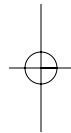


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Ashley Beck and Tony Schmitz

Deacons and

Those of us involved in different ways in the permanent diaconate face a constant task to 'blow the trumpet' for this form of ordained ministry in the face of what is still a serious level of indifference, ignorance or even hostility. We can even make sense of this negativity in terms of how being marginalised or 'trodden on' is intrinsic to a ministry of service, of identification with the oppressed and the marginalised. But there is one trap we must never fall into: of seeing the diaconate as somehow more important or meaningful than either the ministry of laypeople in the Church or the ordained ministry of priests and bishops. If we want to claim that the diaconate is an essential part of the threefold ministry of the Church, then we have to value and esteem the other parts of that triangle.

So deacons are not uninvolved in the 'Year for Priests' proclaimed by the Holy Father on the feast of Sacred Heart this June. It is not just for priests – it is for all of us. Indeed, in formation programmes for the diaconate we constantly stress that deacons have to work out a relationship with others in the Body of Christ, and we try hard to help the priests with whom they will be working to realise this as well. That is why it is a good thing that priests are actively involved in diaconal formation and support – not to keep deacons or students under control, but to help us all realise that we are part of the body of Christ who have to learn from one another (it works both ways – one seminary in England has a deacon as Director of Pastoral Studies and one of the American deacons who has contributed to this issue works in priestly formation). The reason why some of us get so tired of largely meaningless comparisons sometimes aired in the Catholic press of the numbers of men in formation for the priesthood and the diaconate is that this way of thinking implies some sort of deranged culture of competition.

What, then, can deacons contribute to and learn from the Year for Priests? First and

the Year for Priests

foremost, deacons and diaconate students need to support and care for their priests. If you are seeking support and care from your priest, you should try to offer him the same. You may not find it easy, but you should try to do it and he – if he is to be nurtured by this year – should be able to accept what you have to offer. This may take the form of tasks in the parish which do not need to be done by a priest and which could fittingly be taken on by a deacon.

Second, you should join with others in praying for vocations to the priesthood. This should be in the wider context of building up a 'culture of vocation' in parishes and other communities, in which helping people discern their vocations in different ways in the light of the deepening of their prayer lives is seen as something natural and enlightening for the whole community. Such a culture should also build up vocations both to the diaconate and the religious life. Of course, we all know what happens: people want to talk about the discipline of priestly celibacy (particularly if you are a married deacon). Important as this issue is, it should not get in the way of praying for vocations to the priesthood or deepening people's understanding of the priesthood.

The third way in which deacons can support the Year for Priests is simply this: stir up, among those for whom you care, a sense of love and loyalty to the whole Church. In the whole of Europe, and in particular in the regions which this journal seeks to serve, the Catholic Church as an institution faces great challenges and opportunities. We will never meet these if we fail to build up a strong sense of identity and confidence. This does not mean we are blind to scandals and sins committed by members of the Church, or that we deny that mistakes have been made – but it does mean we should be clear and assertive about what we are about. The ordained priesthood, and the sacramental life of our parishes and communities which is in vary-

ing ways dependent on the priesthood, is at the heart of this, so if we want to build up this sense of confidence we should be fully engaged in the process of renewal which this Year for Priests is designed to foster.

In this third issue we continue our reflections on both the sacramentality of the diaconate and diaconal spirituality. There are also papers from both the IDC International Study Conference in Vienna which took place in March and the Patristics conference in Rome dedicated to the diaconate in May: at the Vienna conference one of the most inspiring addresses was given by the Archbishop of Durban, Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, and we are delighted to include it in this issue. In Britain at present one of the most pressing moral issues is the government's plans to renew the Trident nuclear missile arsenal: the bishops of Scotland have been at the forefront of Christian opposition to this and we print here an Easter Vigil homily by Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh which addresses the issue. There are also articles about diaconate formation and the liturgical role of the deacon in the Eastern churches. Another important recent event for deacons has been the publication of Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical on social teaching, *Caritas in Veritate*, and we include an initial assessment of this.

A year into the life of this journal we would like to express our thanks to those who have supported this venture in many countries. In particular we are grateful to the publisher and editor of *The Pastoral Review*, and to their designer James Chasteauneuf, for their commitment to what we are doing and for their advice. It remains very important to build up a big subscription base and we need you to remember to pay your subscriptions if you haven't signed a regular standing order. We hope in the near future to set up *PayPal* arrangements for payments from outside the UK. ■

The *Exsultet* and Trident

In Britain one of the most pressing moral issues is the determination of the government to renew the Trident nuclear weapons programme. Here Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, reflects on Christian opposition to the nuclear deterrent in a homily given at the Easter Vigil in his cathedral in 2006.

