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The Diaconate

come of age

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In ancient Rome, a young man, *iuvenis*, was a man below the age of forty years; indeed this concept was reflected in the pre-1983 Code of Canon Law, which stipulated that priests under the age of forty were considered too young to hear the confessions of female religious. Just over forty years ago Pope Paul VI restored the permanent diaconate in the Latin Church, so in a sense the permanent diaconate has come of age. In most parts of the Catholic Church it has become a clearly recognised part of the ordained and public ministry of the Church; numbers of permanent deacons are growing in most places where their ministry is established, and more and more dioceses and regions are restoring the diaconate.

As is often remarked the Church thinks in centuries, which means that in spite of this coming of age it is still 'early days'; this is reflected in a certain lack of clarity about the theological underpinning of the diaconate. The strength of this has been that deacons can carry out their ministry with flexibility; the weakness is as an institution we can look as if we are making it up as we go along. There has been, as a result, a vigorous debate about many aspects of the diaconate which is likely to continue; we can also identify significant differences of emphasis between different countries and even dioceses.

What has been lacking has been an English-language journal outside the United States dedicated to the permanent diaconate. For many years the *International Diaconate Centre* (IDC/IDZ), based in the diocese of Stuttgart-Rottenburg, has been the worldwide

research institute for the permanent diaconate, organising major study conferences and publishing the journal *Diakonia Christi*; in recent years local IDC networks have been established in various parts of the world to further the centre's work and increase the support which can be given to those involved in diaconal ministry. A primarily Anglophone circle for Northern Europe has now been set up, and the publication of this journal will be at the centre of our work; we also aim to organise regular theological conferences, the first of which is planned for 2011.

The journal will aim to support people at different levels. First, we want to provide English translations of significant articles being written elsewhere on the diaconate, and this first issue contains two important

We are not simply an academic journal: we also want to share material about good practice and open up people's understanding of diaconal work

pieces translated from French and German. But we are not simply an academic journal: we also want to share material about the pastoral ministry of deacons and others involved in diaconal ministry, to share good practice and open up people's understanding of diaconal work. The Catholic Church is an international community, and learning about the diaconate enables us to see the ways in which the diaconate has developed in different parts of Europe.

This initiative happens at a significant time for the diaconate in northern Europe. Every diocese in England and Wales except the diocese of Salford, and every diocese in Scotland, has now restored the permanent diaconate, and in many places (such as Ireland) this form of ministry is now being restored after many years of reflection and preparation; in other places, such as Scandinavia and some of the Baltic states, deacons are ministering within small but rapidly changing Catholic communities. In addition we are offering a resource for laypeople and religious engaged in a more general *diaconal ministry* in the life of the Church. We hope to reflect all these exciting developments in the pages of this review: above all, we want to *celebrate* what has become an integral and indispensable part of the Church's life.

We are fortunate to have entered a partnership for publication with an established journal in England and Wales, *The Pastoral Review* (formerly *The Clergy Review* and *Priests and People*). This journal has been an important resource for the Church since 1931 – and in particular in the last few years has stimulated a lively debate about the nature of the deacon's ministry of charity. The IDC North European Circle is pleased to be linked to *The Pastoral Review* and we are grateful for the support we have been given by its publisher Ignatius Kusiak and its editor Michael Hayes. ■

The Sacramentality of the Diaconal ministry

Didier Gonneaud is a priest of the Archdiocese of Dijon and a Professor in the Theology faculty of the University of Lyons. In this article he explores the ways in which the Church's thinking has developed about the sacramentality of the diaconate.

Until Vatican II our understanding of the sacramentality of the sacrament of Order, to put things as simply as possible, was centred on the ordination of priests. The seven degrees of the sacrament of Order (doorkeeper, lector, acolyte, exorcist, subdeacon, deacon, priest) were understood, in the Latin tradition, as progressive participations in and preparations for the priesthood. The way in which the 'presbyter' exercised a sacerdotal ministry was directly connected to the consecration of the Eucharist; there never has been, in the Catholic tradition, the slightest doubt about its sacramentality. Presbyteral ordination cannot pass on the power to consecrate the Eucharist without it fully being a sacramental ordination. So from this perspective, the sacramentality of the diaconate was absorbed by that of the priesthood, and the diaconal degree would not pose any specific question in relation to the other degrees which prepared a man for the priesthood. The diaconate was the last degree, that which rendered a cleric immediately ready to become a priest. The only subject of controversy on the subject of the diaconate was centred not on its sacramentality, but on its manner of institution: did the diaconal order derive directly from Christ, or was its institution mediated, set forth by Christ through the apostles, in the episode of the choosing by the Twelve of the Seven in Acts chapter 6?

What this means is that the Council would wish us to consider not so much the diaconate as the episcopate: how can we think of its sacramentality alongside that of the presbyter? We notice that the number

seven, very symbolic and marking the fullness of the sacrament of order, comes to an end with the presbyterate: the seven degrees of the sacrament of order reach a climax with the ordination of the presbyter, and not with the ordination of the bishop: is episcopal consecration a repetition, one that is more solemn, of the ordination of a presbyter, fundamentally transmitting the same priesthood, without therefore a new sacramental degree? Is it a development of powers already received in presbyteral ordination, but which continue to be 'tied up', until they are 'untied' by episcopal ordination? Or, rather, is it really episcopal ordination which is a new thing alongside presbyteral ordination?

Vatican II determined in its teaching that the episcopacy is not a development of a

Now it is necessary to think simultaneously of the unity and diversity of the sacrament of order

juridical kind of the powers already received in ordination to the presbyterate, but that it passes on sacramentally the charism of apostolicity. The ministerial theology which comes from the Council finds itself in this way facing a new situation, which is a little complicated: so far as the whole of the sacrament of order was centred on the priesthood of the presbyter, itself focussed on the consecration of the Eucharist. Its unity was very homogenous. We could define this unity by subtraction

and by addition: a deacon was a priest denuded of certain powers, the bishop was a priest made greater with certain juridical powers. It is this equilibrium, somewhat static, which was shifted by Vatican II, because now it is necessary to think simultaneously of the unity and diversity of the sacrament of order, and it is here that a series of new questions are posed about the diaconate.

I Diversity and Unity of the Sacrament of Order

This theoretical problem of how we articulate the unity and diversity of the sacrament of order can be broken down into a number of concrete questions. For example, there is the question of the formation of deacons. If we focus on the unity of the sacrament of order, we are likely to see formation of deacons, to start with, as a copy, an adaptation, of the formation of priests. We put together again the essential elements of the formation of priests and then we redistribute them in a manner adapted to the fact that deacons can't spend normally long and testing years in a seminary! Or again, if we insist more on how different the diaconate is at this same interior level, we will be led to emphasise the difference in formation: for a distinctive form of ministry there should be a distinctive type of formation, and it is not a question simply of reproducing artificially for deacons what is done for priests. One point where this question must be a sensitive area is the place of wives in formation: the more that formation is thought to be like a copy of that given to priests, the more it will be difficult or even impossible to take account of the specific needs of formation for wives. They will be tolerated,

but they will not truly be jointly responsible for their formation.

Another question is that of the ordination of women to the diaconate. This question is not definitely settled, and it remains always a matter open to discussion. Again, if we insist on the unity of the sacrament of order it is impossible for us to open up for the diaconate that which is impossible for the two other ministries: to ordain women to the diaconate is to shatter the visible unity of the sacrament of order: it would place a big gulf between deacons on the one hand and priests and bishops on the other. Again, to bestow some value on the originality of deacons' ministry, rather than see it solely as a diminished form of the presbyterate and the episcopate, allows us again to envisage seriously ordaining women. We could make for the diaconate something which would be valuable solely for itself.

The anxiety about the unity of the sacramentality of ordained ministries explains why the difficult discussions about it at Vatican II were not focussed on the diaconate in itself, or on the specific nature of its ministry and its sacramental character, but were very quickly concentrated on a preoccupation which had become more and more animated: what happens when one ordains married men to the diaconate?

When we read the interventions of the Council fathers, we can see how the question progressed so that early on the council did not have the advantage of theological reflection on the theology of the diaconate. We can surely make an exception

for the interventions of Cardinal Suenens: during the consideration of the very remarkable request which he put before the council at the time of its preliminary consultations, he drew out a coherent theology of the diaconal ministry. But reading the total array of interventions from members of the council shows that, whenever they spoke about the diaconate, the bishops, speaking in fact about other things were really speaking about priestly celibacy: could the Latin Church ordain married men deacons without setting back indirectly the question of priestly celibacy? Within the unity of the sacrament of Order, how far can the difference go between the different ministries?

Thus determined, and indeed preoccupied by the question of celibacy, the sacramental character of the diaconate could not be developed fully for itself, so much so that it was not explicitly affirmed. *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* repeat the ambiguous expression of ‘sacramental grace’¹, which leads certain theologians to think that the question is again open, and that we can have a complete theology of the diaconate which does not consider it to be a sacrament. Therefore I will put forward several reflections:

- What is it that we understand by the sacramentality of the diaconate? As much as the Council was able to give sufficiently precise teaching with regard to the sacramentality of the episcopate, it remains just as vague with regard to the diaconate: so what propositions can we put forward to enable us to understand the diaconate’s sacramentality?

- Is the manner in which the Council proceeded with reference to the episcopate’s sacramentality perhaps illuminating on the subject of the diaconate?

Therefore I should define carefully the limitations of this article, which leads to

the question of the sacramentality of the diaconate in the carrying out of its ministry: what is the sacramentality which is distinctive for the diaconal *ministry*? So once again the question centres on the originality of this ministry with regard to the sacramentality of baptism and confirmation: is diaconal ministry something we should think about first as being in the pathway of baptismal mission, or rather is it a pathway from its sacramental origin? In France, the diaconate was born after vigorous reflection on the apostolate of laypeople, and we needed time to value properly this originality of the diaconate; at the same time it was necessary to insist on its basis, which is not a simple extension of the baptismal apostolate, but rather a specific sacramentality of the whole ordained ministry.

This ministerial perspective means that I am leaving to one side a particularly stimulating point: the connection between the sacramentality of the diaconate and the sacramentality of marriage. With an interval of twelve years between them, the

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National Council of French Deacons organised two sessions on ‘The Diaconate and Marriage’. The first took place in 1989, and it dwelt in part on the framework of questions inherited from the Council: how to reconcile the diaconate and marriage? We could move away from the diaconate and ask ourselves how the specific demands of the state of diaconal life could be harmonised with conjugal and family life. In July 2001, after the

same session organised in Lyons, one could measure the path that we have mapped out: this was not at all the comparison between two states of life, to see their compatibility consequently with the diaconate. We could move away from the sacrament of marriage, to ask ourselves about that which we bring: the fact of marriage which is lived for deacons. I recall how requirements were laid down concerning wives of deacons at the time of the first documents about the diaconate. In May 1968, the bishops of France promulgated their first norms relating to the re-establishment of the permanent diaconate. These norms developed the guidelines of section 11 of Paul VI’s *motu proprio* (*Sacrum diaconatus ordinem*, 18

... as a result the link with the minister of the sacrament is indirect and secondary

June 1967): “The life of the spouse, like that – eventually – of the children, will be that which should not create ‘an obstacle to the ministry of the deacon, nor should it dishonour it’ (no. 11). Well on the contrary, in the estimation of what is possible, the spouse will love to bring positive support to her husband’s ministry, in accordance with the promotion of the position of women in the modern world.” We can evaluate how far these questions have matured in a more sacramental perspective: the experience of couples whose husband is a deacon has become sufficiently consistent for us to ask ourselves what it is that the sacrament of the diaconate can bring to the practical theology of the sacrament of marriage. How is the sacrament of marriage illuminated inwardly by the experience of couples where the husband is a deacon? This thorough investigation of

the problem of sacramentality has allowed us to give a better place to what deacons’ wives have to say, while the questions which have been left on one side – about the compatibility between the states of life – could straightaway put them in an awkward position.. At the end of the session in 2001, it was easy to perceive the development in thinking: this session would only have been able to call itself not ‘diaconate and marriage’ but rather ‘marriage and diaconate.’

Could we then study fully the sacramentality of the diaconate without putting it back in the whole context of Christian sacramentality? I hope that I have not retraced the problem too much while limiting myself, as a result, to the sacramentality of the diaconate – which has a uniqueness in terms of the working of the sacrament of Order all over the world.

II The Deacon of the Bishop, or The Deacon of Christ the Servant?

According to the more traditional terms of reference of Latin theology, to say that the diaconate is a sacrament signifies that there is a direct link between the deacon and Christ. The notion of a sacrament was born in the gradual discovery of a permanent character which is direct in the link which exists, so as a result the link with the minister of the sacrament is indirect and secondary. This is what explains definitely St Augustine’s formula with regard to baptism: ‘When Peter baptises, it is Christ who baptises; when Paul baptises, it is Christ who baptises; when Judas baptises, it is Christ who baptises.’ (*In Jo. Tract.* 6.18, *PL* 35. 1428).

But the Council’s insistence on the fullness of the episcopate created some hesitation over this. In fact, Vatican II placed great value on the figure of the bishop, so that the figure of the priest seemed even to lose a little of its profile, above all in com-

parison with the position it had been given by the Council of Trent. Is this putting the episcopate first simply a question of moving the curser along the slide-rule, as if, after ministerial theology had been centred on the priest, it was now enough from now on to replace the centre with another, concentrating ministries no longer on the priest but on the bishop?

We have seen in the introduction that this is not the whole interpretation of the sense of Vatican II's teaching: it is about thinking simultaneously in the sacrament of Order of its unity and diversity, and about not absorbing everything in a central figure, whether it is that of the bishop or the priest. So this would have to make it advisable to define the sacramentality of the diaconate as a participation in the sacramental fullness of the episcopate.

So we need to work out well in which sense we can talk of the deacon as 'the deacon of the bishop'; strictly speaking, this expression is as incongruous as it is to speak of the priest who is the 'priest of the

The deacon is not deacon of the bishop because he is fundamentally the deacon of Christ – that is the meaning of the sacramentality of the diaconate

bishop'. The deacon is not deacon of the bishop because he is fundamentally the deacon of Christ – that is the meaning of the sacramentality of the diaconate. This lets us understand why the ancient formula 'not for the priesthood but for the ministry of the bishop' has progressively seen the disappearance of the genitive 'of the bishop'.² At the time when this formula was quoted in *Lumen Gentium*, any recourse (*le renvoi*) to the original sources

would brought about a recovery of the genitive, and this would have been only to tone down rather a small part of a functional formula like a doctrinal sentence which was absolute. Why then did the Council not re-establish the phrase 'of the bishop'? We can only guess that the formula was known not directly from the sources, but rather because it was mentioned in the rubrics of the Roman Pontifical, which passed it down while leaving out all reference to the bishop. But, beyond these circumstantial reasons we see above all how that to define too much the deacon by his participation in the bishop's ministry could diminish the diaconate's sacramentality. Traditional teaching reminds us on this point that the bishop plays a totally instrumental role by virtue of this sacramentality: he is neither the source nor the foundation of it, but the instrument.

Therefore if this is not the right way to look at its participation in the fullness of episcopacy which we must define as its sacramentality, how should we characterise it? The classic expression characterises the deacon as a configuration of Christ the Servant. The sacramentality of the diaconate consists of the transmission of a character which would bring an identification of the deacon with Christ the Servant, something given meaning particularly by the gesture of the washing of feet: this gesture actually had the effect really of annexing diaconal spirituality, just as the dialogue between Jesus and his mother at the foot of the cross (John 19: 26-27) could also be seen to have been annexed by priestly spirituality. I would like therefore to pause a little at this expression 'character configured to Christ the Servant'.

First of all, as the International Theological Commission emphasises it, this expression can make us perplexed if it is about characterising the deacon, even if it means no longer differentiating the priest or the bishop as configured to Christ the Head or

Christ the Shepherd.. The Theological Commission's text does not hesitate to criticise this expression, including the point up to which it was used in the official documents of the Holy See: 'There is no doubt that we are here before a way of speaking about the specific identity of the deacon which offers some novelties in agreement with that which was the custom up till now: the deacon has a specific configuration to Christ, Lord and Saviour, to which corresponds a spirituality marked by the 'notion of service' (*serviabilite*) insofar as it is a distinctive sign which makes the deacon, by virtue of his ordination, a living 'icon' of Christ the Servant in the Church. In this way is justified the restriction to

Is this fundamentally a religion not of service or of obedience, but rather a religion of love and communion?

priests of the configuration with Christ, Head and Shepherd. But the configuration with Christ 'the Servant' and 'service' as characteristic of ordained ministry is also valid for priests. In such fashion that one does not see very well that is 'specifically diaconal' in this service.³

After this difficulty with regard to the theology of ministries, it is in fact a Christological question all the more delicate as it has some important inter-religious stakes. Perhaps to say that Christ is in a proper sense 'Servant', in the sense of a deep identity which is also definitive and not only one of a transitory function, was left by its historic mission? In the fourth gospel, Christ appeared at the Good Shepherd in a sense which was absolute, definitive, and – one could almost say – eschatological: also well in agreement with

the account that in the Kingdom, Christ has for function and identity that of being Shepherd resembling in his unity all of humanity. But perhaps to say the same thing of service, without risking betraying a decisive originality about Christianity, is this fundamentally a religion not of service or of obedience, but rather a religion of love and communion? One certain inflation of the discussion about the service has to be without doubt to be re-evaluated at the time when engagement with Islam asks us to be particularly precise about this subject. What would Christ, freely and with love, have assumed in history both for the salvation of the human race as an example of service which led him all the way to the cross, – is it that this signifies as much that he is a servant, without his radical identity?

