

National Association of Deacons Australia
Annual Conference
Hobart 23-26 March 2017
Deacons as Ministers of the New Evangelisation

The Theology of the Diaconate
in the Norms for Formation and Guidelines for
Ministry of Permanent Deacons
in the dioceses of the Catholic Church in Australia

Our path

- 1 CONTEXT
- 2 RECEPTION JOHN N COLLINS *DIAKONIA*
- 3 SERVANT ICON OR ENVOY?
- 4 PRIORITY OF BEING OVER DOING
- 5 SACRAMENTAL GRACE AND CHARACTER
- 6 'INTERMEDIATE ORDER'
- 7 MANDATED MESSENGER OF REVELATION
- 8 WHAT IS THE FUTURE?

A Borrás The Diaconate: problems and perspectives
Nouvelle Revue Theologique 2016

- Diaconate emphasises that faith is incarnational
- each local Church must ask itself not only *why* ordain deacons, but also ordain *for what*, and, most importantly, *with what operative vision of Church* ordain them.

Envoy.2

diakonia in classical
Greek society:

a commission that has
a religious connotation.

ITC identified the roles of 'presbyteral supply' and *diakonia* of charity. If not careful they threaten the integrity of the diaconate, since the inner logic of these options can lead to 'mini priest' or 'super lay person' typology

A Borrás

Approaches:

Northern Europe

North America



Icon of Christ the Servant

Australia

contemporary German exegesis

**Envoy entrusted with
religious mission**

1970's onwards:

James Keating, William
Ditewig, Owen Cummings and
others
promoted a spirituality of
service.

2005 first recognition of

Collins' research:

Richard Gaillardetz in O

Cummings, R Gaillardetz, W

Ditewig *Theology of the*

Diaconate Mahwah, NJ: Paulist

Press, 2005.

The most recent collection from the United States:

James Keating ed. *The Character of the Deacon* (2016)

Scott M Carl cites Collins in 27 of 49 footnotes in “*From Being with Jesus to Proclaiming the Word*”.

Stephen F Miletic in “*The Mystery of Jesus as Deacon*”, in a nine page section, “We examine the *diakon* word complex”, cites him 3 times (out of a total of 40 footnotes).

Shawn McKnight has adopted Collins’ research wholeheartedly, summing up by saying the deacon “is the bishop’s agent in giving *diakonia* to the Church.” (p 69)

icon

Christological;

sacramental;

spiritual motivation;

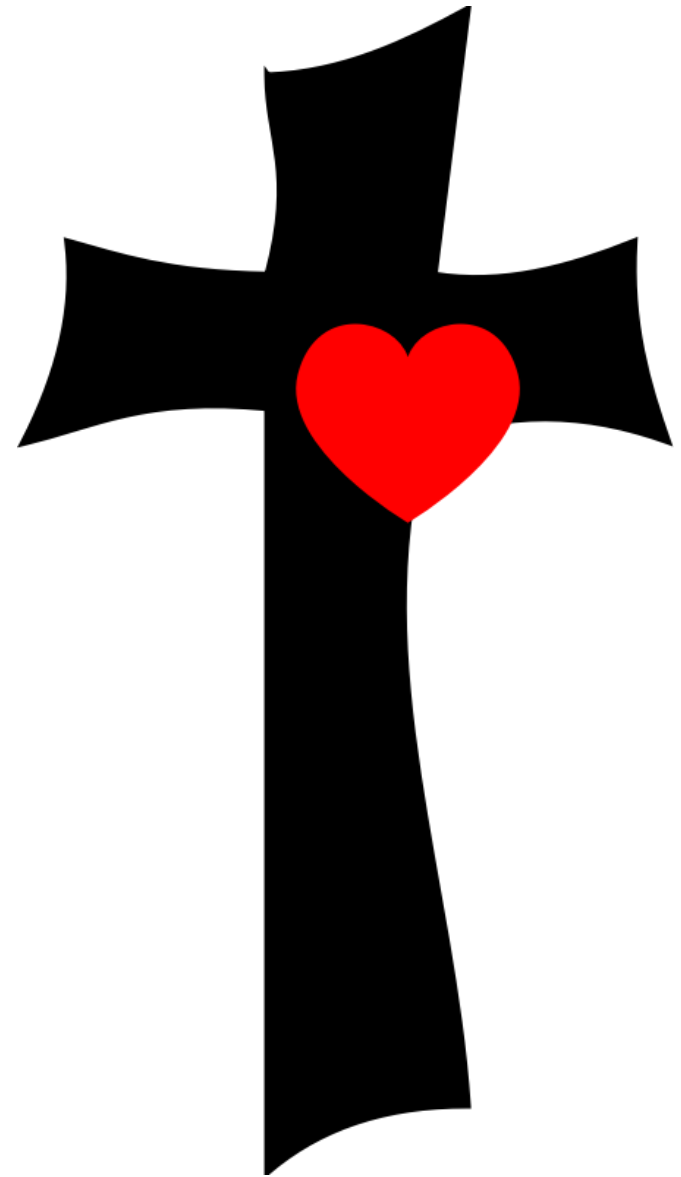
Church's mission: to evangelize and
serve the poor.