One of the most beautiful duties any deacon can carry out in the liturgy is the singing of the *Exsultet* at the Easter Vigil. This remarkable and richly symbolic hymn can touch us at many levels. In 2006 I took the opportunity to preach in my cathedral on how the *Exsultet* touched me in relation to nuclear weapons, and I am very happy to reproduce a slightly edited version of that Easter homily here. Readers will see, I hope, that I believe deeply and strongly that nuclear weapons have no place in our world. Now is the time for the church in Britain to add its voice in the debate on military spending and to plead the case for non-renewal of Trident. This is not a new message – it's an old one, but repeated often – by the Council, by popes, by bishops and by many active faithful. This homily may be slightly dated, but its theme is horrifically current. Nuclear weapons remain a threat, and their renewal remains a terrible possibility. What I say below about the need for us to be people of prayer and people of action applies to all the faithful, and the faithful look to our deacons and priests for leadership in both.

Homily

My dear people, the beautiful song of proclamation, the *Exsultet*, which is sung only on this Easter night, declares our Easter faith wonderfully. The heavens are told to rejoice and sing, and all creation is told to exult around the throne of God, because Jesus Christ our King is risen. The whole song is a declaration of the love of

God, and we see that love as clearly as we see the flame of the Easter candle. Whenever we light that candle we recall the love of God, and recalling the love of God we see ever more clearly that this love calls us to action.

Our Easter faith is not to be kept to ourselves. If the first witnesses to the resurrection kept it to themselves then we would not know of it. No, far from keeping it to themselves they proclaimed it every bit as fully as our Easter song of *Exsultet* proclaims it, and we, today and each day of Easter, and each day of our lives, must follow that example and speak of our faith, sharing it with others, allowing it to deepen and grow, allowing it to find expression in a parish community. These are to be communities of faith and love – communities which support us and in which we support others. We must also learn from those of other Christian communities and other faiths what it really means to live in this twenty-first century as men and women of faith.

Much is demanded of us in the name of faith. We must be people of prayer, both liturgical prayer when we pray the mass, and personal prayer, when we find some quiet moments in our day to be still, to listen to the voice of God, to ask for the things we need for ourselves and others.

But alongside being people of prayer we must be people of action, people who put our faith into action. In these days there is perhaps more need for action than ever before, and tonight, in 'the power of this holy night' as the *Exsultet* so wonderfully puts it, I wish to speak of ways we can all be people of action.

Many things are common in the accounts of the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the different gospels. Meeting the risen Jesus, for example, usually leads to some action. When Mary recognises Jesus in the garden she runs back to the others to tell them. The disciples in Emmaus also leap into action when they recognise Jesus, and even though it is dark they run all the way back to Jerusalem, excited beyond words. At the Sea of Galilee Peter jumps from his boat and makes straight for the shore when he recognises Jesus. So action is an Easter reality.

Another Easter reality is the promise of peace which accompanies so many resurrection appearances. When Jesus meets the frightened disciples his first resurrection words are 'peace be with you'. He is saying that fear and anxiety can be overcome, and they can

We must also learn from those of other Christian communities and other faiths what it really means to live in this 21st century as men and women of faith