III What Configuration?

With these questions arising from the theology of the ministries and that of Christology, there is certainly an uncertainty remaining with regard to sacramental theology. Surely there is bound to be a certain amount of disquiet in the face of so many sacramental configurations, as if it were necessary to have many images to define properly the sacramentality which is proper to the diaconate? There are already difficulties in being specific about the character of Confirmation in line with the character of Baptism: how, then, can we be particular about the sacrament of Order in relation to three distinctive characteristics? How can we establish an individual identity in real terms, not simply metaphorically, for the configuration to Christ the Head (with a further subdivision likening the episcopate to Christ the Shepherd and the priesthood to Christ the Priest), that is a configuration of the deacon to Christ the Servant?⁴

So we need again to recall from first principles this splitting up of characters and configurations, and, on this point, the

teaching of St Thomas can clarify things. When he reflected on the connection between sacramental character and Christ, St Thomas made a character in effect of the priesthood of Christ. That is this priesthood which is about towards all the sacraments which communicate a character. But Thomas' language is particularly precise: towards his priesthood, it is directly towards Christ that the character configures. St Thomas does not say that a character would configure to Christ the Priest, but always that the character is in effect of the priesthood of Christ configuring precisely to Christ.⁵

In all the sacraments which confer a character, it makes a mark, therefore, not of a resemblance with the face of Christ, but rather to Christ himself

In all the sacraments which confer a character, it makes a mark, therefore, not of a resemblance with the face of Christ, but rather to Christ himself. The only distinctions which St Thomas puts forward occasionally do not concern aspects of Christ's identity (priest, head, servant, or shepherd....) but rather events in the life of Christ, the 'mysteries' in the exact sense which he gives to this term, like efficacy proper to the identity of Christ considering how he made it or suffered for us.

If we diversify the characters while rearranging them on the diverse identities of Christ we run the risk of falling into a sort of closed circuit, as if everything in the end were made light of between Christ and him who receives the character, as if the deacon were constituted directly in his identity by an immediate symmetry between himself and Christ the Servant.

But for St Thomas the diversity of sacramental characters does not come from a diversity of identities or from functions of Christ, but rather it proceeds dynamically from what the character is like in the end. The character does not have its end in itself but it is always instrumental for something else (which leads St Thomas to make of the character a *sacramentum et res*: the character is an effect with regard to a visible sign, but this effect is not final, it is instrumental with regard to an ultimate finality, a *res* which constitutes the sacrament's *raison d'être*). The more correct interpretation of the texts of St Thomas seems to indicate that the diversity of characters is not taken from the side of Christ: according to this point of view, there is not a single configuration. It takes itself from the final purpose of the character: in what way is the baptised person, the confirmed person, the deacon, the priest, the bishop configured to Christ himself?⁶ In spite of its slightly arid nature, this brief review of the nature of the term 'character' in St Thomas sweeps away the terrain: no more is it about asking ourselves what configuration particular to Christ is defined for the deacon, but rather of asking about the proper final end which characterises, as a ministry, the configuration of the deacon to Christ. The perspectives which have been developed more generally by Vatican II seem to allow a hypothetical solution to this question.

IV Hypothetical Reflections from Vatican II

To answer this question, I am proposing an hypothetical reflection from Vatican II: what is it that leads *Lumen Gentium* to make plain so solemnly the sacramentality of the episcopate? Across the deeper ideas of this symbolism about the episcopate, what elements are evident to help us understand in the end the diaconate's sacramentality?

Several factors converge in this teaching of

Vatican II on the subject of the episcopate's proper sacramentality: a wish of to conclude the programme which Vatican I had initially fixed, while looking in turn at the episcopate and the papal primacy; a more sacramental vision in the way that precedence of the sacraments and precedence of the Church was articulated; a will to recover, in the Catholic tradition, the elements which correspond to the teaching and practice of the East; biblical and patristic resources, while meeting the Latin experience with regard to Scripture and the tradition of the Fathers; and an institutional balancing between papal centralism and episcopal collegiality. But, more than these factors, it seems to me that the decisive perspective is the value placed by the Council on the objectivity of the bishop's responsibility. The starting point of Vatican II, is its reflection on the bishop's responsibility, defined a unity of three *munera* (to preach the Gospel, to sanctify and lead the community). The sacramentality of the episcopate is not a starting point, but rather it is a consequence flowing from the very nature of the

It is not with regard to itself that the episcopate is sacramental, but as a function of its final end, which is to exercise pastoral responsibility defined by the indissoluble unity of the three munera (to preach the Gospel, to sanctify and lead the community)

bishop's responsibility. So it is not with regard to itself that the episcopate is sacramental, but as a function of its final end, which is to exercise pastoral responsibility defined by the indissoluble unity of the three *munera*. Without doubt we should

not exaggerate this doctrine of the three *munera*: it furnished a coherent environment to think about the bishop's responsibility – in turn, both its unity and its complexity. Some other ways of thinking about it are undoubtedly conceivable.⁷ But, whatever poles could be distinguished, the essential thing is to think about the bishop's responsibility both in terms of its unity and its complexity, and not to break it up by setting aside the *munus* of government. Even if the environment in which Vatican II proposed its teaching can be looked at again, the teaching's sense is clear: the functions which defined the bishop's responsibility as pastoral could not be mixed up, and would need to be recovered while retaining their unity. The precise point on which this teaching was from now on separated from the Catholic tradition is that this unity is intrinsically sacramental.

Reflection on the indivisible character of the bishop's objective responsibility led Vatican II to get over the juxtaposition between ordination and jurisdiction: the *munera* of the bishop's responsibility were passed on completely as his ordination to the episcopate, which is under this heading a true sacrament. The jurisdiction came to determine the field in which this responsibility is exercised, it does not set up this responsibility itself. So we cannot separate, in the episcopate, the sanctification and the preaching on the one hand, which would be handed on in ordination, and, on the other hand, the power of governance which would be delegated in the jurisdiction: while hardening itself, a certain juxtaposition would ruin the deep unity of the bishop's responsibility, unity which is its *raison d'être*, the ultimate end of the sacramentality of the episcopate.

If this hypothesis of re-reading Vatican II is fair, it brings with it two consequences. First, it places a value on the primacy of objective responsibility: that is, what we should move away from to understand the

sacramentality of a ministry. Then, with regard to the responsibility which is to be exercised, this sacramentality loses all significance, and it falls back again into sterile comparisons between states of life, with the risk of forgetting the link between ministry and community. Finally, this re-reading makes coherent the sacramental place between the sacramentality of the episcopate and the collegiality of the episcopal body. That which is sacramental, this is the *ordo* to which ordination allows entry: the sacramentality of the episcopacy, that is the sacramentality of an *ordo* into which one cannot enter except through ordination. So this perspective does not depend primarily on the individual receiving ordination, but on the *ordo* into which it is sacramentally joined.

V How is the Deacon configured sacramentally to Christ himself?

Do these perspectives have merit only for the episcopate, and, by analogy, for the presbyterate, or are they clear as well for the diaconate? I think that it is exactly here that trying to work this out makes light of both similarities and differences within the sacrament of Order.

As for the episcopate, a thoughtful theology of understanding the sacramentality of the diaconate has to start with the diaconal *ordo*, and not be centred on the individual status of the minister: what is first in the life of the Church is the order of deacons. Because this order is sacramental by nature, one cannot become a deacon except by sacramental ordination. The *raison d'être*, the final destination of this sacramentality of the diaconal *ordo* therefore has to be rediscovered by starting from the deacon's specific pastoral responsibility, but we find ourselves here up against two difficulties.

First, if the link between the objectivity of the three *munera* and the sacramentality

of episcopal ordination cuts across the proper structure of the episcopal *ordo*, do we then have to understand the same model for the diaconal *ordo*? Does this *ordo* form a college modelled on the college formed by the episcopate, and, by analogy, by the *presbyterium*? On the other hand, are the three *munera* identically carried out by each of the three ministries which make up together the unique sacrament of Order?

These questions are raised because of the clean break which the Council seems to introduce between the pastoral responsibility, explicitly centred on the three *munera*, and the job of the deacon. In effect, the texts of Vatican II do not recover directly for deacons the doctrine of the three *munera*: they do not say that the deacon's job consists of announcing the Gospel, making holy and leading the community, but rather they elaborate a triple *diakonia* of Word, Liturgy and Charity. Would the Council have wanted to separate in its content the deacon's job and the job conferred on bishops and priests?

The texts of Vatican II do not say that the deacon's job consists of announcing the Gospel, making holy and leading the community, but rather they elaborate a triple diakonia of Word, Liturgy and Charity

Surely the Council wanted to hint more at a difference of structure, which separates on the one hand the order of deacons and, on the other hand, the sacerdotal order of priests and bishops. The teaching of the Council on episcopal collegiality is accompanied by a reevaluation (as yet in embryonic form, sadly) of the *presbyterium*, with a collegiality analogous to that of the episcopate. By contrast, this teaching matches

that part of the diaconal order which is not collegial in structure⁸. Therefore if we develop the sacramentality of the diaconate by starting from the structure of the diaconal *ordo*, we notice first a very marked difference between episcopate/presbyterate on the one hand, and diaconate on the other: deacons are not called to form a college, which moreover raises difficult questions with regard to their proper way of life in terms of being united and being represented inside the Church. But this flexibility characterises on this occasion the order of deacons and their ministry: they are not responsible for

The role of the bishop is to decide, by showing the full 'local' character of his particular Church, which munus a deacon should carry out in his ministry

the three *munera* together, but can exercise their ministry by putting in an order of priority one or other of the three *munera*. Such is the distinction which seems to me to hint at the division between the three *munera* exercised together by priests and bishops, and the group of three 'Word, Liturgy, Charity' which recurs for deacons.

It is there that the relation comes about which is specific between the deacon and the bishop: we have noted above the difficulty in understanding the sacramentality of the diaconate as a participation in the fullness of the episcopacy, which is a perspective which risks diminishing the direct relationship between the deacon and Christ. In fact, the sacramentality of the diaconate is written into the sacramentality which belongs to the local Church.⁹ The universal Church does not exist in isola-

tion from the particular Church: the visibility of the particular Church is the sacrament which makes visible and gives efficacy to the universal Church, which in the same way has no visibility other than this particular way of being made concrete. The Council emphasises this role of the bishop in the visibility which the diocese gives to the universal Church: 'A diocese is a part of the people of God centred on a bishop, which he should feed with the help of his body of priests. Bound to their shepherd and gathered by him in the Spirit, thanks to the Gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes a particular Church in which is truly present and effective the Church of Christ, one, holy, Catholic and apostolic.' (*Christus Dominus* 11).

So it is that the particular Church is a local Church, rooted in a place, which make true within itself the diaconal ministry's own sacramentality.¹⁰

Therefore the role of the bishop is to decide, by showing the full 'local' character of his particular Church, which *munus* a deacon should carry out in his ministry, in the heart of the diaconal *ordo*. While the presbyteral *ordo* is immediately destined for the integrated and indivisible exercise of the three *munera*, the diaconal *ordo*, just as it is not a college, would appear to be destined to fulfil rather some or other *munus*, according to the decisions taken by the bishop. It is of no consequence to place in relief one *munus* to the exclusion of the other two, which is perhaps what happens if there is a temptation to have some kind of specialised diaconal ministry, which could consecrate to itself such a deacon uniquely to this or that aspect of its mission. It is the whole sacrament of Order which is destined to the array of the three *munera*, but rather it reverts to the bishop and to the *presbyterium* to work out how the unity of the three should be, for the Church to be truly the Church of Christ, the deacons show this same unity

starting with one of the three. This can explain that, in the order of the *munus* received, a deacon should be able to exercise legitimately an hierarchical responsibility with regard to a priest, or even a group of priests. This does not signify that this responsibility, well defined, exercises itself under the form of a pastoral authority: only the *presbyterium* can ensure with the bishop the visible unity of the three *munera*, a unity which defines the pastoral responsibility such as this.

Conclusion: The Diaconate, 'Ministerial' Fullness of the Sacrament of Order?

This state of being which is the deacon's own, and the flexibility of the charge which he receives when it is compared to the intrinsic pastoral charge tied to the unity of the three *munera*, seems to be defined as a sort of ministerial fullness. If the episcopate can be characterised as fullness of the sacrament of order, by reason of its transmission of the charism of apostolicity, this fullness is preceded by the ministerial fullness of the diaconate. One could explore in this sense the maxim which qualifies the order of the deacon as 'not with a view to priesthood, but with a view to ministry': it would then be like two poles in the sacrament of order, one pole of priestly fullness realised by the episcopate (and, by analogy, by the priesthood), and another pole of ministerial fullness realised by the diaconate.

Two elements in the tradition allow us to conclude in getting our bearings right in this direction of the diaconate's sacramentality. The first element, practically universal in space and time, is the liturgical tradition which makes ordination to the diaconate precede priestly ordination (to the presbyterate or the episcopate). The possibility of passing directly from the diaconate to the episcopate even shows the whole weight of this usage which has the effect of

basing priestly ordination on diaconal ordination, as if the fullness of the diaconal ministry were structured only for the exercise of pastoral ministry. We see, therefore, in the practice of ordinations, a paradox which is particularly significant. The priest and the bishop do not take part in the diaconal *ordo*, but if they make up together, in a differentiated manner, only a priestly *ordo*, priests and bishops are always carried along by the sacramentality of the diaconate which they have received.

There is here each thing which determines the meaning of Christian priesthood: it is like preceded, pre-formed by the diaconal ministry. One cannot define better the image of a priesthood which could be at the same time a service, and we touch on one of the most profound novelties of the Gospel.

The second element concerns the manner in which the tradition made up the minor orders. We have noticed above the controversies on the subject of how the diaconate was instituted. By contrast with these controversies, one matter appears remarkable by its stability: the minor orders have always been attached to the diaconate. This appeared to be so much more surprising that they were conceived as dispositions, of progressive preparations for the priesthood. So the minor orders would have to correspond logically to the priesthood: but the tradition seems unanimous in making from them a development from the diaconate, as if there had been in the diaconate a ministerial fullness which makes it suitable for showing within itself the other ministries.¹¹ So we would have a new key for understanding the decision of Vatican II on the subject of the permanent diaconate, just forty years ago. It is not only for fear of restoring the institutional harmony of the sacrament of order, and of making visible anew the diaconal *ordo* after its progressive disappearance. It

is not only for strategic reasons, more or less superfluous as a result of the crisis in priesthood, which risks making more and more complicated the reception of the diaconate in our communities. In fact this is because there exists within the diaconate a fullness which is proper to it: a fullness which precedes and carries the original sacramentality of the priesthood, a fullness which therefore calls forth for itself the visible existence of the diaconal *ordo* in the heart of the local Church.

Translated by Ashley Beck, with assistance from Alexandra Hobson.

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1 *Lumen Gentium* 29a: 'Fortified by sacramental grace (*gratia sacramentali roborati*)'; *Ad Gentes* 16g: 'By means of sacramental grace (*per gratiam sacramentalem*)'

2 The expression 'ordained not for the priesthood, but for the ministry of bishop (*ordinetur non ad sacerdotium, sed ad ministerium episcopi*) is found in the Constitutions of the Egyptian Church (cf. F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et constitutions apostoloum*, vol. II, Paderborn, 1905, p. 102) and in the *Apostolic Tradition* (cf. Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*, ed. B. Botte [coll. *Sources chrétiennes*, 11 bis], Paris, Cerf, 1968, p.59

3 Cf. *Documentation catholique*, n. 2284, 19 January 2003, p. 82/b

4 If we take the opportunity to speculate about the configuration to Christ the Servant alongside the configuration to Christ the Head, we need to recall that, in

the scriptures, the metaphor of Christ the Head is applied to ministries not in the sense of an authority descending from Christ over his Body, but rather, on the other hand, in the sense of an ascending relationship, one of growth of the Body towards the Head. Firstly the ministries do not have the mark of exercising authority from the Head towards the Body, and this has fundamentally ecumenical implications. In an explicitly ministerial context, the text of Ephesians 4:15-16 invites us apply in this sense this image of the Head: 'If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole Body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each individual part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up in love.' How do we render coherently this gift from the scriptures with a configuration to Christ the Servant, which becomes contradictory if it operates in a manner which is a representation of descending service, through the deacon, exercised by Christ towards his Body?