As practised, threefold service in
worship, proclamation and charity.

Continuing question: distinguish
from call to serve in baptism?
Bishop's call to service? Priest's?

Envoy.1 exegesis of key
text: Mk 10:45

“For the Son of
Man himself came not
to be served but to
serve, **and** to give his
life as a ransom for
many.”



Envoy.2

diakonia in classical
Greek society:

a commission that has
a religious connotation.

Envoy.3

prediction by Jesus of
his suffering and death

Mk 8:31,

9:31

10:33

Envoy.4

Response of disciples:

“Aww, let’s talk

about power

in your kingdom.” (v.

37)



Envoy.5

Jesus refers to his
death

Explains his *service*

‘epexegetical and’

Significance and
specificity of his
attitude of service.

Envoy.6

Jesus of Nazareth, the
Son of Man, is sent ('he
came') by the Father
for a task:

self-giving unto death
for the benefit of
others.

Preeminently an envoy
with a religious mission



Envoy.7

Theological foundation of
any diaconal service
in the Church

**Based upon
graced by**

Son of Man's service to
human beings

Envoy.8

~~What does a deacon do?~~

WHO IS A DEACON?

A consistent sacramental ordering of the Church gives identity to each member. Though an awkward manner of expressing the point, it may be made more clearly by using the personal pronoun “I” rather than the impersonal “one”.

Through baptism, I AM disciple

Through ordination, I AM deacon.

Through ordination, I AM presbyter.

Through ordination, I AM bishop.

Envoy.9

Patristic authors:
close bond of the
bishop with his
deacons

Sentiment:
deacon is ready to
extend the service due
by the chief shepherd
to the flock

Envoy.10

Specific character of a
deacon's service:

Participation in –

- Sacrament of Order
- church's ministry present in
the bishop
- jubilee mercy - 'good news
for the poor' (Lk 4) -
inaugurated by Jesus
himself

The National Directory for Formation of Deacons in England and Wales (2010) offers a handy theological summary (page 15):

“As Christ is the sacrament of God, so the Church is the sacrament of Christ. ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself’ and ‘we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us’ (2 Cor 5:19-20).

So the service that truly defines *diakonia* is akin to the noble service rendered by a faithful ambassador, totally dedicated to his master, his mission, his message; and the message in this case, carried in the name of Christ, is one of reconciliation and peace.”

Ordination situates the ordinand in a new manner within the Church. While remaining a member of the people of God, he is simultaneously set against (pose face a ses freres) the other members of the Church as one who symbolically manifests the reality that Christ himself, through the Spirit, ontologically precedes the Church as its foundation (l'Eglise vient [tient] du Christ par l'Esprit).

A Borrás

In order to articulate correctly the relationships of the ministries, ordained and baptismal, reflection is needed on *the power to serve* that is communicated in ordination.

Catholic view of sacrament is never merely declaratory, a recognition of service already undertaken, despite

AG 16, fn.3.