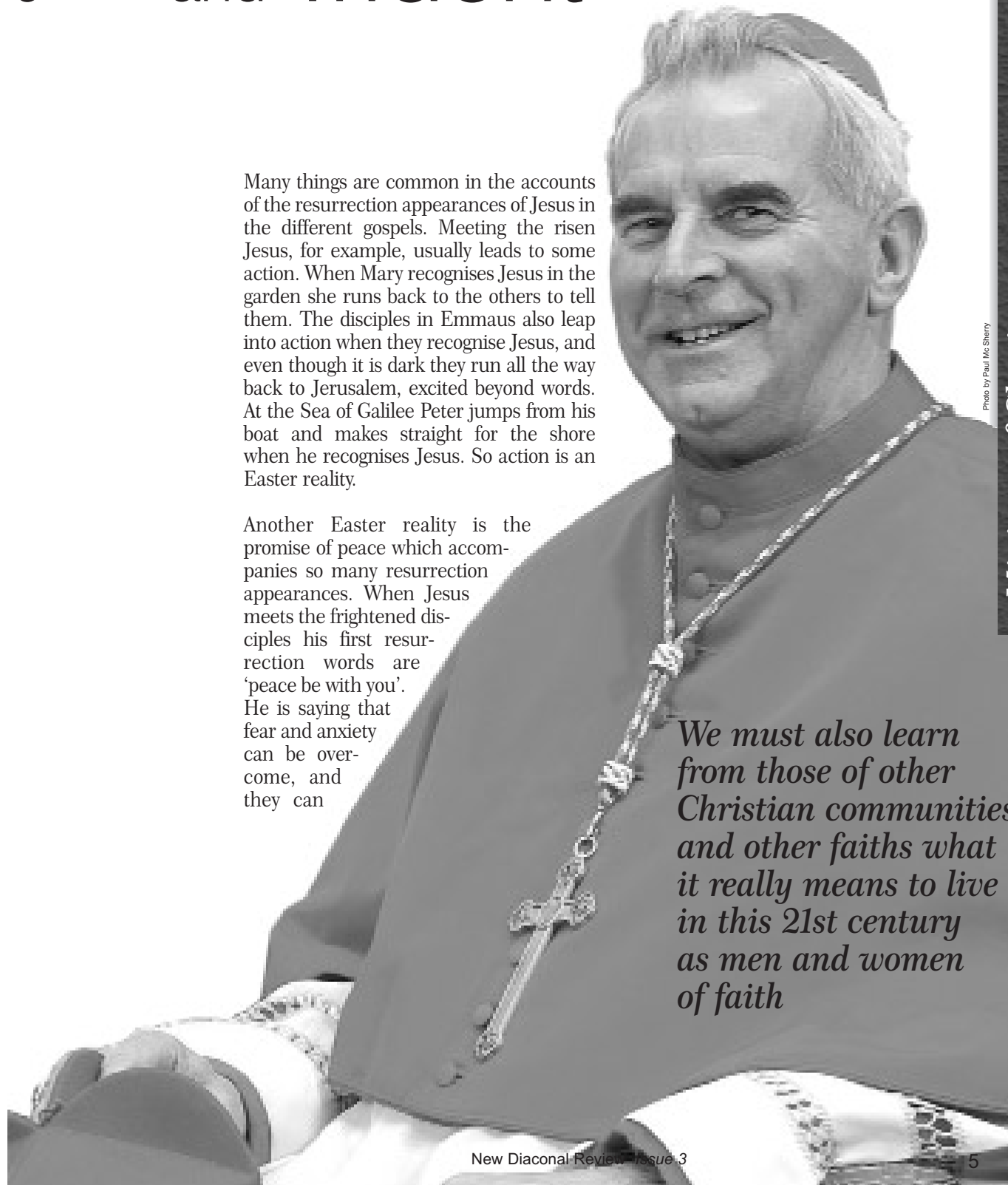


Photo by Paul McSherry

Ministry of Charity

be overcome by peace.

The work of the resurrection is somehow to be action, and it is to be peace. Action for peace.

Recently the Bishops of Scotland reflected precisely on this matter – how we can be people of action and people of peace, and how we can encourage the people of Scotland in this. We were responding to the invitation from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence to engage in a public debate on the replacement of the Trident nuclear weapon system, which has been at the centre of British nuclear defence and the British nuclear deterrence for many years now.

We welcome the invitation for public debate on this most vital issue at the heart of the pro-life tradition of the Church because it allows us to restate, clearly and unequivocally, the consistent teaching of the Catholic Church.

Nuclear weapons have an awesome power for destruction. The use of even one nuclear weapon would mean the death of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of people, and we already have hundreds of such weapons, capable of total destruction of our planet many times over. Vatican Council II, in the document *Gaudium et Spes*, warned that the use of such weapons must never be contemplated: 'every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man himself, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation'.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church repeats these words. Pope John Paul II described that Catechism as the 'statement of the Church's faith' so we should be in no doubt about this issue being an

issue of faith. John Paul was a wonderful champion for peace and an end to violence, war and weapons. During his visit to these shores in 1982, he pleaded for peace at Coventry: 'Today, the scale and the horror of modern warfare – whether nuclear or not – makes it totally unacceptable as a means of settling differences between nations. War should belong to the tragic past, to history; it should find no place on humanity's agenda for the future'.