5 'Sacramental characters, which are never other than being in some way participations in the priesthood of Christ, [are] participations derived from Christ himself.' (*Sacramentales characteres, qui nihil aliud sunt quam quaedam participationes sacerdoti Christi, ab ipso Christo derivatae*, ST III.63.3, *Resp.*)

6 It is this question which the teaching most in agreement with Thomas on the subject of the sacramental character poses this question: 'In the proper sense, the character is a kind of distinctive mark, by which each person is designated, like ordained towards a certain end (*Character proprie est signaculum quoddam quo aliquid insignitur, ut ordinandum in aliquem finem*), ST III.63.3, *Resp* 'By the character, each person is distinguished from one another by comparison with a certain end

to which that person has been ordained, the one who received the character: so it is like, so to speak, the character of a soldier, by which, in the sight of combat, the soldier of the king is distinguished from the enemy soldier. (*Charactere distinguitur aliquis ab alio per comparationem ad aliquem finem in quem ordinatur qui characterem accipit: sicut dictum est de characterem militari, quo in ordine ad pugnam distinguitur miles Regis a milite hostis*), *Ibidem*, ad 3.

7 This is what Alphonse Borras emphasises, on the subject of Georges Tavard's proposed way of thinking about this: 'G. H. Tavard distinguishes four functions in the this group of ministry: in the first place, the function of mediation, then proclamation of the Gospel, then the function of service and finally the task of education. These functions make a system in themselves and depend on many variables (present needs, disposable resources, social gifts, cultural factors, etc.) This typology is, according to M. R. Alexander, more complete than that of the *tria munera* of Vatican II, which is drawn from Calvin (p. 218; cf. pp. 202-208). It has the advantage of integrating the historic heritage of different churches and safeguarding the requirements of ecumenical dialogue.' (A. Borras, 'To think of the Church', in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 118 (1996), p.90.

8 I have tried to clarify this by starting with the maxim 'ordained not for the priesthood, but for service' (cf. D. Gonneaud, 'For the fortieth anniversary of the re-establishment of the diaconal *ordo*: reflections about a doctrinal maxim' *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* t. 126, 2004, p. 555-566)

9 Here there is a problem of terminology: following Vatican II, both the Code of Canon Law and the Catechism of the Catholic Church avoid using the term

'local Church' to designate the particular Church, which is therefore placed in a kind of immediate tension in relation to the universal Church. In return, we see the style in which the *Ceremonial of Bishops* notes section 41 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, while introducing a particularly significant nuance. To present the new liturgical norms which ensure that the Mass is no longer called 'Pontifical' but 'Stational' the *Ceremonial* does not hesitate to add to the text from the Council the term 'local Church': 'The principal manifestation of the local Church (Latin text: *Praecipua manifestatio Ecclesiae localis*) takes place when the bishop, as the high priest of his flock, celebrates the Eucharist, particularly when he does so in his cathedral, surrounded by his *presbyterium* and his ministers, with the full and active participation of all the holy people of God. This Mass, called 'stational' shows at one time the unity of the local Church (Latin text: *unitatem Ecclesiae localis*) and the diversity of its ministries around the bishop and the Holy Eucharist.' (*Ceremonial of Bishops*). The conciliar text which provided the background to the *Ceremonial* did not mention the local Church, but spoke uniquely of the 'manifestation of the Church'. The introduction of this mention of the 'local' Church (which happens twice in as many lines) explains the sense of the new liturgical rules: their purpose is not to deploy around the bishop the maximum degree of solemnity, but to make visible the wealth of ministries which display the unity of the local Church. To signify this new orientation, the ancient term of 'Stational Mass' was substituted for that of 'Pontifical Mass': the emphasis brings to this liturgical manifestation something of the diversity of ministries.

10 To elucidate completely this original link between the diaconate and the sacramentality of the local Church would demand that we clarify how the episcopate

and the priesthood demonstrate a specific articulation between this same Church and the universal Church. The *presbyterium* – that is to say the visible college formed by the bishop and the priests – is immediately at the point of articulation between the particular and the universal Church: it is at once fully 'in' the particular Church and 'opposite' the particular Church by reason of communion between it and all the other particular churches. In return, the diaconate does not show the same purpose, it is not directly concerned with the communion between the churches: therefore it can have more 'local' physiognomy, more determined by the history and situation of the churches which have decided to restore the diaconal *ordo*. Without doubt this can explain the larger difficulty shown when deacons are led to change diocese: they have then to be integrated into a group which by its very nature has a strong local identity.

11 Thinking that Christ did not simply institute the diaconate, through the mediation of the apostles, St. Bonaventure and St Thomas considered the extension of the diaconate in the minor orders as the intervention of the Church. '[To begin with], the powers in question (of the minor orders), would not exist except insofar as they are linked to the unique power of the deacon. But for the rest divine worship develops itself, and the Church has explicitly deployed in different orders what which it implicitly possesses in one alone: and this is why the Master (Peter Lombard) says that the Church has instituted for itself the other orders (*Nihilominus errant omnes paraedictae potestates, sed implicite in una diaconi potestate. Sed postea ampliatus est cultus divinus; et ecclesia quod amplicite habebat in uno ordine, explicite tradidit in diversis; et secundum hoc dicit Magister in littera, quod ecclesia alios ordines sibi instituit*)' St Thomas, *In IV Sentiarum, Dist.24 Qu.2 Art.1 q.2 ad 2*). The Church therefore can

freely fold back into the diaconate the elements which it had there broken up. In this perspective, common to St Thomas and St Bonaventure is the proper sacramentality which the diaconate diffracts in the minor orders, which are in this definition themselves sacramentals, not open to be repeated and communicating the character of ordination. With regard to him, Duns Scotus thinks that Christ himself wanted this sacramental diffraction of the diaconate in the minor orders.

The decision of Paul VI (*Motu proprio Ministeria quaedam*), in suppressing the minor orders, and in attaching the instituted ministries to baptism and not to the sacrament of Order, is putting himself more in the tradition of St Thomas and St Bonaventure: the minor orders were not dissolved, but in each case reinserted into the diaconate. This framework offers a coherent view to make legitimate the practice of the oriental churches which continue to break down the diaconate into the collection of minor orders. The decision of *Ministeria quaedam* therefore opens a twofold investigation for theology: on the one hand, to explore this hypothesis of the ministerial fullness of the diaconate, which would explain the variations of thinking within the Church on the subject of minor orders. On the other hand, to think about the newness of the instituted ministries. In the strict sense, the ministries retained in *Ministeria quaedam* (those of lector and acolyte) are not the same as the ancient minor orders even though they have the same name, since they are attached not to the diaconate, but to baptism. But the concrete loss resulting from this arrangement also confuses the distinctions between recognised ministries, instituted ministries and ordained ministries. Because we will not have clarified the status of ministries founded on baptism, it will remain difficult to understand in what sense the diaconate can be agreed to represent some sort of fullness.

Learning about Diaconate from reflections of T. F. Torrance on the Eldership

John N. Collins is author of the study *Diakonia*, among other works. This is a modified extract from a public lecture given at the Diaconate Conference of the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, NSW, 13 August 2008

In 1984 T. F. Torrance published the booklet *The Eldership in the Reformed Church*.¹ Written in his retirement, the booklet was Torrance's attempt to rescue the eldership from what he named as 'persistent ambiguities and problems about the nature and function of the elder's office' (p. 3). We do not need to follow Torrance as he tracks through these in-house Presbyterian ambiguities. We have enough of our own in relation to the diaconate. The point at which Torrance arrived, however, has long been of considerable interest to me for insights it makes available for our own ongoing reflections on the diaconate in the Roman Catholic Church.²

In the first place, Torrance emphasises that the elders are ordained only by 'those

Particularly to do with ministry of the divine mercy and with seeking the fruit of it in the life and mission of the community

who are themselves ordained and commissioned, that is, not by the people, but by those who are called and sent by Christ with authority to act in his Name, and, in a significant sense, in his stead... ' (p. 8)

Torrance does not pretend that this kind of theology of instalment of the elder is uniform in the Presbyterian tradition (p. 9),

but it is the theology that makes sense for him – and fits well enough with expectations within our tradition.

This 'ordaining' of elders is only the beginning. It provides an elder who has an ecclesial character – and, yes, the word 'character' does echo with values attaching to the 'character' we speak of in the theology of orders.

Torrance moves from this ecclesial character of the elder to the function of the elder, and here he says an interesting thing: 'the kind of functions [elders] perform bear a close resemblance to the ... functions of the *deacon* described in the Pastoral Epistles and Early Church documents.' (p. 9)

Torrance describes the functions as 'an important *assistant ministry* [my emphasis] in the Church in association with bishops and presbyters...' That is one claim. But he goes on to clarify and greatly enrich this foundational idea with the following: the deacons 'had particularly to do with ministry of the divine mercy and with *seeking the fruit of it in the life and mission of the community*' (p. 9, my emphasis).

Torrance concludes that there is a 'substantial relation between the Reformed [or Presbyterian] elder and the biblical and early Christian deacon' (p. 10). Accordingly, he goes on to argue for making a name swap in the Church of Scotland from 'elder' to 'deacon'. That question is not ours. But we can, I believe, learn a lot from the further detail Torrance provides of what his hybrid 'elder-deacon' can do in the church today.

from reflections of T. F. Torrance on the Eldership

As '*ministerial assistants* to presbyters and/or bishops', deacons have 'an important part in the regular liturgy of the Church':

- reading the Scripture;
- prompting responses
- leading the praise
- assisting in the celebration of the Eucharist
- exercising stewardship over the gifts
- hence, charged with the distribution of goods to the poor
- assisting presbyter or bishop in taking Communion to house-churches

To many today this list will look nothing out of the ordinary. Deacons may well say, 'Yes, I do all that.' However, when we reflect that Torrance is writing of the early

'Ministry of the divine mercy' – 'seeking the fruit' – of that ministry – 'in the life and mission of the community'

deacon, and when especially we note how closely the deacon is incorporated into the whole liturgical act – the deacon's actions integrated into the liturgical act of the presiding presbyter or bishop – then the deacon's role takes on the character of something much more than a merely subsidiary function.

Of course, over many decades we have become accustomed to seeing altar boys

and girls as well as men and women of the congregation doing bits and pieces or all of these functions. As a result, we may have lost, perhaps, a sense of the extra value the activities take on as the result of being ecclesial activities, essential liturgy; they become acts of the church.

At the same time, our own practice has been to allocate most of the functions in the list to people we call extraordinary ministers, lectors, and so on. So where does that leave the deacon?

This sort of contemporary Roman Catholic attitude easily translates into a mild disregard of the deacon: 'What is he needed for? We can all do that kind of thing.' So it can be helpful if we follow Torrance in taking his reflections one step further.

I believe this is the step we have been failing to take. Indeed, we may have lacked the vision to see the need for it.

Torrance sees the ministry of the church as 'a two-fold activity'. One activity is familiar, and he names this 'service of the Word'. Basically this is the ministry of the presbyter and bishop as well as, in our time, of the deacon.

The other activity is rarely spoken of but immediately makes sense and speaks clearly of its own importance. Torrance names this the 'service of response to the Word'.

Torrance alluded to this in his earlier rich phrases about deacons' 'ministry of the divine mercy' and about deacons 'seeking the fruit' – of that ministry – 'in the life and

mission of the community’.

At this later stage of his booklet Torrance advises that we distort the office of deacon if we think of the deacon’s ministry being ‘restricted to the ministry of alms and social care’ (p. 13). Reduced to this, the office of deacon ceases to be ‘an evangelical office’. It must recover its ‘wholeness’ by re-instituting itself as, in his words, ‘an essentially spiritual and evangelical *diakonia*’.³

At this point of an ‘evangelical *diakonia*’ I draw attention to how Torrance envisages such an evangelical activity as deepening

Helping God’s people respond to the Word of God which they enter into each time they participate in liturgy

what he calls ‘the mutuality and complementarity between the *presbyteral* ministry of the Word and Sacrament [the first of Torrance’s two-fold ministerial activities] and the *diaconal* ministry of shared obedience to Christ’ (p. 14).

The outcome for church order – and for the deacon – would add up to the deacon exercising ‘a more central ministry in the responses of God’s worshipping people...’, that is, in helping God’s people respond to the Word of God which they enter into each time they participate in liturgy.

In arguing for a ministry for deacons that was essentially far removed from ‘the ministry of alms and social care’, what was Torrance envisaging and how would it operate?

For Torrance what enlivens the communi-

ty or congregation is the reception it gives to the Word and Sacrament provided at the regular liturgy. Torrance assumes, however, that not all individuals are necessarily attuned all the time to what the Word is actually offering them. So he concludes that any partial form of participation – occasioned by one’s state of health, for example – or even a largely disaffected attitude will impede the enrichment on offer through the Sacrament of the Lord’s Eucharist. Add to this that a sole individual pastor is not physically able to ameliorate such regularly recurring situations through personal ministry to the numerous individuals who are distanced from the processes of reception of and responses to the Word and Sacrament.

Accordingly, the objective of the ministry of Word and Sacrament could be more effectively attained if each congregation were equipped with ministerial assistants whose responsibility it would be to assist people in their responses. This ministry of cultivating a response to the Word would not be haphazard or left to chance. Deacons may need to be assigned to different sectors of the congregation. The form of their ministry would, nonetheless, be variable. Largely deacons would engage in house-church ministry, but the ministry could take other forms: open meetings – tutorials even, social gatherings, one-on-one interactions, telephone and email communication, prayer, meditation, and so on.

A diaconal ministry of this kind would develop strong and even intimate bonds between deacons and levels or sectors of the congregation, a wholly mutual set of relationships. But of course such could develop uniformly probably only if the person chosen to be a sector’s deacon were already a respected and appropriately skilled member of that sector or of the larger congregation itself.

A system of appointment by higher author-

ities of deacons from beyond the congregation would not seem to be helpful to any such pastoral diaconal strategy.

While Torrance does not spell out the strategy in these precise terms, the outline I have just given would seem to represent his concept of a ministry of response to Word and Sacrament. It is the strategy that I sketched in my book *Deacons and the Church: Making connections between old and new*.⁴ In those pages (129-43) I was attempting to describe pastoral implications of what I had come to understand of the character and role of deacons in early Christian communities. Underpinning that description was the linguistic profile of the deacon’s ancient title – *diakonos* – that had emerged from my earlier examination of the kind of Greek terminology used within those first Christian house-churches.

In any of these reflections I have taken for granted that the diaconate will function fruitfully within the church as a whole only when it is open to women, many of whom

What we have been seeing among multiple variations of deacon ministries across dioceses and within national churches is hardly encouraging

already perform functions of the kind I allude to, but without the advantage of full ecclesial recognition and permanent ecclesial blessing.

Within such a pastoral scenario I see hope for a life-giving contemporary ministry of

deacons. Currently, however, what we have been seeing among multiple variations of deacon ministries across dioceses and within national churches is hardly encouraging. ■

- 1 Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1984
- 2 See comments in the Afterword to my *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: OUP, 1990), pp. 254-55.
- 3 The concept of a ‘spiritual’ *diakonia* that Torrance attempts to present here relates to a *diakonia* that has a connection with the second activity noted above of ‘response to the Word’. The deacon helps the congregation – or the part of it that the deacon is responsible for – to understand the religious import of the Word presented through the liturgy. Torrance needs to call this ministry ‘spiritual’ because, like his mentor Karl Barth, he understands the *diakonia* of the New Testament to be ‘a *humble form of service*’ (p. 13, and as described in his paper ‘Service in Jesus Christ’ in J. I. McCord and T. H. L. Parker, eds (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1960), pp. 707-13. Any such evaluation of *diakonia* is incompatible with the semantic outcomes in my *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*.
- 4 Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2002; see especially pp. 129-43.

Whatever became of

This article makes observations on a recent study of the deacon in light of the unity of the sacrament of Orders¹ It is also timely in the light of the recent Synod of Bishops on the Word of God. Dr Bert J. Koet is lecturer in New Testament Exegesis and Introduction in the New Testament at the Department for Catholic Theology, University of Tilburg, the Netherlands (Utrecht campus) and lecturer for Religion and Catechetics at

Introduction

In earlier times, the bishop of Sens was the metropolitan of the bishop of Paris. His cathedral was therefore ranked higher than that of Paris. Today, whoever visits the not particularly big town of Sens, would have no difficulty in finding the cathedral. The patron of this church is St. Stephen the first martyr and, according to the tradition, a deacon. This Stephen is often depicted with stones and a palm branch, both symbols of his martyrdom, and he is dressed in a dalmatic, the deacon's vestment.

In the Acts of the Apostles diakonia meant not only care for the widows but also – and maybe before anything else – the proclamation of the Gospel

However, at the entrance to the Sens cathedral a statue of the patron saint represents him holding a book of the Gospels.³ Why? Because already in the Acts of the Apostles *diakonia* meant not only care for the widows but also – and maybe before anything else – the proclamation of the Gospel. Stefan Sander's book which we

are dealing with here addresses the renewed diaconate of the Catholic Church. As a contribution to the critical debate this renewal has occasioned, I would like to show that Stefan Sander neglects the tradition of the deacon as a herald of the Word, thereby restricting the pastoral possibilities as well as the essential significance of the deacon.

From 'Cult in place of Love' to 'Diakonia instead of Cult'?

Sander opens his book with the statement that after the renewal undergone by the Catholic Church through the Second Vatican Council different theological approaches to diaconate emerged. He added, however, that post-conciliar discussion was unable to produce a consensus as to any specific function of the deacon that might provide the ministry of the deacon with a more distinctive profile (page 13). What is the *differentia specifica* of the deacon? What are the powers given him by virtue of his ordination? What motivates the sacramentality of diaconate? Does the ministry of the deacon have a share in the representation of Christ and, if so, in what does this consist? Sander presents his book as a reflection on these problems and as a contribution to the debate on the theology of sacramental diaconate.