A Borrás

The 'trace mineral' in all
our discourse about
grace
"gift",
"gracious gift"
"superabundantly
excessive gracious gift"

chapters 2 and 3 of the
letter to the church at
Rome every
manifestation
imaginable, at that
time, of human
depravity, leading to
human beings' spiritual
and moral blindness,

chapter 5 the reason for this miserable catalogue. “(Adam) prefigured the One who was to come ... There is no comparison between the free gift and the offence of one man. If death came to many through the offence of one man, how much greater an effect the grace of God has had, coming to so many and so plentifully as a free gift through the one man Jesus Christ.”

Lost for words, he has to repeat himself as he did to portray the gift who is Jesus Christ.

“There is no comparison between the gift and the offence ... (that) brought condemnation, but now, after many offences, have come the free gift and so acquittal! Death came to reign over all, but how much greater the reign in life of those who receive the fullness of grace and the gift of saving justice.”

(5:14-17)

Notice:

“no comparison”,

“free gift”

“how much greater”

“so plentifully”

“the reign in life”

“the fullness of
grace”

“the gift of saving
justice”.

The dis-grace
the yearning for
grace ----
Israel, the freely
chosen, beloved
child/spouse/servant
of the Lord God.

Image of Israel's divided
heart is the divided city -

Split asunder by injustices
towards its own children

Separated from its Spouse
and his love by its
fascination with idolatrous
misadventures.

The Second Covenant
Initiated by the mission
of a *diakonos*, a Son of
Man,

the faithful envoy of the
faithful divine Spouse
who always seeks the
return of love from
beloved Israel.

The envoy of the
divine Spouse
completes the
mission for which he
was sent,
'so plentifully' 'the
gift of saving justice'
flows in blood and
water from his side.

Saving justice

*heals the alienated
heart

*transforms division
into union

*infuses the very life
and Spirit-breath of
the Spouse

*within receptive
hearts.

We need to be constantly working at articulating accurately the relationship of deacons both to presbyters and to the lay faithful.

The married vocation, following on the sacraments of initiation, is a sacrament *of grace*, while ordination is a sacrament *for grace*. The balance of personal, conjugal, familial and ministerial responsibilities is crucial

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The final sacrament is a sacrament *for* grace. This is the sacrament that makes saving justice present in *diakonoi*/ministers for the building up of the new Jerusalem, the new city, where all are seated at the supper of the Lamb, one now in adoration and praise, at home, finally, in the bridal chamber of the Spouse. All is gift.

Pope Benedict XVI clarified the different manner in which the gift is present in bishops and presbyters on the one hand, and in deacons, on the other hand.

Bishops and priests as *in the person of Christ*, representations of Christ, the life-giving Head of the Body of the Church

Deacons as in those who serve the Church through the *diakonia* of liturgy, word and charity

Ordination assumes a person (man) in his entire existence and for his entire existence. Henceforth, he transfers to the group of those whom the Church receives from God, who, as a result, through Christ and in the Spirit, give them selves as deacons.

Citation of A. Rouet “Vers une theologie du diaconat”, *Etudes* 400(2004), 798.

A deacon is configured to Christ the servant so that the community of the Church becomes a truly diaconal community in the world, at the heart and at the service of its history. “Diaconal ordination conforms a person to the service which Christ gives to the history of humanity, so that it will reach its fulfilment.”

Citation of A. Rouet “Vers une theologie du diaconat”, *Etudes* 400(2004), 798.

We best talk about
the 'character
permanently
imprinted on the
soul' by a sacrament

from within the
experience of living
that sacrament

Character is not a
'static' mark on the
soul. It is, rather,
dynamic in the
manner of a
changing and
growing
relationship

- P Fransen

‘Character’ is the ‘unfolding of a
new mould for the soul’,

conceived by the divine artist

whose gift of grace in the
sacrament draws the minister one
brush stroke at a time

to become the work of art
conceived by the master painter

Our graced relationship
unfailingly remoulds the soul
to become a dwelling for the
sacrament itself.

The 'spiritual mark' assumes
its unique 'design' due to the
lived ministry

and the unique
circumstances of each
minister who exercises the
ordained ministry.