His successor Pope Benedict XVI has already made clear his own unequivocal call for Britain and all other nuclear powers to give up these weapons of war. Let me quote something from that wonderful message:

'What can be said about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? ...this point of view is not only baneful but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims. The truth of peace requires that all... agree to change their course by

The resources which would be saved could then be employed in projects of development capable of benefiting all their people, especially the poor

clear and firm decisions, and strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament. The resources which would be saved could then be employed in projects of development capable of benefiting all their people, especially the poor.¹

We here in Britain are in a marvellous position to take concrete steps towards

making real this demand from the Holy Father. And we here in Scotland have a duty to lead the way in campaigning for change, because we have the shameful task of housing these horrific weapons.

With the Trident nuclear weapon system fast becoming obsolete, and the debate concerning its replacement promised by our government, now is the time for all men and women of Easter faith, men and women of good will, men and women of peace, to raise our voices. Enter this debate and demand that these weapons of mass destruction be replaced, but not with more weapons. Rather, replace Trident, as the Holy Father has said, with projects that bring life to the poor.

... the sum is more than the much advertised amount of debt relief announced at the 2005 G8 Summit in Gleneagles

I know first hand what the peaceful diversion of the vast sums of money in our military budget could accomplish. I recall a SCIAF visit to Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan, and I will never forget the ramshackle homes in the vast Internally Displaced Peoples' camps in the desert – where people like William, Magdalena and their children, Mary, Daniel and Marco, eke out an existence in their ramshackle home on less than £1.50 per day.

We help such people through our giving – but how much more help could there be if only a fraction spent on nuclear weapons could be saved. To replace the Trident Nuclear System is estimated to cost £20 billion pounds and the running and maintenance cost is estimated to be around the same. Yes – what help could be given at home by way of healthcare, schools, hospi-

tals and the basic necessities for those who are in need if we had that money at our disposal. And the sum is more than the much advertised amount of debt relief announced at the 2005 G8 Summit in Gleneagles. Britain alone will be spending more on nuclear arms than what 18 of the world's poorest countries are getting together in debt cancellation.

Replacing Trident in this way is the only moral option, the only way to show we really are serious about our obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to which we are a signatory.

A particular Scottish response was given in 1982 in a widely endorsed statement when the Bishops then said: 'We are convinced that if it is immoral to use these weapons, it is also immoral to threaten their use'. We must ask ourselves can we be any less outspoken 25 years on?

If I may return finally to that great Easter Proclamation, the *Exsultet*, we are reminded there that: 'The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy; it casts out hatred, brings us peace, and humbles earthly pride'

What a marvellous prayer to begin this great season of Easter. May our prayer become a reality in the eventual scrapping of Trident, using those resources for life instead of death, peace instead of hatred. May God bless you all at this Easter; may we indeed be people of peace. ■

1 World Peace Day message for 2006, available from www.vatican.va

The Church – A Prophetic

Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM is Archbishop of Durban. This paper was one of the keynote addresses at the IDC/IDZ International Study Conference in Vienna in March of this year.

Preliminary Remarks

I was asked to speak on 'The Spirituality of the Deacon in the face of the Challenges of Globalization'. But, rather than speak about spirituality from a theoretical point of view, I have chosen to paint a background picture of the continent, the region and the diocese as well as the vision and mission that the Church has set itself at these levels. In particular I want to speak about the countries and peoples served by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC).

The Church in these areas has adopted the vision and mission, its 'Pastoral Plan' to become a *Community Serving Humanity*.

The general vision is for the Church to become a community in order to overcome and even undo the divisions and separations brought about by the 'colour bar' of the colonial regimes and the *apartheid* segregation of successive Afrikaner governments.

The mission (to 'serve humanity' by carrying over into society all that we as Church have achieved in our efforts to become a community in every sense of the word, modelling ourselves on the community of the Holy Trinity) is also closely aligned to the theme of the forthcoming Second Session of the African Synod – *The Church in Africa in the service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace – You are the light of the World; You are the salt of the earth*.

For the purposes of this talk the mission is somewhere in between as I wish to look at: *The Church – A Prophetic and Reconciling Voice*.

Thus, the vision and mission of a Church committed to being a *Community Serving Humanity, a Church at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace* and a *Church – A prophetic and reconciling Voice*, is the context in which the deacon's life and ministry must be inserted.