In the first chapter Sander presents the various attempts to identify the diaconal ministry within the sacramental unity of orders. He distinguishes between two models: the complementary ministerial model and the model arising from the concept of hierarchy. In the description of the complementary model, Sander examines

'The *Diakonia* of the Word'?



Illustration: St. Stephen at the main portico of Sens Cathedral, 2 Burgundy

one by one the theological conceptions presented by J. Caminada, A. Winter, P. Huenermann, W. Kasper, B. Hilberath and O. Fuchs (pages 22-53). This complementary ministerial model can be summarised as follows: "Deacons and priests have a share, each in their own specifically ordered way, in the one and only sacramental ministry whose fullness is given to the bishop. The bishop has, so to speak, two arms which have different tasks but

which must work in together."⁴

In the following section Sander presents several studies that, in his opinion, rest on a more or less hierarchically structured model: in this model the deacon occupies the lowest level of hierarchical office. For himself, Sander strongly supports the complementary ministerial model (pages 68-76), among other reasons because he thinks that the concept of hierarchical office is not to be found in the New Testament.

In the next two chapters Sander deals with the origins of church office. Within the context of the question on the origin and identity of church offices he starts (chapter 2) a detective work of sorts in the New Testament. As the characteristic of the understanding of church office in the New Testament, he singles out "great freedom" and "flexibility" (page 86). The books of the New Testament reveal to us a great number of community structures and well defined ministries. Sander, however, thinks that one single word in the New Testament – namely *diakonia* – was used as a more or less general concept (page 87) and that this *diakonia* is the only *sine qua non* requirement put forward by the New Testament for all church offices (page 89).

In the third chapter Sander deals with the history of the diaconate in the first centuries up to its transformation into a mere transitional stage to priesthood. He quotes various texts from the *Didache*, the first letter of Clement, the letters of St Ignatius of Antioch, the *Traditio Apostolica* and the *Didascalica*. In Sander's view, the "the ear-

liest community” finds its identity in the community celebration of the Lord’s Supper and, through that celebration, is constituted as the eschatological People of God. The community forms the eucharistic celebration and the life of the community itself as a unison in tension between the sacramentality of the eucharist and the realities of the community’s historically conditioned existence. This unity of the meal as both a responsibility for the poor and a eucharistic event lays the foundation for the kind of ministry that constitutes the ‘two-fold office’ of bishop and deacon.⁵

Sander thinks that in the ensuing development the diaconate lost its identity as a result of the sacerdotalisation of both the presbyterate and the episcopate, a process that already began in the early third century.⁶ This tendency to understand church office as sacerdotal immediately limits it to cult: ‘Cult in place of Love’ (pages 171-174). With the transition to the post-Constantinian imperial church the social-charitable dimension is lost and the importance of the deacon decreases. Monasteries become responsible for this *diakonia*, replacing other communities in that role.

Although the Council of Trent did discuss the diaconate, only the Second Vatican Council unequivocally defined the sacramentality of diaconate and made provisions for the re-instatement of the permanent diaconate.⁷

Sander goes on to sketch the developments leading up to the reinstatement of diaconate by the Second Vatican Council. In chapter four of his book he tackles the pre-conciliar debate as well as the discussion that took place in the Council itself. He describes the ecclesiological context and the main features of the Council’s theology of church office. He naturally deals with the keynote text of *Lumen Gentium* 29. His most important conclusion is that because of the (seemingly rele-

vant) pastoral necessity for a diaconate no broad theological debate was engaged concerning the theological identity of the diaconate itself.

On account of the fact that the Second Vatican Council describes in *Lumen Gentium* the relationship between the episcopate, the presbyterate and the diaconate as a *communio*, Sander devotes the fifth chapter of his book to this concept. The Council describes the unity of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – as the trinitarian model of the Church. This trinitarian *communio* is, according to Sander, the formal and structural principle of the sacramental *ordo*. He shows, however, that new theological constructs seek to do away with the traditional pre-eminence of unity over diversity. Unity and plurality have the same origin. The trinitarian mystery as *communio* and the *communio* of sacramental *ordo* are to be understood as a mere analogy. If, as a result, one sees relationships within the sacramental *ordo* as a *communio* (in the line of *Lumen Gentium*), then the sacramental unity of bishops, priests and deacons should also be understood as a relational event (page 247). For Sander, ‘Office’ means ‘to-be-for-another’. In this, the idea of ‘Representation’ is important.

In the following sixth chapter Sander tries to achieve a new understanding of the concept of ‘representation’ but also of concepts like ‘ordination’, ‘liturgy’ and ‘witness’. He does this in dialogue with E. Levinas’ philosophy. As a key to this deeper understanding he uses Levinas’ concept that the immediacy of the other means the immediacy of the presence of God, i.e., of that which is totally different.

In the last chapter Sander sketches the importance for the sacramentality of diaconate of the ‘representation of the seemingly worthless other’. He contends: ‘The deacon exists for this purpose – and is in himself a constant reminder of it – that the

cry of the stranger, the lowly, the inadequate, the marginalised, of the unusual other, calls for a concrete response, in whatever circumstance of one’s life; the taking up of this response leads to an encounter with God. The sacramentality of the seemingly worthless other is a different but not inferior or deficient form of the sacramental presence of Christ’ (p. 304).

Whatever happened to ‘The Diakonia of the Word’?

Sander’s book is a scientific analysis of the debates about diaconate from various angles. In a German which is quite rigid and therefore a little bit difficult for me as a non-native speaker and which it may also be for other non-native speakers (his German is somewhat reminiscent of Heidegger’s) he summarises not only the various theologies of diaconate but also the exegetical and historical discussions about its origins. Moreover, he puts the *communio* theology of diaconate in the context of Levinas’ philosophy. I cannot but admire someone with the intelligence and energy to collect and order all this material -and in his spare time at that. Sander offers much material likely to help in the presentation and defence of the complementary model of diaconate. This in itself is an important contribution.

Sander’s ideas are to a certain extent comparable with those of the Belgian theologian A. Borras, who dealt with the diaconate within the system of the Church. A system is whole in which the various parts are not only connected to each other but also influence each other. More concretely, Borras’ stance is that the reinstated diaconate is a part of the Church which stands in a relationship to priests, bishops and lay people and has its own place in this system in interaction with all these groups.⁸

At first sight, Sander’s book has a clean

line. After a presentation of the historical sources, Sander connects the topic of *communio* provided by the Second Vatican Council with the various ordained offices. *Communio* is linked to representation, and that, in turn, leads one to Levinas’ philosophy.

The book gives food for thought – and this should be understood as a big compliment. In my view it also has some essential things to say about diaconate as a part of the *communio* of ordained ministry. Given its extensive material, however, it is understandable that the book should evoke some critical asides and prompt new questions. I find his contribution to the profile of diaconate not always convincing. Consequently I would like to add some remarks from my own perspective as a Dutch New Testament scholar.

Sander’s book sees itself as a contribution to debate about the diaconate. My first remark may appear trivial but, as a Dutchman, I am quite surprised how little non-German literature on the diaconate is used in this book.⁹ Its contribution to the world-wide debate on diaconate is thereby diminished. Moreover the author leaves us under the impression that he’s not even aware of this limitation. Even the very dense and important report of the Pontifical International Theological Commission on the diaconate is not mentioned.¹⁰ Does this have anything to do with the fact that the said document was not translated into German? In France and in Belgium there are comprehensive studies about the diaconate which have been published in recent years. Whoever reads the above mentioned study by Borras will realise that this author also sees some problems in respect of the identity of the diaconate, but also that he is much less negative about *Lumen Gentium* 29.¹¹

Linked to this limitation is the fact that

Sander implicitly starts his reflection from something which I, for simplicity's sake, prefer to call the 'German model'.¹²

As already shown by John N. Collins, in Germany one equates the concept of *diakonia* (especially since Theodor Fliedner) with the practice of charity, with faith in action, with helping in the name of faith in Christ.¹³ In the twentieth century, the word *diakonia* was often used even in Catholic circles as a substitute for 'charity work', including in the very description of the newly re-instated diaconal ministry by the Second Vatican Council.¹⁴ The ministry of the deacon is connected – and not only in Germany- above all to the social mission of the church. And it is this model for diaconate that I typify as the 'German model'.

In order the better to understand the discussion, I would characterise this concept of *diakonia* as too restricted.¹⁵ As an example of a broader concept I could mention Acts 6: in this biblical episode we find an account of how a specific group of Christians is entrusted with the care of the widows. The apostles continue to focus on prayer and the *diakonia* of the Word. There is, therefore, not just the 'diakonia' of the tables (Acts 6: 1-2) but also the 'diakonia' of the Word (6: 4) and this not only for the apostles themselves but also for Stephen (Acts 7) and Philip (Acts 8). In the New Testament there is a clear link between the service of the tables and the service of the Word.¹⁶

It is therefore clear that only if one uses the expression '*diakonia*' in a narrow sense can it be argued that the majority of the deacons who are active in their communities are not attaching much value to the 'genuine' (sic!) diaconal service.¹⁷

We should therefore ask ourselves whether in the earliest times the diaconal ministry was really connected in a particu-

lar way with the care for the poor and needy. This issue was cleared by the philological research carried out by John N. Collins. His study of the Greek word *diakonos* and its lexical family makes it clear that deacons were more than just charity workers.¹⁸ As I elaborated in another context, one could mention here that the meaning of *diakonia* can even extend to a sort of mediation between God and His people.¹⁹ The Jewish author Flavius Josephus is a *diakonos* of God's voice.²⁰ So Josephus, who lived one generation later than St. Paul, understood the word *diakonos* as a person who transmits the word of God.²¹ It follows that the deacon has a special connection to the Word.

Study of the Greek word diakonos and its lexical family makes it clear that deacons were more than just charity workers

Throughout history and up to the present-day ordination liturgy a connection is made between diaconate and the Gospel. In this sense *Lumen Gentium* reconnects to more ancient conceptions of the diaconate.

But what place is given in Sander's book to the 'diaconate of the Word'? This connection is constantly mentioned in one way or another but is never reflected upon.²² At least just as often Sander overlooks the fact that the earliest community found its identity not merely in the common celebration of the Lord's Supper but also in the proclamation of the Word of God.

Even though the book shows a high degree of scholarship, it lacks a fundamental discussion on the relationship between diaconate and *diakonia*. This could have to

do with the fact that this relationship is *unconsciously* understood by Sander in the more restricted sense of *diakonia* and therefore such a connection appears implicitly. Even though he laments the fact that there are no tasks which would be specific to a deacon, he seems to know, from the very beginning of the book, what the characterising feature of a deacon really is. His ideas on this topic move especially in the direction of a restricted concept of diaconate. Already on page 14 he reproaches the German bishops for failing to mention the diaconal ministry in one of their declarations on charity. He asks: 'Wouldn't one suppose that the place of the deacon is also situated within this context?' My question is: 'Really?' For two reasons it seems to me that the answer should be negative: first of all, it is not only the deacon that takes care of the poor, but also the bishop. Secondly the deacon is there not only for the poor, but he also has very much to do with the Word, with the Gospel.

My first point: the care for the poor is not exclusively the concern of the deacon. An old tradition sees the care for the poor as part of a bishop's *diakonia*. And Sander is right to assume that the bishop has to be *pater pauperum* (page 173).

Furthermore, ever since Collins' research, it is no longer possible to understand *diakonia* exclusively as care for the poor. In the years following its publication Collins' book made little impact in Germany, and where it did the impact was primarily in the non-Catholic circles.²³ My guess is that this neglect has to do with the fact that German scholars read little foreign literature. Should we regard it as indicative that Sander does in fact mention Collins' book, but indicates the wrong year of publication for it?²⁴

Recently a thoroughly researched book was published in German **which totally**

confirms the semantic principles of Collins' re-interpretation, although in regard to a few passages of the New Testament, the author argues for interpretations different from his.²⁵ Such differences, however, have no significant bearing on the theology of diaconate. This leads to the necessity of reconsidering one's understanding of diaconate in the light of the now established re-interpretation of *diakonia*. In this regard, Sander's book could be outdated, as far at least as Germany is concerned, a year after its publication.

Another important requirement within Germany is to give increased attention to the original tasks of the deacon. Closer historical research into the connection of the deacon with the bishop and also with the Gospel could probably show that the ever recurrent unilateral stress on 'service to the poor' as a possible *differentia specifica* has had an exaggerated influence on the discussion so far.

In a certain way the law of 'a hampering advantage' applies as well to the German Catholics. After being, in a first stage, one of the most important driving forces for the reinstatement of the permanent diaconate, the German way of seeing things has today become, more often than not, both a brake and an obstruction for the further expansion of the diaconate. The cynical remarks of Herbert Vorgrimler in a *Festschrift* for Klemens Richter are a case in point.²⁶

Thus Sander presents himself as understanding what the diaconate is and seeks its rationale once more one-sidedly in the care for the poorest of the poor. He deems the Council's point of view about the ordained ministry "unbalanced".²⁷ Whilst Sander considers the **threefold diakonia of liturgy, of word, of charity** in *Lumen Gentium* as a reason why the specific feature of diaconate has not surfaced

as yet (as for instance at page 221-228), I personally consider *Lumen Gentium* as a good summary of what the New Testament means by the word *diakonia*: the connection between that task of evangelisation and the care for the poor. Is it by chance that Sander turns his regard to the biblical roots of diaconate in his reflection [77-137], but later on fails to reflect on the relation between deacon and the Word of God? In so doing, his own conception of diaconate loses its balance and becomes just what he accused the Council of: unbalanced.

It is precisely this one-sided emphasis on the so-called service which becomes as dangerous for the poor as for those who help them. Sander finds the sacramentality of diaconate on the need to recognise 'the seemingly worthless other'. He goes on to list some categories of this "other": strangers [amongst them the also the migrants?], the lowly, the inadequate, those at the margin of society, the 'unusual' other in whatever circumstance of life (p. 304).

In this respect he mentioned that 'the deacon should, as a representative of Jesus Christ, look for the guilty and for the suffering precisely there where that is happening and thus be with them and help them through compassion at the point of their extremity' (page 304).

All beautifully said, but for me the following remark is important in this respect: I (who worked for fifteen years as a deacon in the largest prison of Amsterdam in the Netherlands) don't understand how, within one and the same paragraph the 'lowly' become the 'guilty'. What are the strangers or the lowly guilty of? When I hear 'to help through compassion' I almost unwillingly associate it with Robespierre saying: 'Compassion is treason'. I can also sense some undertones of Friedrich Nietzsche's disdain for Christian charity. I

don't wish to give anti-Christian rhetoric the last word here but it does contribute to clarifying the issue that is really at stake here.

My question is whether or not compassion can really be an adequate diaconal attitude. Again, the over simplified equation between *diakonia* and helping the poor takes its toll. In my work in prisons I have learned that compassion rarely helps and is often very unpleasant for the inmates. If a prison chaplain wishes to learn from the others, from the seemingly worthless but also from the drug baron, then one establishes a link with the world outside, as well as with God's world. One can learn from these people, and when one honours them in this way, then there is a chance that they open themselves for the religious wisdom which one represents, but maybe also for the acceptance of oneself.

Compassion is too often paternalistic. Quite often, it is true, prisoners need a 'father', but they rarely need a paternalistically minded person. I am also not quite sure whether the asymmetry of the relationship, mentioned here in line with Lévinas, is the only angle from which such pastoral situations should be considered. Even if Lévinas' point of view (i.e. that a pastoral relationship is normally asymmetric) is basically correct, one should still look for a space where a symmetrical relationship can begin.²⁸ For it could be the case that both the stranger and the pastor profit from such a relationship.

The Church's care for the poor is a part of both the bishop's and the deacon's *diakonia*. In this point we see how unfortunate it is that Sander makes much use of the Bible in his historical exposition, but fails to think biblically. From both the Old Testament and the Gospel we know that social relations are never founded on compassion but rather on justice and on the fact that the poor are our equals. We recall

that we ourselves were nomadic Arameans at some point. Perhaps the poor are the ones who help us here. The paramount example for that comes from the deacon *par excellence* of the Church of Rome: St. Lawrence calls the poor the treasure of the Church (see image on the front cover of this journal).

Conclusion

I have been able here to make only a few remarks on Sander's dense book.²⁹ The most important question, to my mind, is how Sander tackles the traditionally diaconal task of proclaiming the Word. In his model – a model I described as 'German' – this aspect is worryingly neglected. Despite the above, I wish to reiterate that this 'German model' is by no means supported by all German theologians. An important example in this respect is Cardinal Frings' homily at the ordination of the first permanent deacons in the Cologne Cathedral (28-04-1969). Because he was almost blind at the time, Dr. Augustinus Frotz, one of his auxiliary bishops performed the ordination, but it was the elderly cardinal himself who delivered the homily. This sermon was published in 1980 in a *Festschrift* for Bishop Frotz on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood.

