (diocese). The grace of this sacrament is entirely directed toward the Church and not to the one who receives ordination. We always ordain within the context of Eucharist presided over by the bishop, in the Cathedral Church (normally) with the whole People of God assembled (deacons, priests, bishop and laity). There is much more to develop in this line but I simply want to draw your attention to the fact that we focus too much on the ordinand and not on the Church which actually receives the gift of the apostolic ministry through the one ordained. We need the eyes and heart of faith to look more deeply at the reality of ordination. Social theory will simply not account for what is happening-our understanding must be grounded in sacramental theology.

Priests might fear deacons because many deacons are married men and perhaps some are resentful of this because they have not consciously and freely embraced the gift of celibacy which should have been discerned during presbyteral formation. They might fear deacons because we are encroaching on their territory as sacred ministers. They might fear deacons because the only deacons they have ever really known were transitional and mostly young and they are not sure how to work with and help form men who are more mature in age, life and work experience. (This last point is one that needs development because of the potential for misunderstanding and conflict that could inadvertently develop.)

Sometimes I think some of our leaders live in a kind of fear that leads them into what I call maintenance mode. They want to just keep things turning over and not foster brave and courageous initiatives for evangelisation. They may think, "the parish has served as well for the last three to four hundred years, could there be another way of proclaiming the Gospel". They fear some of the practicalities such as diocesan finances and wonder how they can look after their deacons. I don't believe doubt is the opposite of faith it is fear. For when we acknowledge the presence of the Risen Lord among us in the Holy Spirit, we hear his voice, "Peace be with you", and we take the risk to put out into the deep and to cast our nets again even though it seems a useless task. Faith gives us a certain courage and confidence founded on hope which comes from the Lord.

I sometimes wonder what would have happened to Mary MacKillop and so many of the great women and men who transformed God's world with their faith and openness to the prompting of the Spirit. In the face of so much difficulty if they let their fears, of which they had many, hold them back what might have happened to our Church.

I sense that we have developed an overly sociological model of Church and ministry. The sociological model sees only power relationships and democratic conceptualisation of the Church and views sacred ministers as nothing more than office bearers in the community,

like elected officials. In particular we place too much emphasis on the human dimension of the church and hold onto a diminished understanding of its divine origins and that of the hierarchy of deacon, priest and bishops.

Allied to the sociological models is a functionalist understanding of sacrament of orders. That is we look at all the functions a priest can do (we rarely start with bishop) and then subtract from that list to define what a deacon is by the things he can't do that a priest can. Sacred ministry is not defined by what a person can do but by what he is by virtue of ordination- the sacramental character. Baptism/confirmation/chrismation and Holy Orders are each understood ontologically as bringing the person into a new and permanent orientation or order within the body of Christ and the world. They are sacraments for ordering the priesthood of the whole Church in which every Christian woman and man participates in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

We need to overcome some of our fears in order to allow the Spirit to work through the diaconate for the good of the Church and its mission.

Possibilities for the Diaconate³⁶

The Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons, coupled with a proper theology of this ministry opens up immense possibilities for our Church and world to receive the grace of diaconal ordination. When we look at the Directory as a whole, and in particular at sections 22-42 we can see the following points emerge:

- Diocesan and parish works (apart from parish pastoral leadership) is the main context for ministry
- The majority of suggested appointments have a diocesan scope, such as chaplain to ethnic communities or youth groups, campus ministry in a university or Catholic school, ministry within a diocesan agency which supports the pastoral mission of the local church, ministry within a charitable agency, specific areas of responsibility within diocesan structures such as the curial office, chancellor, tribunal etc and a host of other ministries beyond that of pastoral care of a parish
- Even within a parish the focus tends to be specific groups or pastoral needs within the parish such a marriage preparation and sacramental programs, adult faith education, supporting young families and forming lay ministers
- Engagement in new evangelisation, outreach to those on the margins of Church (which would make campus ministry in a Catholic school such an important ministry), reanimating communities
- Parish pastoral leadership only if there is no priest available
- Most of these are full time appointments
- They are appointments (not jobs) made by the bishop
- They are remunerated as is required by canon law, either from the clergy sustentation fund or through other sources (Directory 15-18),

³⁶ PPT slides 12, 13

this is not as difficult task as it seems once we think of deacons as clerics.

Notice that it is ministry on behalf of the bishop directed toward what I call the scattered. The primary responsibility of the priest is the pastoral leadership of the assembly and consequently its liturgical life as the left arm of the bishop. The deacon may be seen as directed by his bishop toward Catholics and those that have yet to hear the Gospel and to those with particular needs. In this way the deacon is seen as the bishop's right hand man (which is embodied in the liturgical relationship). For all deacons, as for priests and bishops, the sacramental, liturgical and pastoral dimensions of ministry are always integrated and in some particular ministers one aspect may find a greater emphasis than another.³⁷

No matter the ministry to which a bishop appoints a deacon that deacon also needs a permanent base in a Eucharistic assembly. Liturgy, especially Eucharist, is the summit and source of Christian life no less so for the deacon than any other Catholic. In this assembly the deacon exercises his liturgical and sacramental ministries and in which he will preach from time to time. Even if his primary ministerial appointment is not to this particular parish he can provide an ancillary and supportive contribution to the life of the parish along side of the priest and lay pastoral workers.

Above all it is clear that there is immense scope for the second type of deacon, the permanent ones, after ordination. If we return to Acts 6 as the rite of ordination does, we can see how the Seven are called to be heralds of the Gospel and this is what they immediately set about doing so that the word of God continues to spread (Acts 6:9). We need to remember that the word of God is not conveyed by preaching and liturgy alone. Deacons are intimately connected to the 'liturgy after the liturgy' which is the sanctification of the world, through our bringing the needs of the Church and world into our local Eucharistic celebrations when we read the general intercession and when we send the assembly out to live what we proclaim. Deacons send the assembly on mission they don't simply dismiss them from the assembly like school children in the school hall or troops on parade.

The Word of God is a Living Word who came among us as one of us. The mystery of the incarnation is lived when we not only share his word and share words about him but when we enter into the lives of people so that the joys and hopes, the grief and anxiety of the women and men of today, especially the poor and marginalised, find an echo in our own hearts. If the world, which is so in need of the Good News is to hear it as good news, we need witnesses not only preachers of the word.

There is a possibility that if we embrace the Norms and Directory and have a proper theological orientation, then we will have the right coordinates to chart a course toward a diaconate envisaged and briefly sketch in Vatican II. If we have the right coordinates then we can achieve the end we have in mind and after ordination deacons will indeed be heralds of the Gospel of Christ.

³⁷ Directory 39-40