Introduction

'What does the future hold for Africa?'
'Who is shaping Africa's future?'
'What can be done to ensure a hopeful and peaceful future for Africa?'

Interested observers often ask these questions, as they try to fathom what makes the continent of Africa tick. They are questions of people whose opinions are formed by the analyses of bodies like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and similar economic and development forums.

In such analyses, Africa is a continent that is always at war; a continent always struggling under self-imposed burdens and a continent always needing to be rescued from some natural or self-inflicted disasters or another.

Africa today

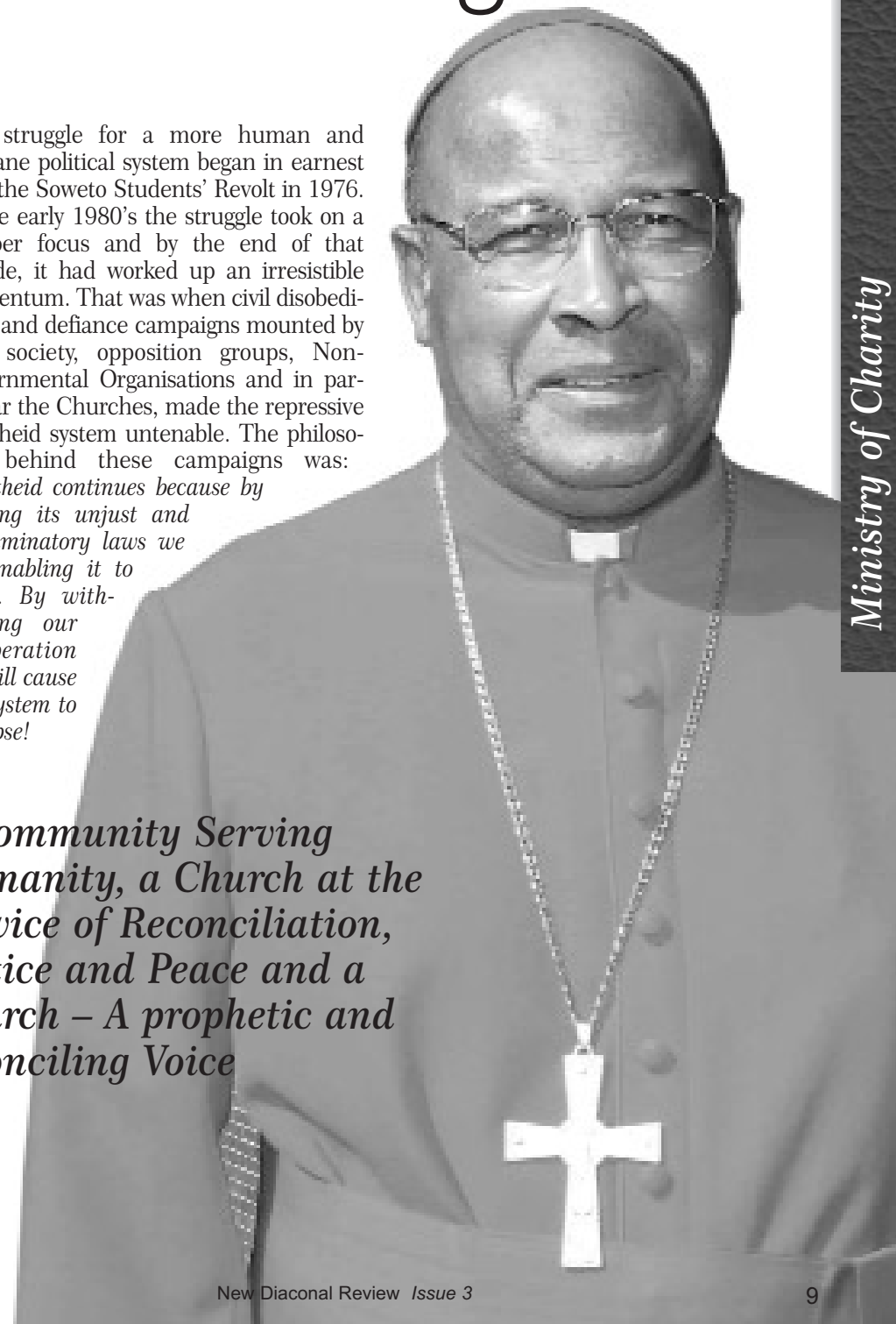
Tension and conflict are normal components of change in any human society. How much more so in societies that have for decades suspended the norms of justice, truth and love, and especially respect for human life and the person, in the struggle to throw off the cruel and inhuman legacies of Africa's past colonial masters!