Frings starts his homily by stating that the deacon is commissioned with three ministerial actions: The first one is the whole field of the liturgy, administration of the sacraments and sacramentals. The second is the task of preaching the Word of God and of catechesis. The third is care for the poor, the social service as well as helping in the administration of the Church.

And he goes on to name great examples: Sts. Stephen and Philip for the proclamation of the Gospel, and St. Lawrence for the practical proclamation. The elderly cardinal could no longer see – and yet it was as if he had before his eyes the wonderful image of St. Stephen holding the

Gospel Book in his hand.³⁰ The deacon is not only the one who cares for the poor, he is the mediator between liturgy, Scripture and the world, walking thus on both feet.

*Translated by Cristian Mocanu and Tony Schmitz, with the assistance of John N. Collins. This article appeared originally in German in **Diakonia Christi** 42 (2007), pp. 182-192 and the translation is published with the author's permission.* ■

1 Stefan Sander, *Gott begegnet im Anderen, Der Diakon und die Einheit des sakramentalen Amtes* (Freiburger theologische Studien, Bd. 171), Freiburg i. Br., 2006

2 The image can be found at catholique-sens-auxerre.cef.fr/sens/indexaccueil.htm (retrieved 6 February, 2008)

3 See Cathédrale de Sens, Saint Etienne dans sa Cathédrale (Les cahiers de culture et de foi, no. 8), Sens 2007.

4 Walter Kasper, "Der Diakon in ekklesiologischer Sicht angesichts der gegenwärtigen Herausforderungen in Kirche und Gesellschaft", *Diakonia Christi* 32 (1997) 13-33,15.

5 Sander neglects, however, the fact that the early Christian community found its identity also in the proclamation of the Word of God (Old Testament and Gospel).

6 In this respect, Sander thinks that in the 9th century the presbyterate became a mandatory stage before the episcopal ordination. However, in *The Cursus Honorum: A Study and Evolution of Sequential Ordination* (Patristic Studies, Vol. 3, New York, 2000), John St. H. Gibault shows that in the 10th century there were still deacons who became Bishop of Rome without receiving a presbyteral ordination: Benedict V, Benedict VI and Boniface VIII (pp. 232-234). The first deacon ever to be

first elected Pope and then ordained priest prior to being consecrated Bishop of Rome was Gregory VII (1073); see Gibault, *The Cursus Honorum* 296 sq.); on Gibault's book see also Bart J. Koet, "Diakon: Adjutant des Bischofs oder Sprungbrett zur Priesterschaft, Randbemerkungen zur jüngsten Studie über Cursus Honorum", *Diakonia Christi* 41(2006), 41-46.

7 Sander forgets to indicate that the 'permanent' diaconate persisted for a much longer time than is commonly appreciated. Bernhard Holter (*Zum besonderen Dienst bestellt. Die Sicht des Priesteramtes bei Franz von Assisi und die Spuren seines Diakonates in den "Opuscula"*, Franziskanische Forschungen, Bd.36, Werl, 1992), shows that permanent deacons existed up to the height of the Middle Ages (311-312.) Since St. Francis was called a 'Levite' and sang the Gospel at Mass, it is possible that he was a deacon. The last 'genuine' Cardinal-deacon was Teodolfo Cardinal Martel (1806-1899); see Koet, *Diakon: Adjutant des Bischofs oder Sprungbrett zur Priesterschaft*, 41.

8 Alphonse Borras, *Le diaconat au risque de sa nouveauté*, Bruxelles, 2007; see also Alphonse Borras & Bernard Pottier, *La grâce du diaconat. Questions actuelles autour du diaconat catholique*, Bruxelles 1998.

9 His exegetical discussion is also exclusively oriented to German contributions. I cannot elaborate here on the consequences of such limitations. At different points, some reference to 'foreign' literature would have led to a deepening of the discussion on exegetical and patristic sources; see e.g. above note 6.

10 For an English translation, see International Theological Commission, *From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diakonia of the Apostles*, CTS, London 2003. And for a fresh and more complete

translation, see Tony Schmitz's version in this issue and subsequent issues of the *New Diaconal Review*.

11 Borras, *Le diaconat au risque de sa nouveauté*, 53-61

12 Having said that, not all Germans writing on diaconate follow this model; see Matthias Mühl, "Mysterium fidei? Drei Thesen als Bausteine für eine Theologie des Diakonats", *Communio* 33 (2004) 387-398. Mühl calls the idea according to which diaconate should be primarily care for the poor a 'narrowing to social charity'. I agree with many of the points he makes.

13 See John N. Collins, *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, New York-Oxford, 1990, 6-14, and John N. Collins, *Deacons and the Church. Making Connections Between Old and New*, Herefordshire, 2002, 1-24. Cf. my review in *Diakonia Christi* 39 (2004) 185-189, and also Martin Gerhardt, *Theodor Fliedner. Ein Lebensbild*, Düsseldorf 1933-1937.

14 The identification of charity and *diakonia* is further strengthened by the fact that the process of re-instatement of the permanent diaconate started with a 'lobby' of the German Caritas. The first permanent deacons were Caritas employees, trained as social workers; see Margret Morche, *Zur Erneuerung des ständigen Diakonats*, Freiburg i. Br., 1996.

15 See Sake Stoffels, 'In het begin was diakonie' in: Huub Crijns *et al.*, 9ed., *Barmhartigheid en gerechtigheid. Handboek diakoniewetenschap*, Kampen 2006, 11-18, here 12.

16 See Bart J. Koet, 'Luke 10: 38-42 and Acts 6: 1-7: A Lucan Diptych on Diakonia' in: J. Corley & V. Skemp (eds), *Studies on the Greek Bible*, (Fs. Francis T. Gignac, CBQ Monograph Series, 44) Washington,

D.C., 2008, 163-185 and *Id.* (with Wendy E.S. North), 'The Image of Martha in Luke 10,38-42 and in John 11:1-12:8' in: G. van Belle *et al.* (eds.), *Miracles and Imagery in Luke and John* (Fs. Ulrich Busse, BETL 218, Peeters, Leuven, 2008), 47-66.

17 See Martin Ebner, "Diakonie und Liturgie-Neutestamentliche Rückfragen", in: Benedikt Kranemann *et al.* (eds), *Die diakonale Dimension der Liturgie* (QD 218) Freiburg i. Br., 2006, 31-40, here 32.

18 Collins, *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*; Mühl ("Mysterium fidei") thinks it remarkable that in German speaking countries no one seems to be aware that since Collins' comprehensive research 'on the notion of *diakonia* in the sources' the basic meaning of *diakonia* as 'waiting at tables' is no longer tenable.

19 See Collins, *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, 77-95; see Bart J. Koet, 'Diakonie ist nicht nur Armenfürsorge. Neuere exegetische Erkenntnisse zum Verständnis von Diakonie' in C. Gramzow-H. Liebold – M. Sander-Gaiser, (eds.), *Lernen wäre eine prima Alternative. Religionspädagogik in theologischer und erziehungswissenschaftlicher Perspektive*, Leipzig, 2008, 303-318.

20 *On the Judaean War*, 4.626.

21 See Koet, 'Diakonie ist nicht nur Armenfürsorge', 315-318; see also Willem C. van Unnik, 'Die Prophetie bei Josephus' in: *Id.*, *Flavius Josephus als historischer Schriftsteller*, Heidelberg, 1978, 41-54, here 44 sq.

22 See e.g. page 77, 81 (note 272), 87, 88 (note 302), 141, 221 and 303; also pages 101 and 280 (note 1273). But where is the Word of God, e.g., on page 149?

23 Volker Herrmann *et al.* (eds), *Diakonische Konturen, Theologie im*

Kontext sozialer Arbeit (Veröffentlichungen des Diakoniewissenschaftlichen Instituts an der Universität Heidelberg), vol.18, Heidelberg 2003; about this book, see my 'Diakonie ist nicht nur Armenfürsorge', pp. 304-305.

24 1995 instead of 1990. We find the same mistake in Annemarie C. Mayer, 'Literatur zum Diakonot', *Diakonia Christi* 39 (2004) Heft 3/4, 143-151, here 145.

25 Anni Hentschel, *Diakonia im Neuen Testament: Studien der Semantik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle von Frauen*, (Wunt, 2 Reihe, 226), Tübingen, 2007, see my review in: *Bijdragen* 69 (2008) 110-112 (English).

26 See Herbert Vorgrimler, 'Liturgie, Diakonie und Diakone' in: Benedikt Kranemann *et al.* (eds), *Die diakonale Dimension der Liturgie* (QD, 218), Freiburg i. Br., 2006, 236-245; here 237

27 Sander stresses that the Council was motivated by pastoral worries or necessities (e.g. on pages 17, 195 and 223). He seems to give a negative judgment on that: 'Unausgewogene Theologie' (page 194).

28 This is done in the dissertation by one of my former colleagues in the prison: Reinilde van Wieringen, *Gaande het gesprek. Domeinanalytische bedadering van het individuele pastoral gesprek*, (Utrecht, 2004). Unfortunately, the book is published only in Dutch.

29 Unfortunately, the book lacks an index.

30 See Josef Cardinal Frings, 'Zum Dienen bestellt' in Joseph G. Plöger & Herrmann J. Weber (eds), *Der Diakon. Wiederentdeckung und Erneuerung des Dienstes*, (Festschrift A. Frotz), Freiburg i. Br., 1980, 259-262, here 260.

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Lectio Divina

and the parish

Most permanent deacons will almost certainly have had some practical experience of *Lectio Divina*, at least during their period of formation or on retreat. But fewer of us, perhaps, practice *Lectio Divina* on a regular basis, whether as part of our personal prayer or in a parish context. Yet *Lectio Divina* affords opportunities not only for enriching our own spirituality, but also for extending the exercise, as permanent deacons, of our charism of the Word. In this article I want not so much to offer a precise description of how to 'do' *Lectio Divina*, as to outline some thoughts on introducing *Lectio Divina* into your parishes.

Lectio Divina

To translate *Lectio Divina* literally, as 'divine reading', does not convey fully what *Lectio Divina* involves, which is why the term is nearly always left untranslated. 'Praying with scripture' or, rather, 'praying through scripture' might be a better way of looking at it, because *Lectio Divina* is a way of entering into the deeper meaning of a – usually biblical – text to discover there what the Spirit has to say to each of us through that text. The aim of *Lectio Divina*, as with all prayer, is to draw us into the presence of God, where we can learn to grow in our love for him and to discover more fully what he wants – for us, from us, through us. In *Lectio Divina*, we do this through a four-fold structure of: *lectio*, reading and re-reading a text; *meditatio*, or reflection; *oratio*, or prayer; and *contemplatio*. This structure mirrors the soul's pilgrimage towards God: God calls us (corresponding, in *Lectio Divina*, to our reading of scripture), we assimilate his call as we meditate, we respond by asking for

God's help to do what he calls us to, and we end by submission in contemplation of God as we seek to become at one with his will. *Lectio Divina* requires no special knowledge of scripture or any particular experience of prayer or of 'spirituality' outside what we already know: the beauty of *Lectio Divina* is its simplicity, which makes it available to everybody, either individually or together with others.

The text

There are no rules about the choice of text, except that it should not be too long. It is most usual to choose a text from the Bible, but *Lectio Divina* can also offer a productive way of exploring other religious texts, such as an extract from one of the patristic readings from the Office of Readings. Some, whether undertaking

This structure mirrors the soul's pilgrimage towards God: God calls us, we assimilate his call, we respond, and we seek to become at one with his will

Lectio Divina as individuals, or as groups meeting regularly, work their way through a particular book of the Bible, or use one of the Mass readings for the coming Sunday. You may consider it appropriate to introduce *Lectio Divina* into your parish to coincide with a particular season, such as Lent.

The fourfold structure

The way in which to accommodate the traditional sequence of phases within *Lectio Divina* – *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio* and *contemplatio*, will depend on whether one is alone or in a group, and on the nature of the group. In *Lectio Divina* by oneself, the four phases can develop progressively, one merging into the next. But with a group, especially when its members are less familiar with *Lectio Divina* – or with each

Some people can feel hesitant about sitting in prayerful silence with others except in church

other – it may be better to have a more flexible structure with a greater degree of overlapping of the various phases, since some people can feel hesitant about sharing openly the fruits of their *oratio* or *contemplatio* or about sitting in prayerful silence with others except in church. The following brief notes are designed with such a new group in mind.

Preparation

A group can comprise any number, though different-sized groups can have very different dynamics. About five to ten is often recommended, but that really is only a guide. The session might last from half an hour to an hour, depending on the group and how it 'goes'.

When we engage in *Lectio Divina*, it's more about hearing than about speaking: the text should do the talking. Our part is

to allow God's word to penetrate beyond the eyes that too often simply follow the text in the Mass-sheet, and beyond the ears that 'listen without hearing', and to work its way into our hearts. We can do this only if we listen attentively, and in a state of reflective calm. For this reason, as for any session of prayer, *Lectio Divina* should always be preceded by a period of a few minutes of tranquillity and silence.

Especially when dealing with a 'difficult' text, it may be helpful, in a group, to offer a few words of background, but in *Lectio Divina* it can often prove that 'less is more'. It may help to explain where – say – Jesus was, when he spoke or did what the text contains. But precisely because we need to be as open as possible to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through the text, we need to be careful as to how much 'context' we give when introducing it to a group for *Lectio Divina*. Too much background might actually focus our minds too closely on the circumstances the passage originally relates to, so limiting the opportunities for the Holy Spirit to speak to us in the here and now.

Lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio for a group

As most readers of this will know, the text is read through slowly, at intervals, and to enable God's word to speak to us, we should *hear* it read to us, without following it in parallel from a written text (even in *Lectio Divina* on one's own, some guides reckon that we should follow ancient practice by saying the text aloud, even if only in a whisper, so that it can actually penetrate our ears). The printed text can be used by individuals as an *aide-mémoire* later on.

During the readings of the text, those present are invited to reflect, and then to share with the others, words or phrases or ideas from the text that have ‘spoken’ to them as they listened. This should be a spontaneous process: nobody should feel obliged to speak if they do not feel moved to do so, so ‘going round the room’ is not the way to do it. Some guides on *Lectio Divina* recommend that the first reading should be followed by complete silence, with participants invited to share the words or phrase that inspires them only after the second reading. Others invite such sharing after both readings. Either way, both readings are read slowly, with the second reading being delivered very slowly, broken down into phrases, so that each word – to use the imagery employed by early writers on *Lectio Divina* – can be savoured, chewed, digested. During this process of reading and sharing, in which

lectio thus, in effect, merges with the period of reflective *meditatio*, it is important that the session does not turn into a discussion: the purpose of *Lectio Divina* is to allow the Holy Spirit – rather than ourselves – to speak. Sometimes – often, indeed – others present will find inspira-

The purpose is to allow the Holy Spirit – rather than ourselves – to speak

tion from something that one of the others has noticed or observed about the text, and they should not be discouraged from sharing – briefly – their own particular further reflection: there is a world of difference between the Holy Spirit speaking through us, and us speaking instead of the

Holy Spirit. During the period of reflection after the second slow reading of the text, we tend also to move towards a period of *oratio* as we are invited to pray silently and then to share, if we wish, our thoughts as to how God might be calling us to respond, or as to how reflection and praying with the text have enabled us to see something in our lives with a different perspective. This phase can end with prayer, silent or aloud, for those present. After the third reading, participants can offer any final thoughts and ideas, before ending with a short period of silent contemplation, of ‘being’ with God. No spoken prayer is called for to end the session: it’s all there in the silence.

Catechesis about Lectio Divina


It is very important when introducing *Lectio Divina* to a group that is not well acquainted with it that participants should appreciate not only what *Lectio Divina* is, but also what it is not. *Lectio Divina* starts from the certain knowledge that all holy scripture is divinely inspired, not simply in

and was not intended to be, just a chronicle of what *happened* in history, so much as an account of the *meaning* of those events – in the context of salvation and eternity – a meaning that can be more fully discovered when the text is read, studied and prayed with discernment. *Lectio Divina* provides one way of finding that meaning, the meaning that God wishes each one of us to discover as it applies to us as individuals and as members of the Body of Christ. *Lectio Divina* is not ‘Bible Study’, in the sense of understanding the history or context in which a text came to be written in the way it was, and nor is a gathering of people for *Lectio Divina* a ‘prayer group’ or a ‘discussion group’ in the usual sense of these terms.

