

Becoming a Permanent Deacon in the Diocese of Elphin

What is a Deacon?

He is a man called by the Bishop of the Diocese to Ordination. He is ordained to serve the Church in a threefold ministry

The Ministry of Charity –

He is particularly called to serve the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised.

He will coordinate the local church's response to their needs.

He will have a special care for matters of social justice.

He will foster and support parish groups and organisations.

The Ministry of the Word –

He will proclaim the Gospel and sometimes preach at Mass and other Religious Services.

He will preside over Services other than the Mass.

He will lead the people in Prayer

He will officiate at Funeral and Burial Services.

The Ministry of the Altar –

He will offer Service at the altar at Mass assisting the Bishop or Priest.

He will distribute Holy Communion at Mass, in hospital and in the homes of the sick, the housebound and the dying.

He will Baptise and prepare people for that sacrament.

He will officiate at Marriages and prepare couples for that Sacrament.

Has the Church always had Deacons?

Right from New Testament times it was so. The Acts of the Apostles 6: 2-4 tell us about the selection of St Stephen and six others:

The twelve summoned the disciples and said; 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables Therefore brothers, pick out seven men of good repute full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty.'

Some Deacons are transitory – that is, they are ordained for a relatively short time as part of their journey to Ordination as a Priest. Indeed over time this became the norm in the Church until the Second Vatican Council.

Some Deacons are Permanent. They remain in this calling for the rest of their lives. They can be single or married. This is how it was in the early Church. If single, they take a promise of celibacy when they are ordained and they live from then on as celibates. If married, they may not remarry should their spouse predecease them.

In 1964 the Church recognised a need in the modern world for the diaconal role. So she decided to return to the practise of the first Christian communities and ordain deacons for life-long service.

In 1972 Pope Paul VI stated that the permanent diaconate should be a driving force for the Church's service towards the local Christian communities as well as ***a sign or sacrament of the Lord Jesus himself who came not to be served but to serve.***

Who can apply in this diocese?

Single men over 30 and married men over 35 and under sixty who feel a call to service of the Church and the World. Single men must also feel called to a celibate life.

Most candidates will be in the world of work and will continue there after ordination. Some may be men who have taken early retirement. It remains, however, the role of every permanent deacon to have one foot in the sanctuary and the other in the workplace / community. Furthermore their will normally be exercised on a voluntary part-time basis through deacons are deacons at all times and in all circumstances.

Successful candidates will have demonstrated the necessary maturity for a life-long commitment.

They will be prepared to embark on a 4 year course of formation.

They will be already working collaboratively with priests and lay-people in the local church in works of service and exercising some leadership roles.

Above all, they will be men of faith and prayer with a desire to serve others for the sake of God's Kingdom.

They will be resident in the diocese or working for the diocese for at least five years.

The Applications Process

Interested men are asked to contact their parish priest / priest who serves their Church area and to convey their interest. He will invite enquirers to send a short CV with a letter outlining reasons for their enquiry to the Diocesan Director for the Permanent Diaconate.

On receipt of the CV and letter the Diocesan Director will arrange to meet the enquirer in their home. Family members who live with the enquirer will be invited to participate in this conversation.

Following this conversation the Diocesan Director will make a recommendation to the Bishop. In the event that the Bishop accepts his recommendation that the enquirer be considered the enquirer will be asked to complete a detailed application form and to nominate persons from whom references will be sought. The enquirer will also be asked to complete a medical examination and a Child Protection Declaration form.

A second home visit will follow where matters arising from the application etc. will be discussed.

The enquirer / applicant will then be asked to present for human development profiling (psychological assessment) with a psychologist and for an interview with an interview board. The interview board will subsequently communicate its recommendation to the bishop.

Successful applicants will have a final meeting with the bishop and be invited to participate in the diocese's propaedeutic year (5 residential weekends between October 2008 and June 2009, one retreat day and one or two evening meetings). The wives of married applicants will be invited to participate in two of the residential weekends.

At the end of the propaedeutic year men who wish to continue will be asked to participate in another interview and to participate in a retreat. Successful candidates will then commence a formal course of studies (part-time) for three to five years.

Where can I get more information?

Please read other sections of this web site and contact:

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