As 'intermediate order', the deacon is directly related 'vertically' by 'order' to bishop and presbyter and 'horizontally' to the faithful for the reason that the deacon does not share in the presidency of the community.

- S McKnight

The deacon's
special arena of
ministry is the
narthex, the
membrane between
the Church and the
world

- D Faberberg

The presbyter is given to the Church for the gathering of the faithful in the celebration of Eucharist.

The deacon is mandated by the Church, that is, sent as his envoy by the bishop, to be the minister who reaches out to those who cannot find their own way to be gathered for the Eucharist.

- P Cashen

Popes' addresses to deacons

The heart of the diaconate ...

**to be a servant of the
mysteries of Christ**

and , at one and the same time,

**to be a servant of your
brothers and sisters ... two
dimensions in one reality**

Pope John Paul II Detroit (1987)

It is Christ alone who guides his Church, calls it and sends it on its mission of service. This is verified from the moment that each missionary disciple (Pope Francis *Evangelii gaudium* #24, 120) has a personal experience of the Saviour who encounters, heals and frees him or her.

A Borras

This experience of salvation persuades the baptised to take their part in the mission of the Church to bring human history to its fulfilment. This is the coresponsibility of all the baptised. The same experience allows those whom the Church calls, consecrates and sends as ministers to guide and form the Church authoritatively for its mission of salvation within history. This is the ministerial service of some of the baptised, in this case, of a deacon. A Borrás

Cf. Diaconal ministry is the able call to service for all in the Church -Sandie

MANDATED MESSENGER OF DIVINE REVELATION

In approaching a conclusion, it may be helpful to reflect on St Paul's insistence that he is *diakonos*. The words that accompany the handing over of the book of the Gospels to the deacon during the rite of ordination, "Receive the book of the Gospels, whose herald you now are", take on fresh meaning in this context.

1 Cor 3:5: “For what is Apollos and what is Paul? The *diakonoi* (servants NJB) through whom you came to believe and each has only what the Lord has given him.”

The concluding phrase ‘the Lord has given’ is rendered more literally in RSV, ‘as the Lord has assigned.’ The divine revealer assigns his envoys to deliver his message.

2 Cor 3:5 Paul confidence in facing God. “It is not that we are so competent that we can claim any credit for ourselves; all our competence comes from God.” To what competence is Paul referring? “Our competence to be ministers of a new covenant”, *diakonous hainas diathakas*. Paul is a mouthpiece, sent with a gift, his proclamation of a new covenant, from the Lord.

Paul's excitement,

His joy in the Spirit,

to be a *diakonos* of
the new covenant.

His astonishment at
'the love of Christ
(that) overwhelms us'
(5:14)

A paeon to
reconciliation (5:14-
21). It is Paul's thanks
to God that God has
given him 'the ministry
(*diakonia*) of
reconciliation.' (5:18)

How can this ecclesial reality develop in the Church in Australia?

Preliminary note:

Deacons' service in parish ministry "might seem an easy way to meet current demands." However, the ministry of deacon is not only in the parish. "Rather, parochial work should be regarded as extraordinary, it might not be the best use of what should normally be a radical ministry" whenever the bishop sees that kind of ministry is needed. "Like a smartphone, deacons have many apps, doing whatever the one who has oversight requests." (T Draine)

Norms England & Wales

- The deacon's ministry in the Church is truly one of service, "the Church's service sacramentalized" (Blessed John Paul II). Every deacon has a bond with his bishop. His service, first of all, consists in extending the reach of the bishop's service of the Gospel. Bishop Terry Draine (Middlesbrough, UK) refers to deacons as "the bishop's men, working wherever sent in the name of the Church, not just as private individuals

CONCLUSION

- Perhaps the developed theology that the International Theological Commission believes is in the future will speak of the deacon as a sacramental representation of Christ the obedient messenger (*'diakonos'*) who, in the power of the Spirit, spoke in the Father's name with good news for the poor (cf. Mark 1:2-3,9-11 citing Mal 3:1, Is 40:3).
- M McEntee KAIROS magazine October 2012