Nor should we expect a session of *Lectio Divina* to offer any sudden life-transforming experience. In catechising the faithful about the introduction of *Lectio Divina* within the Parish, it is important to discourage any tendency there might be to hope that it will somehow unlock a door of instant spiritual insight and fulfilment. *Lectio Divina* is one of the ways God makes available to us to help us in the lifelong process whereby, gradually, for most of us, we accustom ourselves to hearing his Word, inside our very being, which is the only place where he can work on us and with us. A session of *Lectio Divina* can indeed offer deep rewards, but they are prayerful ones, and the satisfaction that one has done something to help to make oneself amenable to the call of God’s voice and so to begin to yield to him. That said, *Lectio Divina* will be a new experience for most of your parishioners, and you need to be prepared for the likelihood that some who attend at first will feel that it is not for them: you should not feel discouraged by this – those who persist will surely thank you. ■

The Holy Spirit will speak to and inspire those who open themselves to him through humble and prayerful submission to the text


the sense that those who first compiled a text were guided by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote, but also in the sense that the Holy Spirit will likewise speak to and inspire those who open themselves to him through humble and prayerful submission to the text. Much of holy scripture is not,



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The pastoral challenge of migration in the Northern European context

Deacons and those involved in diaconal ministry are expected to have a particular knowledge of the social doctrine of the Church, and migration is one of the key international issues addressed in this teaching – and yet migration is usually relegated to the sidelines of local church policies. But with recent reports on the pastoral needs of migrants in the UK and the public value of migrant churches' involvement in social cohesion projects in the Netherlands, migration is back on the churches' agenda. Dr. Richard Steenvoorde* is a consultant for the Dutch Katholiek Netwerk and a Research Associate at the Von Hügel Institute, St Edmund's College, Cambridge; he describes how the Catholic Church tries to respond to the challenge of migration.

1. Introduction

In 2002, Oxford professor Philip Jenkins published a book on the coming of global Christianity entitled *The Next Christendom*.¹ In this book he tried to give an overview of

Migration is not something 'out there' but something affecting the whole of the community

some important trends and shifts in the Christian world. In this context he also discussed the impact of migration on the church. According to Jenkins, the far-reaching ethnic transformation of Europe was largely an accidental by-product of the Cold War. In wake of the Western industrial boom of the 1950s and 1960s it would have been logical to look to the East for cheap labourers, but the 'Iron Curtain' prevented these migration flows. Thus the first waves of migrant workers came from the South and from Africa. However, the

fall of the Berlin Wall and the accession of Eastern European countries to the EU have now resulted in a second wave of migrant workers from the East to the West.

Today, we can no longer deny that migration is a core experience of the European social reality.² The demographic changes occurring in the context of migration have religious consequences. The most visible aspect has been the upsurge of mosques and Muslim community centres. However, many migrants are Christian, and their arrival is changing the Christian churches as well. Some migrant communities start their own churches, others try to find a home in existing, but dwindling and ageing, Western communities. Lately, these communities have grown to realise that migration is structurally affecting their current position and future. Furthermore, they are slowly appreciating how migration is not something 'out there' but something affecting the whole of the community. A recent report on the plight of migrant workers in London described the situation of Catholic migrants as follows:

'...a section of the Catholic community facing tough conditions, harsh working conditions and constant economic and personal uncertainty. In many cases this uncertainty is profoundly aggravated by the lack of papers or legal status which is often caused by social isolation and language difficulties rather than technical irregularity. This faithful, vulnerable and energetic group takes their Catholicism seriously and have high hopes of the Church and her Bishops when it comes to assistance in their days of need.'³

Under those circumstances it is quite surprising that the *2004 Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church* hardly mentions migration as a key issue facing our society and church today, and when it does, it does so only specifically in the context of political refugees (505). Yet, barely a month after the publication of the compendium, the Pontical Council for the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people issued a new instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (The love of Christ towards migrants) which, according to Cardinal Hamao 'intends to be an ecclesiastical response to the new pastoral needs of migrants and lead them towards the transformation of their migration experience not only into an opportunity to grow in Christian life, but also an occasion of new evangelisation and mission'.

To lead them towards the transformation of their migration experience not only into an opportunity to grow in Christian life, but also an occasion of new evangelisation and mission

Until recently, specific data on the effects of migration and the expectations of migrants of the church were not available. This all changed with the 2007 groundbreaking report *The Ground of Justice* by the Von Hügel Institute, St Edmunds College, Cambridge. But before we can discuss the pastoral needs of migrants, let us first look at some concrete experiences of migrants arriving in Northern Europe.

2. Hopes and fears

Many of the pastoral needs of migrants derive from the experiences upon entering the country. A recent publication of the *Independent Asylum Commission* has brought some harsh experiences into public daylight (2008). The following quotes by people who have experienced the process help to paint a disturbing picture:

'My appeal failed and I spent four months homeless and hungry. One day it became too much and I tried to kill myself at Leeds train station. I will never forget the kind lady who took my hand and stopped me – but I would prefer to die than to go back to Sudan'.⁴

'We spent five and a half months in detention. It was extremely stressful, for me as a mother, and my young children cried every day. Our children were locked up like prisoners. Which type of human could keep a child locked up all day?'⁵

But asylum seekers are not the only ones who have a rough start upon entering the country. The following two case studies are derived from *The Ground of Justice* reports:

'A young couple wanted to move from Poland. They found details of an "agency" on the web which promised to arrange a job and a place to stay. They arrived at Luton airport, were met, and then driven to an office, where they were asked for their £ 300 registration fee. They paid, and had their passports copied. Having been driven to a nearby house they then had their bags unloaded. As they walked towards the door – while the driver said

he had to get something from the car – the man who had met them drove off at high speed leaving them behind. At the house door they knew nothing about the agency. Confused and bewildered they somehow managed to find the Catholic Church and they are now being looked after.⁶

‘My two Italian flatmates who arrived recently had a real nightmare trying to open a bank account. They had to arrange a number of letters, go back and forth, and the whole thing was rather complicated. As there are so many things newly arriving people do not know,

There are still many Catholics like me who feel that going to a Catholic Church is like joining a family, having your own community in a strange country, some place where you belong

maybe the Catholic Church could gather expertise and knowledge of its members. For example, if a migrant wants to get a teaching job, maybe the church could say ‘ring parishioner X who has the expertise and who will provide you with the necessary information’... There are still many Catholics like me who feel that going to a Catholic Church is like joining a family, having your own community in a strange country, some place where you belong’⁷

In general, the biggest fear among people approaching the Church for help is that expressions of solidarity by the Church’s leadership will not be matched by future resources and deeds on their part. This fear is the largest among those migrants who, for reasons of their legal or age status, have been excluded from welfare provision from both voluntary and

government sources. The reason for this moving to the church was not blind institutional faith in church leadership or institutions but ‘concrete insights into what the Church had been able to achieve in other countries with minimal resources’.

So how is the church responding? We will first look at some important papal statements on the issue of migration. Then we will look at two case studies.

2. Pope Benedict XVI: Reading the signs of the times

When studying Pope Benedict XVI’s Messages for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, it is important to note that the Pope explicitly starts from the standpoint of reading the signs of the times and not from the perspective of doctrine or theology. Pope Benedict recognises the complexity of the problem as migration includes both national and international migration, forced and voluntary migration, legal and illegal migration and ‘the scourge of trafficking in human beings’.⁸ Generally speaking, we can identify three major themes in the papal writings on migration.

The first theme is the feminization of migration. In the past it was mainly men who emigrated, while women mostly emigrated to join their husbands or fathers. Today female emigration has become more and more autonomous. Often women become the principal source of income of her family. In this context the pope also raises the issue of trafficking in human beings destined to be exploited almost like slaves in their work or in the sex industry:

‘Though I cannot closely examine the analysis of the consequences of this aspect of migration, I make my own the condemnation voiced by John Paul II against “the widespread hedonistic and commercial culture which encourages

the systematic exploitation of sexuality.” This outlines a whole programme of redemption and liberation from which Christians cannot withdraw.⁹

The second theme the Pope raises in the context of migration is the plight of young foreign students. The Pope notices that these young people need special pastoral care because they are not only students, but temporary migrants too. They often feel alone under pressure of their studies and sometimes they are also constricted by economic difficulties:

‘It is necessary to help them find a way to open up to the dynamism of interculturality and be enriched in their contact with other students of different cultures and religions. For young Christians, this study and formation experience can be a useful area for the formation of their faith, a stimulus to be open to the universalism that is a constitutive element of the Catholic Church.’¹⁰

Concerns are with the feminisation of migration, young students and migrant families

Finally, the third theme in the papal writings is the plight of the migrant family. The distance of family members from one another and unsuccessful reunification often result in breaking the original ties:

‘New relationships are formed and new affections arise. Some migrants forget the past and their duties, as they are subjected to the hard trial of distance and solitude. If the migrant family is not

ensured of a real possibility of inclusion and participation, it is difficult to expect its harmonious development.’¹¹

How should the local church respond to these themes? Besides advocacy and raising awareness of the issues pressing on migrants and refugees, the Pope stresses the need for both spiritual and practical care:

‘Aside from giving assistance capable of healing the wounds of the heart, pastoral care should also offer the support of the Christian community, able to restore a culture of respect and have the true value of love found again. It is necessary to encourage those who are interiorly wrecked to recover trust in themselves. Everything must also be done to guarantee the rights and dignity of [the] families and to assure them housing facilities according to their needs. Refugees are asked to cultivate open and positive attitudes towards their receiving society and maintain an active willingness to accept offers to participate in building together and integrated community that would be a common household’ for all.’¹²

In conclusion, Pope Benedict seems to be deeply aware of the challenges that migrants and refugees are facing in today’s globalising world. His special concerns are with the feminisation of migration, young students and migrant families. The church should not only respond practically, but also spiritually, helping to restore the dignity of migrants. Reciprocally, migrants are called to contribute to the local community in which they are living.

3. How the local Roman Catholic churches are responding: 2 cases

Pope Benedict stressed the need for both spiritual and practical aid to migrants and refugees by the local church. In this sec-

tion, we will look at two illustrative case studies of the church's response to the challenge of migration in the Netherlands and in London. These are meant as illustrations and are not the last word on the developments in either situation.

3.1 The Netherlands: migration as a local responsibility

The pastoral care for migrants in the Dutch Catholic Church started in the 1920s with the arrival of Italian and Polish migrant miners in the diocese of Roermond. In 1975 two national organisations were established, one focusing on the pastoral needs of migrants and one on the practical needs. In 2000 both organisations were merged into the Cura Migrantorium foundation. A few years later, the Dutch bishops' conference decided that the care for asylum seekers and migrants should primarily be a diocesan responsibility. As a result the Cura Migrantorium was dismantled.

Currently there are some 50 migrant parishes in the country that reach out to –

Only 9% of the Roman Catholic parishes have identified a deacon with – amongst others – special responsibilities towards refugees and migrants

according to their own estimates – 37.000 migrants.¹³ Recently, the central focus of diocesan policies towards migrant churches has become integrating these migrant communities within the existing territorial parishes and structures. Territorial congregations are suspicious of this proposed

integration, fearing a loss of local customs in pastoral care. Migrant congregations are suspicious of a loss of identity and question whether the locals are 'real Catholics' at all.¹⁴

This development within the Dutch church coincided with larger trends in society. Whereas in the 1970s the focus was very much on the formation of national platforms, the last two decades saw a shift towards funding policies favouring local organisations. As a result most national organisations have ceased to exist, although some of them are part of a loose network called 'Urban Mission'. There exists no national Caritas network. The international development aid part of Caritas is carried out by the Catholic development aid organisation Cordaid.

Recently, some empirical material has become available with regard to the diaconal involvement of the church with migrants and asylum seekers as part of a larger survey into the impact of the diaconate of local churches in the battle against poverty. To begin with, there exist 1.124 Catholic parish Caritas associations and St. Vincent de Paul societies. Yet, only 9% of the Roman Catholic parishes have identified a deacon with – amongst others – special responsibilities towards refugees and migrants.¹⁵ More strikingly even is the fact that only 2% of all Christian (both the Catholic and Protestant) diaconal organisations had direct contact with NGOs caring for the plight of asylum seekers and refugees.¹⁶

On average 12,2 appeals are made per caritas organisation for diaconal assistance. Of these, 10,2 appeals are honoured. The estimated total sum of Catholic local Caritas involvement has been calculated as between €4.326.324 and €6.105.570. Asylum seekers rank third amongst those seeking the help of the church (after single parents and long-termed unemployed persons).¹⁷

This summer, a broad study was also conducted with regard to the public value¹⁸ of all churches, both Catholic and Protestant, with regard to migration issues in the city of Rotterdam, pop. 983.000 (Jan 1st 2008). This report claimed that all Christian churches together save the local council between 110 and 133 million euro's a year with regard to psychosocial and practical care and help. Together these churches manage to reach between 500 and 600 thousand (!) people a year, among them many migrants, refugees and illegal aliens.¹⁹

To conclude, the picture of the care for migrants and refugees by the Catholic Church in the Netherlands shows an increasing focus on the local and diocesan level, with policies in place to encourage the migrant communities to become part and parcel of territorial church structures. However, whether this is a wise strategy remains to be seen especially in view of the fact that only 9% of the deacons active in the territorial structures have a special assignment with regard to migrants and

77% of the migrants interviewed hoped that the church would help them to become more integrated into local society

only 2% of the parishes are in contact with specific organisations caring for the plight of migrants.

3.2 London: migration as an inter-diocesan challenge

In response to the 2004 instruction *Erga migrantes*, the bishops of the three Catholic dioceses covering London – Westminster,

Southwark and Brentwood – in May 2006 commissioned a report by the Von Hügel Institute, St Edmunds College, Cambridge to find out the needs of migrants in London. The results of this project (analysing just under 1000 mass going migrants) were published a year later and caused a media uproar. The report found that illegal migrants form an increasing share of the congregations. It showed that more than 75% of parishioners in at least three parishes were "irregularly" in the country. But what made this report far more interesting was the fact that it had identified pastoral needs from the perspective of the migrants themselves and their own understanding and interpretation of their current situation.

In view of the challenging work and living conditions nearly 40% of the surveyed migrants expressed feelings of depression. Many are looking for places to be 'at home' and for solidarity. Parish life can act as a counterpoint to this but it can also do much wrong:

'In one parish migrants were far and away the largest group and yet were "hectorated" about their need to "integrate" with an "indigenous" congregation that had essentially collapsed. On a few occasions some "indigenous" clergy had handed out long lectures on what it meant to be a migrant, the failings of ethnic chaplains and again trenchantly reiterated the need for "integration". There were repeated reports of some "indigenous" Catholics – lay, ordained and even in the Episcopate – making disparaging comments about forms of Catholicism at variance with the "English theological norm"...'²⁰

What do migrants expect from their church? First and foremost 77% of the interviewed migrants expected and hoped that the church would help them to become more integrated into local society. This could be done in the following

concrete ways:

- provide welfare services (64%)
- help people to find jobs (58%)
- provide access to legal advice on work, financial and immigration matters (53%)
- provide English classes (53%)
- help to find low cost accommodation (39%)

But what about ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual’ matters? It turned out that under these harsh conditions people regarded worship as a source of solace and comfort, inspirational preaching was appreciated and committed clergy vital. However, other specific demands for ‘spirituality’ were not found.

The report ended with the perspective of clergy who are in the forefront of modern migration. The main point here being that they were in a situation for which they were ‘neither trained nor did they know where to turn to for training or help if the thought of it occurs at all’. In practice this has led to some particular problems. Firstly, ethnic chaplaincies often feel patronised by local churches. Secondly, the quality of the ethnic pastors can vary, overseas appointments being regarded either as highly prestigious, or as a ‘demotion’. Thirdly, especially priests seem to be the ‘first port of call’, but they do not know where to turn for help those who turn to them.

The Ground of Justice report ended with many practical recommendations which are currently being studied. They ranged from allocating financial resources, developing common policies between the dioceses, bringing in policy experts to reflect on the current effects of legislation in the migrant communities, to prophetic preaching.

4. In the meantime in Brussels...

Much of the legislation affecting migrants in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom has been directly or indirectly affected by legislation and directives from Brussels. One of the key influences comes from the process through which countries were obliged to write National Social Inclusion Strategies as part of the implementation of the Lisbon strategy. The Lisbon strategy was formulated in 2000 with the aim of making the EU “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010.

In 2005 the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities) opened up a civil dialogue with civic society networks that work in the field of poverty reduction. One of the networks involved was Caritas Europa, the European network of national Caritas

The United Kingdom failed to mention migration at all within the context of poverty reduction

organizations active in 44 European countries. In March 2007, it published an interim report assessing the National Social Inclusion Strategies.

It turned out that only eight member countries of the European Union have addressed the issue of the needs of migrants as a policy priority within their National Action Plans. Others mentioned migration in passing or as a cross cutting

issue. The United Kingdom failed to mention migration at all within the context of poverty reduction. National Caritas organisations had been consulted with regard to this issue, but the findings had also been left out of the NAP.²¹

Caritas Europa is also effectively lobbying the European institutions. During the Portuguese presidency of the EU, a Caritas delegation met Pedro Silva Pereira, then minister of the Portuguese presidency. Martina Liebsch, president of the Caritas Europa Migration Commission, advocated an integral approach that would allow for safe and legal channels of labour

Undesired migration cannot be prevented through restrictive measures, but only through creating jobs and decent living and working conditions in countries of origin

migration into the European Union. She also warned that ‘undesired migration cannot be prevented through restrictive measures, but only through creating jobs and decent living and working conditions in countries of origin.’²²

Caritas Europa is not the only presence of the Church in Brussels. The Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) regularly intervenes in the public debate with regard to European migration and asylum policies. This is often done together with other churches and with other Christian advocacy networks in Brussels. Their activities range from broad statements to specific lobbying interventions focusing on the details and effect of policies such as the issue of administrative detention in asylum procedures.²³

Last but not least we should mention here the activities of Jesuit Refugee Service²⁴ and the international priory of the Dominicans in Brussels who through their practical aid, high level informal networks and through regular study programmes, such as Espace²⁵, contribute to public policy making and a better understanding and practice in response to the of the historical challenge and practical consequences of migration in the Europe context.

5. Conclusions: The Pastoral Challenge of Migration

Migration is one of the biggest issues facing Europe. It is also one of the biggest challenges facing the churches in Europe. It is a very complicated issue that reaches even into the core of the Catholic experience, celebrating the Eucharist, where strong demands for the availability of the Mass in migrants languages are challenging the idea of territorial parishes catering for all living within the bounds of the parish.

In the Netherlands the church lacks a national strategy for dealing with the demands of migration. The Bishops’ Conference has delegated this responsibility to each local diocese. A national NGO that could address this issue is lacking. As a result, church involvement with migration is sporadic, local and incidental. That is not the whole picture though; internationally the effectiveness of the Dutch Bishops’ Conference on migration within the larger European context seems impressive. But this can be explained by the fact that the bishop of Rotterdam, Dr. Adriaan van Luyn, bishop of the largest migration city, is also the president of COMECE and thereby actively involved in lobbying Brussels with regard to migration and asylum policies.

In London there is now a reasonably adequate understanding of the needs of the

migrant communities in the Church. The challenge now lies in the Church's response to these needs. Will the three dioceses be able to come up with a joint strategy that adequately addresses the needs and will this be backed up by ample financial and personnel resources? Will these efforts also spread to other dioceses beyond London and can the Catholic bishops make plausible stand on behalf of the excluded in the national and European public debate?

In conclusion, many migrants and refugees flock to the Church in hope of finding Christ and a community that wel-

Can the Catholic bishops make plausible stand on behalf of the excluded in the national and European public debate?

comes them and will care for them, practically and spiritually. At every level the Church is now being challenged by a pressing situation to come up with strategies that move beyond words of solidarity with migrants and refugees into adequate resources and deeds. For, as far as we know it, Christ might very well dwell among them, as the gospel of St Matthew 25:35 reminds us: 'For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in.' ■

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'For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in.'

St Matthew 25:35

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* Dr. Richard Steenvoorde's doctorate focussed on the impact of globalisation on the regulation of international economic relations (R.A.J. Steenvoorde, *Regulatory Transformations in International Economic Relations* [Nijmegen 2008: WLP, ISBN 978-90-5850-351-0]).

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- 4 Independent Asylum Commission, *Fit for purpose yet?*, a national review of the UK asylum system in association with the Citizen Organising Foundation, London: 2008, p. 39
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- 8 Message of his Holiness Benedict XVI for the 92nd World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2006), at www.vatican.va
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- 12 Message of his Holiness Benedict XVI for the 93rd World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2007), www.vatican.va
- 13 To compare: if we take the data from the research in Rotterdam alone, the combined churches reaching at least 500.000 people, 12% being RC churches, the RC figure, for Rotterdam alone, should have been at least 60.000.
- 14 Kairos. *De tijd is rijp*
- 15 Armoede in Nederland 2008, p. 18.
- 16 Armoede in Nederland 2008, p. 29.
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What should Deacons read?

Ashley Beck is a priest in the parish of Beckenham in the Archdiocese of Southwark and co-editor of the *New Diaconal Review*. He is Chair of the Conference of Diaconate Directors and Deacon Delegates for England and Wales and Dean of Studies of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Programme for nine dioceses in southern England and Wales

The *Basic Norms of Formation for Permanent Deacons* published ten years ago by the Holy See makes it clear that deacons, in their studies in Moral Theology, should have a 'special' knowledge of the social doctrine of the Church; elsewhere the deacon is called on to 'transform the world according to the Christian order'. It is therefore disturbing that this part in moral teaching has not always played a big part of diaconate formation programmes (or, in some cases, any at all) or that many deacons seem to know nothing at all about it, although they are no worse in this than many priests. It has become rather a cliché to claim that the social teaching of the Church is its 'best kept secret', but this gap among those who are meant to be experts has ensured that the secret in some places is still firmly under wraps. While a great deal has been done to remedy this, it is still the case that there is in our communities both ignorance of this branch of moral theology, and a sustained, deliberate and deep-rooted refusal to take it seriously, among clergy, laypeople and the Catholic press.

This survey aims to outline for our readers some of the most important material published in English in recent years. It is now customary for writings to be divided into three categories with distinctive abbreviations:

(i) **Catholic Social Teaching ('CST')** – the official teaching as laid out in papal encyclicals, together with documents from the Council, curial departments and

Bishops' Conferences;
(ii) **Catholic Social Thought ('CathST')** – material which gives the philosophical and theoretical underpinning to all the elements of the teaching; and
(iii) **Catholic Non-Official Social Teaching ('CNOST')** – reflections from theologians and organisations within the Church which do not claim official sanction or authority.

Introductions and reference works

The most comprehensive reference work in English is *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought* in the Michael Glazier series of dictionaries and encyclopaedias, edited by Judith A. Dwyer (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994). The only limitation for readers in northern

This survey aims to outline for our readers some of the most important material published in English in recent years

Europe is that it is written from a very clear American perspective.

In Britain one of the foremost authorities on social teaching is Fr Rodger Charles SJ at Campion Hall in Oxford. His *Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching* (Oxford: Family publications 1999) provides an accessible way into the topic, and a *Study Guide* was produced by the same publishers in 2001. Charles looks at social teaching through the two key headings of Ethics and Civil Society and Ethics and Economic Society; he gives extracts from

the basic texts with his own brief commentary and analysis. The *Introduction* is a distillation of his *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: the Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus*, (Leominster 1998), volume 1, *From Biblical Times to the late Nineteenth Century* and volume 2,

It is inevitable, particularly in societies which are abandoning conventional religious belief and practice, that we will be brought into more and more conflict with the State

The Modern Social Teaching: Contexts: Summaries: Analysis. These volumes provide a comprehensive and indispensable survey of the whole tradition of social teaching: sometimes we easily think of social teaching as something purely from the last century or so, but Charles explores in great depth the tradition from the scriptures right through the whole of Christian theology and history. My only criticism concerns one or two of Charles' own judgements in his comments, where he is very cautious about possible conflict between Catholics and the State over some aspects of social teaching, for example, with regard to nuclear weapons. It seems to me that as social teaching 'matures', to borrow the phrase he himself uses, it is inevitable, particularly in societies which are abandoning conventional religious belief and practice, that we will be brought into more and more

conflict with the State. This is borne out in the way in which studies in ecclesiology itself are developing, particularly from the 'Radical Orthodoxy' school (see the book by Cavanaugh referred to at the end of this article). We can see much less of this caution in recent documents from the Magisterium itself.

'Official' Catholic Social Teaching ('CST') Basic texts

The basis of 'official' social teaching are the key papal encyclicals of the last hundred years or so, readily available in booklet form published by the Vatican Press, the Catholic Truth Society, St Paul publications, Veritas and other outlets: Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, Blessed John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1964), Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and the letter written after the 1971 Synod of Bishops, *Octagesima Adveniens*, and John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (1979), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991). At the same time, many other papal writings address themes of social teaching, such as Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* (1968) – in relation to the link between poverty and the size of families – and many of the letters of John Paul II particularly those written before, during and after the Jubilee year 2000. We can see very clear signs of development – in particular there is a progressively more positive view of the role of state in providing for the poorest. The early encyclicals of Benedict XVI, particularly *Deus Caritas Est*, root the Church's ministry of love in the life of the whole Catholic community.

There are additional texts which are important in the development of social teaching and the most significant is *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World, issued at the end of the Council in December 1965. In addition to papal and Council documents, material is being published all the time by curial departments covering issues such as the treatment of refugees, racism, the arms trade, and the ethics of advertising. Many of these documents are published separately and cheaply by the Catholic Truth Society and can be ordered from their website, www.cts.org.uk.

Magisterial collections and the Compendium

A feature of social teaching in recent years has been a process of codification by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace – official collections of key texts. *The Social Agenda of the Catholic Church*, edited by Robert A. Sirico and Marceij Zieba (English ed., Burns and Oates 2000) is a very helpful and clear thematic arrangement of key texts under various headings.

The most important recent event in social teaching studies was the publication in English in 2005 (following the issue of the Latin edition a year earlier) of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church* (London: Burns and Oates 2005) – the launching of this publication attracted very little attention at the time in England, a sign of the lack of interest in this field. It is designed to be parallel to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and is laid out in the same way. It is divided into three parts: Part one is the 'theological dimension'. It details key principles and the background of social doctrine – for example, the place of the human person, Christ as the fulfilment of God's plan, the Church's affirmation of human rights, and fundamental principles such as solidarity and subsidiarity. Part two looks at

specific issues: the family, human work, economic life, the political community, the international community, the environment and the promotion of peace. The third part looks more briefly at how social doctrine should be integrated into the Church's mission. This *Compendium* will prove to be an invaluable source book and it is assertive in its placing of social teaching at the heart of Catholic life. For clergy and catechists it should be essential reading and should form the basis of a deacon's formation in this topic. There is one major criticism one could make: in the third part the document looks at those in

Material is being published all the time by curial departments covering issues such as the treatment of refugees, racism, the arms trade, and the ethics of advertising

the Church who should be pioneering the integration of social doctrine into the Church's life – bishops, priests, religious, catechists, other laypeople....but there is absolutely no reference to permanent deacons. This is startling in view of what other dicasteries of the Holy See are saying and should be remedied in any future edition. For the text of three lectures given to deacons in ongoing formation as an introduction to the *Compendium* go to the website of the Archdiocese of Southwark, www.rcsouthwark.org and follow the diaconate links.

'Local' Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching is meant to be applied to definite historical situations. In England and Wales in recent years the Bishops Conference has published invaluable documents which apply its insights:

The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching, published at the end of 1996, was the most important intervention in any British Election campaign by the Christian community in living memory. It became a best-seller and gave a concise introduction to the themes of Catholic teaching and applied them rigorously to concerns in public life and some of the key issues in the election campaign. The document was a best seller and attracted controversy and immense interest in all the churches – talks and study groups were set up all over the country. A Study guide was published and a parallel document applied its insights to education, *The Common Good in Education* (Catholic Education Service 1997). In the 2001 election campaign the bishops published a brief document looking at a slightly different set of issues, *Vote for the Common Good*, and on Palm Sunday 2005 an even shorter pastoral letter was sent to all Catholic parishes on the same theme before the General Election. These authoritative publications have done a great deal to dispel ignorance of Catholic

The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching, published at the end of 1996, was the most important intervention in any British Election campaign by the Christian community in living memory

social teaching, and the bishops have been criticised for their efforts, a sure sign that they are being effective.

They have looked in more detail at specific issues. For example, *A Spirituality of Work* was issued in 2001, linking classic teaching about the dignity of human

labour with the Christian's prayer life. In 2002 the bishops issued *The Call of Creation – God's Invitation and the Human Response*, which looked at environmental concerns, sometimes seen as a 'poor relation' in social teaching. In 2004 alone they published three very important teaching documents: *Cherishing Life*, which makes clear the all-important links between what are usually called 'life issues' and everything else the Church teaches about human dignity; *Taxation for the Common Good*, which looks at the whole area of taxation in the light of social teaching; and *A Place of Redemption*, a damning critique of prevailing attitudes towards crime and punishment and the state of Britain's prisons. Earlier this year a new document was published by the Committee for Migrants and Refugees, chaired by the Bishop Pat Lynch SS.CC, *The Mission of the Church to Migrants in England and Wales* (London: CTS 2008).

These documents root social teaching in present-day political realities: moreover the bishops teach with authority, using the expertise of many laypeople and drawing on the work of Catholics in these fields over many years. Applying the insights of moral teaching to specific issues is an example of 'getting your hands dirty' – and it is impossible to do this without attracting criticism from the rich and the powerful.

In Scotland, Ireland, the Netherlands and other European countries similar documents are published by Bishops' Conferences.

These documents should be supplemented by statements from the Holy See and Bishops' Conferences about Europe. It is quite clear that based on our commitment to international peace and the key social doctrine concepts of solidarity and subsidiarity, the Catholic Church is firmly committed to European unity and integration. The Church supports the common political institutions of the European

Union, and has supported strongly, for example, economic integration made concrete by the adoption of the Euro, and the expansion of the union into Eastern Europe; the Church is also critical of ‘fortress Europe’ policies in relation to migration and unjust trade policies towards developing countries. In England and Wales and Scotland the journal *Briefing*, published by the Bishops’ Conferences, used to provide (until it ceased publication) a good source for statements from bishops about Europe, and material can still be found on the online archive accessible from www.catholic-ew.org.uk. The umbrella group for Bishops’ Conferences in Europe, COMECE, provides the best source for this continuing work and their material can be found on www.comece.org. More can also be found on the website of the ecumenical agency *Faith in Europe*, www.faithineurope.org.uk and the Jesuit office in Brussels, www.ocipe.info. One way in which the Church has furthered European unity and integration has been through the naming of six men and women as *patron saints of Europe* by Paul VI and John Paul II. For a brief survey of their lives and the connection between them and the Church’s social vision for Europe see Ashley Beck, *Europe’s Soul and Her Patron Saints* (London: CTS 2007). Some standard works on contemporary European history and economics, such as Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot* (London: Macmillan 1998) and Will Hutton, *The World We’re In* (London: Little Brown, 2002) make the same link between Catholic social teaching and the development of the European Union. This link is exemplified by the life of the founding father of European unity, the French statesman Robert Schuman. This perspective on social teaching is particularly important in northern Europe at present because of the pervasive and malign anti-Europeanism in the political arena and in the press.

Catholic Social Thought (‘CathST’)

In the last forty years there has been an enormous debate about the theoretical basis for social teaching. How has it fared since the Council? Has it got a future? Since the Church has changed so much since the days of Leo XIII and Pius XI, is the way of imparting social teaching by means of large scale social encyclicals still effective? What is the relationship with secular moral philosophy – how do we best use traditional concepts such as natural law? Is social teaching Eurocentric? These and many other questions are thoroughly examined in J. S. Boswell, F. P. McHugh and J. Verstraeten (eds.) *Catholic Social Thought: Twilight or Renaissance?* (Leuven: University Press 2000), a collection of the proceedings of a seminar in Cambridge in April 1999. The collection comprises 18 essays from leading figures from all over the world, and gives an excellent survey of present academic issues. While it is a collection written for those in academic life (three of the articles are in French) most readers with a rudimentary knowledge of the subject would find it helpful. Two of the best contributions are Julie Clague’s tackling of the place of human rights in social thought in the light of the well-known dismissal of their importance in Macintyre’s *After Virtue*, and Frank McHugh’s ‘Muddle or Middle-level? A Place for Natural Law in Catholic Social Thought’ which looks positively at the relationship between reliance on natural law and the biblical foundations for social teaching. Many footnotes in the essays point the reader towards important works on the various subjects covered, so the collection is a very good ‘way in’ to the field.

Catholic ‘Non-official’ Social Teaching (‘CNOST’)

The tradition has always been enriched by reflections and theological work from ‘non-official’ sources, and the whole tradition of *Liberation Theology* and material pub-

lished by agencies like CAFOD, *Progressio* (formerly CIIR) and *Pax Christi* is in this category. It also includes works from 20th century figures such as Dorothy Day (and continuing material from the *Catholic Worker* movement) and Thomas Merton.

In this category should be included academic research about issues covered by social teaching – not necessarily from Catholic sources. In our critique of western societies which are structurally sinful and unjust we need to have accurate information – in relation to immigration, armaments, and levels of poverty and affluence. With regard to poverty and affluence in

With detailed evidence it shows how the gap between rich and poor has widened appallingly in the Blair-Brown years

Britain an outstanding book has recently been published: *Unjust Rewards* by Polly Toynbee and David Walker (London: Granta 2008). With detailed evidence it shows how the gap between rich and poor has widened appallingly in the Blair-Brown years, and also exposes a shocking level of ignorance among the rich about how others live. If deacons are serious about ‘transforming the world according to the Christian order’ they need to know how dire the situation is.

I would like to conclude by pinpointing two books which are really from the ‘CNOST’ stable, often overlooked. I referred above to Fr Charles’ caution about nuclear weapons, but the best and most thorough statement of the moral case against deterrence – one of the most important moral issues in Britain today – is still a book written before the end of the Cold War:

Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism by John Finnis, Joseph Boyle and Germain Grisez. (Oxford: Clarendon 1987) The authors are usually perceived as coming from a conservative standpoint in moral theology, so their trenchant critique both of US and NATO policies and of some of the Church’s weak efforts to question those policies (such as those of the US Catholic bishops) is the more powerful. The book is a critique of consequentialism, similar to John Paul II’s *Veritatis Splendor*. Social teaching has been forthright in absolute condemnation of the use of torture, which is a big issue for European countries in relation to the so-called ‘war on terror’ and American policies; at the same time there is a vigorous debate about the place of human rights in our teaching. William T. Cavanaugh’s book *Torture and Eucharist* (Oxford: Blackwell 1998) is a powerful reflection on the reactions of the Church in Chile in the Pinochet years to the use of torture by the regime, in terms of the Church’s self-understanding and theology of the Eucharist. Cavanaugh examines the resistance to the Pinochet regime by the Church in Chile in the light of its ecclesiology and shows how it had been impeded by a view of Church-state relations, derived from the teachings of Jacques Maritain, which handed over effective control over people’s bodies and souls to the power of the nation-state: in the face of persecution the Church became an effective centre of resistance, and in many respects this was centred on the celebration of the Eucharist. The book shows how important it is to integrate social teaching, rooted in harsh political realities, with ecclesiology and sacramental theology – I would see the book as one of the most important theological works of the last decade.

This article is based on a ‘Catholic Social Teaching Chronicle’ originally published in The Pastoral Review, January/February 2006. ■

Book review

Nelleke Wijngaards Serrarens
Partners in Solidarity
Wives of Deacons

Published, 2006, A. van
Nieuwenaarlaan 10, 6824 AN
Arnhem, The Netherlands

This book is the findings of an international research project conducted by Nelleke Wijngaards Serrarens, a well known figure in the world of diaconate formation and support. With her husband Deacon Aloys Wijngaards she has been involved in diaconate formation in the Archdiocese and University of Utrecht for many years.

This is an invaluable study of the place of deacons' wives in many of our dioceses in northern Europe. Since 2001 the author has been the representative of deacons' wives on the Board of the International Diaconate Study Centre (IDC) and the research in this document stems from that role, coming from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and

Germany. This research balances similar findings from other parts of the world, such as the surveys of deacons' wives in the United States in James Keating's recent book *The Deacon Reader*.

The study looks at the effect of ordination on a deacon's family life, on differing expectations of the ordained ministry, and on the ways in which wives support and collaborate with their husbands. It examines both positive and negative effects and the varying levels of support available to wives in dioceses. There is a useful concluding section giving reflections from the perspective of social sciences. This is very useful report which should be read not only by deacons and their wives but by bishops and diaconate directors and formators. The author has done further research on the pastoral care of deacons' widows.

Ashley Beck

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Tony Schmitz

The Diaconate – Perspectives on its Development

Preliminary Note

The International Theological Commission has already, during its preceding quinquennium (1992-1997), undertaken a thematic study on the diaconate. This work was carried out by a sub-commission charged with analysing several ecclesiological questions. This sub-commission was chaired by Msgr Max Thurian and was composed of the following members: Cardinal Christoph Schönborn OP, Cardinal Joseph Osei-Bonsu, Reverend Charles Acton, Msgr Giuseppe Colombo, Msgr Joseph Doré PSS, Professor Gosta Hallonsten, Reverend Fr Stanislaw Nagy SCI, Reverend Henrique de Noronha Galvao.

Given, however, that this sub-commission was unable to take its work as far as the

*Falling into decline in
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[in the West]*

production of a text, the study was resumed in the course of the following quinquennium, building on the work already accomplished thus far. To achieve this, a new sub-commission was formed, chaired by Reverend Henrique de Noronha Galvao and composed of Reverend Santiago del Cura Elena, Reverend Pierre Gaudette, Msgr Roland

The NDR here presents the first instalment of a fresh (and for the first time complete) translation into English of The International Theological Commission's important Historico-Theological Research Document originally published in French in 2002. Tony Schmitz is a deacon of the diocese of Aberdeen and co-editor of the *New Diaconal Review*. He is Director of Formation for the Permanent Diaconate for the dioceses of Scotland and Director of the Ogilvie Institute for Religious Education and Formation in Aberdeen.

Minnerath, Msgr Gerhard Ludwig Muller, Msgr Luis Antonio G Tagle, and Reverend Ladislaus Vanyo. General discussion on this theme unfolded in the course of numerous meetings of the sub-commission as well as during the plenary sessions of the Commission itself held in Rome from 1998 to 2002. The present text has been approved *in forma specifica* by a unanimous vote of the Commission on the 30th September 2002 and it has subsequently been submitted to its president, Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, who authorised its publication.

International Theological Commission Introduction

With a view to a renewal of the Church and a desire to find more effective ways of proclaiming and presenting the mystery of Jesus Christ the Second Vatican Council sought inspiration in her origins and history. Amongst the riches of the Church discovered there was the ministry of the diaconate to which the texts of the New Testament testify: a ministry that rendered significant service to the life of Christian communities, above all in the days of the early Church. Falling into decline in medieval times the diaconate [virtually] disappeared as a permanent ministry [in the West] (translators brackets) surviving only as a transitional step on the way to the

presbyterate and the episcopate. Despite this, it is a fact that, from the time of the scholastics to our own day, there remained an interest in the theological significance of the order and particularly in the question of the sacramental value of this degree of the order.

After the restoration of the diaconate as an effective ministry placed at the disposition of the particular churches by the Second Vatican Council, we have seen a markedly differentiated process of reception of the diaconate. Each church attempted to take account of the real implications of this initiative of the Council. Taking account of the concrete circumstances of ecclesial life in each place – different in every country and continent – the leaders of the churches continue to discern whether or not it is opportune to include the permanent diaconate in the present-day life of their communities. In the course of this process of reception a number of questions have surfaced, both in respect of the interpretation of the New Testament and the historical data and also in respect of the theological

be given present-day recognition. The International Theological Commission examined these questions with a view to clarifying them in the light of advances in our knowledge of the historical and theological sources as well as in the light of the present-day life of the Church. Whilst the facts of the matter need to be established through rigorous historical methods, it remains the case that only a consideration of them in the light of the *sensus fidei* can render these a *locus theologicus*. We must distinguish what can be recognised as belonging to Tradition itself since its origin, and those regional forms that are purely regional or else tied to a particular period of this same Tradition. In this perspective it is fundamental to recall the role of the interventions that in the Church belong to the competence of the hierarchy, namely, the decisions of ecumenical councils and the declarations of the magisterium. In short, if we are to arrive at properly theological conclusions we have to make an effort of discernment in the light of these interventions whilst admitting that a wide knowledge of history has the inestimable advantage of knowing the concrete life of the Church, in the heart of which there will always be found both a truly human element and a veritable divine element (LG 8). Only faith is able to discern the working of the Holy Spirit there. Men and women, beings at once corporal and spiritual, historical and transcendent, become providential recipients of an overture from God in the Persons of His Word made flesh and of His Spirit, Who, as *pneuma* and *dynamis*, makes us able to discern in the phenomena of history a God who discloses himself through words and signs. It is precisely because He reveals his mystery to the community of faith through his Word and his Spirit that God builds up the Church as a community of witnesses who emerge from, and represent, Revelation. Dogmatic teaching is a rendering into words of the Word who is God enfleshed, according to the Church's profession of

faith, her response to divine Revelation. Scripture, together with Tradition, the sovereign rule of faith (DV 21), gives us the mystery and the mission of Christ in a language that is living and often symbolic, a language that speculative theology in particular tries to interpret with rigour. We should not, however, forget that, in all its forms, theological language always remains analogical, the ultimate criterion of which rests in its capacity to speak the truth of Revelation. The *regula fidei* is the *regula veritatis*. The research presented here has sought to attend to the differ-

sion of *diakonia* in the Church, made manifest in her various ministries. It is in this light that we ask ourselves firstly what is the historical and theological meaning of the ministry of deacons in the course of the history of the Church and what were the reasons for its disappearance? Only then, finally can we ask about the importance and implications of the introduction in our day of a diaconal ministry that is effective and at the service of the Christian community.

Chapter One From the *Diakonia* of Christ to the *Diakonia* of the Apostles

I The *Diakonia* of Christ and Christian existence

The most inconceivable revolution has come about through the incarnation of the Word who is God and through whom everything was made (cf. Jn 1:1-18). The *Kyrios*, the Lord, becomes the *Diakonos*, the Servant, of all. The Lord God comes to meet us in his Servant Jesus Christ, only Son of God (Rom 1:3), who, though being 'in the form of God' (*morphe theou*), yet 'did not see in the form of God a prize to be coveted, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave (*morphe doulou*), and having become as all men are ... he abased himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross' (Phil 2:6-8).

Thus we can grasp just what constitutes the essence of being a Christian in a Christological perspective: to exist as a Christian is to share in the *diakonia* that God himself accomplished on behalf of mankind. In the same way this leads us to an understanding of the fulfilment of humanity. To be a Christian means following Christ's example in putting oneself at the service of others, to the point of renouncing oneself and giving oneself, out of love.

Baptism confers this *diakonein* on every

Theological language always remains analogical, the ultimate criterion of which rests in its capacity to speak the truth of Revelation

ences characterising the ministry of the diaconate in the course of the diverse periods of its history and which even today still provoke debate. The reflection that is here presented is based on a lively awareness of the gift bestowed by Jesus Christ on his Church when he handed on to the Twelve a particular responsibility for accomplishing the mission that he himself had received from the Father. The Spirit always allows the Church to discover the riches God puts at her disposal, thus always witnessing anew to his fidelity to the plan of salvation he offers us in his Son. It is through his condition as Servant, through the very service assumed in obedience to the Father, for the sake of humankind, that according to Scripture and Tradition Jesus Christ has realised the divine plan of salvation. It is only by basing ourselves on this primary Christological datum that we can come to understand the vocation and mis-

Women's diaconal ministry is a subject that ought to be studied in order to establish the ecclesial status of it and so also to examine what it is that could be given present-day recognition

implications of the Council's decision and consequent implementations executed in line with the Church's magisterium. Moreover, although the Council made no declaration on the question of women's diaconal ministry as alluded to in the past, it is a subject that ought to be studied in order to establish the ecclesial status of it and so also to examine what it is that could

Christian. It is in virtue of this participation in the *diakonia*, *leiturgia et martyria* of the Church that the Christian cooperates in the service of Christ for the salvation of mankind. Effectively, being limbs of the Body of Christ all need to become servants of one another, employing the charisms they have received for the building up of the Church and their brothers and sisters in faith and love: ‘If anyone claims to serve, let it be as by a command received from God’ (1 Peter 4:11-12; cf. Rom 12:8; 1 Co 12:5).

The *diakonia* that Christians render others is realised concretely in diverse expressions of fraternal charity, serving those who are sick, physically or spiritually, those in need, those in prison (Matt 25), in the help brought to the churches (Rom 15: 25; 1 Tim 5:3-16) or in various forms of assistance given to the apostles, as we can see in the case of the men and women collaborators of the Apostle Paul who sends them his greetings (Rom 16:3-5; Phil 4:3).

II The *Diakonia* of the Apostles

Because he was the *doulos*, or slave, fulfilling, in total obedience, his Father’s salvific will, Jesus Christ was made Lord of all creation. He made himself the one through whom the God’s sovereignty was achieved by the gift of his life: For ‘the Son of Man himself came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mk 10:45). In the same way, Jesus instituted the Twelve: “for they were to be his companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message, with power to drive out devils” (Mk 3:14-15). In a way that is radically opposed to the rulers and the great of this world who abuse their power and exploit their fellows, the disciple needs to be ready to become *diakonos* and *doulos* of all (Mk 10:42-43).

Diakonein is the essential characteristic of apostolic ministry. Apostles are God’s collaborators and servants (cf. 1 Th 3:2; 1 Co

3:9; 2 Co 6:1), ‘Christ’s servants and stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God’ (1 Co 4:1). They are ‘ministers of a new covenant’ (2 Co 3: 6) and ministers of the Gospel (cf. Col 1: 23; Eph 3:6 ff), ‘servants of the word’ (Acts 6:4). In their function as apostles, they are ‘ministers of the Church’, in order to bring about the coming of the word of Christ to believers in its fullness (cf. Col 1:25) and to organise the building up of the Church, the Body of Christ, in love (cf. Eph 4:12). On account of Christ, the apostles become servants of believers since it is not themselves they proclaim but Christ Jesus as the Lord (2 Co

... fraternal charity, serving those who are sick, physically or spiritually, those in need, those in prison

4:5). They are sent in the name of Christ, the word having been transmitted to them in order that they might proclaim it in the service of reconciliation. Through them, God himself *exhorts et acts* in the Holy Spirit and in Christ Jesus, who has reconciled the world to God (cf. 2 Co 5:20).

III The *Diakonia* of the Collaborators of the Apostles

Within the Pauline communities (cf. 1 Co 15:3-5; Gal 2), alongside, with, or near, St Paul, St Peter, and the other eleven apostles, we find the direct collaborators of St Paul in the apostolic ministry (for example, Sylvanus, Timothy, Titus, Apollos) as well as many others allied to him in apostolic activity and in service to the local churches (2 Co 8:23): thus Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Epaphras (Col 4:12) and Archippus (Col 4:17), all called servants of

Christ. In the opening address of the Letter to the Philippians (towards 50 AD), St Paul greets, in a specific way, ‘their *episkopoi* and deacons’ (Phil 1:1). What we dealing with here are ministries in the course of their taking shape in the Church.

Of course the terminology in respect of the ministries was not yet fixed. Reference is made to the *proistamenoï* (Rom 12:8), ‘those who are among you as your leaders in the Lord and who admonish you’, for whom the Thessalonians have ‘the greatest respect and affection because of their work.’ (1Th 5:12). Reference is made to leaders (*hegoumenoi*), ‘who have made you hear the word of God’; and the Letter to the Hebrews adds: ‘... obey your leaders and submit to them’ (13:7,17; cf. 13: 24; cf. 1 Clement 1.3; 21.6); there is also reference to ‘the men who were sent’ who guide the communities (cf. Acts 15:22), to apostles, to prophets, to teachers (cf. 1 Co 12:28; Gal 6:6; Acts 13:1; 14:4,14), to ‘evangelists, or rather pastors and teachers’ (Eph 4:11). St Paul says of Stephanas and of Fortunatus of Achaicus, ‘the first-

fruits of Achaia’, ‘that they have devoted themselves to the service (*diakonia*) of God’s holy people’ (1 Co 16:15); he exhorts the Corinthians ‘to be subject to such men and to all who work with them in this arduous task.’ (1 Co 16:16).

The activity expressed in these terms points to the official titles that were to take shape shortly thereafter. What emerges from these documents is that the early Church attributed the formation of the diverse ministries to the action of the Holy Spirit (1 Co 12:28; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28) as well as to the personal initiative of the apostles, who owed their own being sent out on mission to the Most High and the Lord of this world, and who anchored their role of sustaining the Church in the power they had received from him (Mk 3:13-19; 6:6-13; Mt 28:16-20; Acts 1:15-26; Gal 1:10-24).

Diakonein is revealed as a radical determination of *Christian living*, expressed in the sacramental foundation of Christian existence, in the charismatic building up of the Church, as well as in the sending out of the apostles on mission and in the *ministry* – which flows from the apostolate – of the proclamation of the Gospel, of the sanctification and of the governance of the churches.

*This translation has been made by Tony Schmitz from the official text published originally in French by the International Theological Commission with the title **Le Diaconat: Evolution et Perspectives**. This version has not yet been submitted for official **recognitio**.* ■

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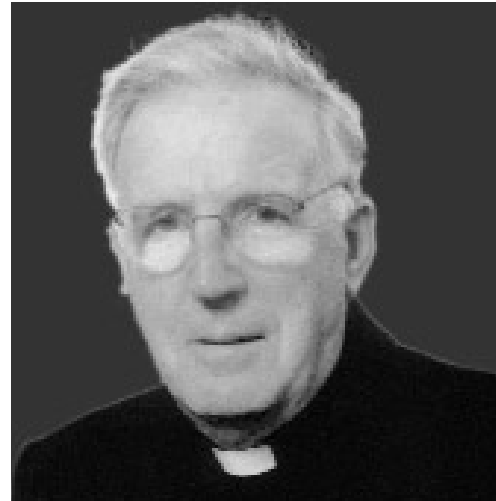
Message from the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

Archbishop's House
Ambrosden Avenue
London SW1

September 2008

I am very pleased to be asked to introduce this first issue of the *New Diaconal Review*. In the forty years since Pope Paul VI in his letter, *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, restored the permanent diaconate in the western Church, it has become enormously important in the life of the Church. In the countries of northern Europe, for which this new journal is primarily intended, permanent deacons have rapidly become an indispensable part of the Church's mission, fulfilling their threefold ministry of Word, Charity and Eucharist.

In the countries of northern Europe where English is a primary or secondary language there have been few resources for academic and theological research about the permanent diaconate. Those involved in ministerial formation have rightly concentrated on the practical task of equipping the men called to this form of ministry with the skills they need to serve the Church. Now that the permanent diaconate is firmly rooted and is reaching a particular stage of maturity, it is good that a new North European Circle of the established International Diaconate Study Centre (IDC/IDZ) is being formed to give additional support to those in diaconal ministry, those in formation and the bishops, clergy, religious and lay people involved in their formation. In many respects we have all been engaged in developing a distinctive theology of the diaconate as time has gone on and this has meant that there has already been a fruitful debate in recent years about aspects of that theology. The *New Diaconal Review* is the first theological journal devoted to this form of ministry to be launched in the



English-speaking world outside North America and I hope that it will be a valuable resource for all of us.

The permanent diaconate has become a valued part of the life of the Catholic Church in Europe and I hope that this new journal will play a big part in developing understanding and experience of this ministry. I am grateful to all who have supported this venture and am pleased to commend this first issue.

+ *Cormac Murphy O'Connor*
Archbishop of Westminster