For brevity's sake I will use South Africa's recent history as a case study.

and Reconciling Voice

The struggle for a more human and humane political system began in earnest with the Soweto Students' Revolt in 1976. In the early 1980's the struggle took on a sharper focus and by the end of that decade, it had worked up an irresistible momentum. That was when civil disobedience and defiance campaigns mounted by civil society, opposition groups, Non-Governmental Organisations and in particular the Churches, made the repressive apartheid system untenable. The philosophy behind these campaigns was: *Apartheid continues because by obeying its unjust and discriminatory laws we are enabling it to work. By withholding our co-operation we will cause the system to collapse!*

*A Community Serving
Humanity, a Church at the
Service of Reconciliation,
Justice and Peace and a
Church – A prophetic and
reconciling Voice*



At the same time as these internal pressures were intensifying, growing external pressures in the form of diplomatic isolation, trade embargoes and economic sanctions were being exerted on the government.

How we got there

Real change eventually began to take place when F. W. de Klerk removed P. W. Botha from office in a power struggle between the *hard-liners* and the *realists* in the National Party. In spite of F.W. de Klerk's accession to leadership of the National Party, and his party's victory in the elections later in 1989, the future became clearer only after his historic address to Parliament on 2nd February 1990.

On that fateful day President de Klerk set the ship of state on a course into uncharted waters, out of the familiar but increasingly turbulent waters of moribund apartheid, into the uncertain shoals of transition to democracy. In that speech he laid the foundations for talks and negotiations with the leadership of the Black majority.

Preliminary steps towards ending Apartheid

The course he plotted committed his government:

- ⊕ to lift the legal restrictions imposed on the people's organisations;
- ⊕ to facilitate the repatriation of political exiles;
- ⊕ to repeal all apartheid laws;
- ⊕ to release Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners;
- ⊕ to begin substantive negotiations.

At the beginning of the 1992 parliamen-

tary session President de Klerk spelt out the programme for removing all discriminatory legislation from the Statute book. By the end of the session the era of legally enforceable racial discrimination had officially ended with the repeal of the three 'pillars of Apartheid', namely the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts and the Population Registration Act.

Removal of Apartheid laws

Removing statutory apartheid was probably the least problematic of the steps that needed to be taken. To identify and repeal the laws that enforced apartheid was much easier than to generate the political will to carry through to term the project that de Klerk had so boldly launched.

In fact that political will was soon put to the test as the 'armed struggle' waged by the liberation movement against the government was replaced by a most violent conflict between the African National Congress and *Inkatha*, two elements of the liberation movement which ended up as bitter rivals in a mortal power struggle.

There is little merit in describing the gory details of that bloody conflict, except to say that in 15 years, i.e. from 1976 to 1991 at least 8000 lives were lost. That is nearly three times the number lost in Northern Ireland in 23 years. Worse was to follow. In the years 1992-1995 a further 10 000 people died in political violence!

The Catholic Church's Role

When the Catholic Church took up the struggle against apartheid it was guided by two principles:

- ⊕ the Social Teaching on the church's role in the Modern World as set out by the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes*;
- ⊕ the bona fide needs of the people in its care.

The first co-ordinated effort to do this was the ETSA project (*Evangelisation today in Southern Africa*) which the Bishops launched in 1973. Each diocese tried to find out the most urgent needs of its people.

What emerged were a) the need for Church Action for Social Justice and b) the need to develop a meaningful role for the Laity in the Church.

But, before this initiative could be complete, it was overtaken by a key event in modern South African history – the students' uprising in Soweto on 16th June 1976.

This pivotal event presented the bishops with a challenge that demanded a more comprehensive and co-ordinated response. Indeed, nothing less than a direct assault on apartheid would be accepted!

Declaration of Commitment

The Bishops' first response was to issue a document called *The Declaration of Commitment on Social Justice and Race Relations within the Church*. In that decla-

... the Catholic Church in South Africa, ... 80% of its members were black, while 80% of its clergy were white

ration the bishops committed the Catholic Church to removing all traces of apartheid from all its conventions, practices and especially from its institutions.

Underlying this commitment was the skewed power-structure of the Catholic Church in South Africa, namely that 80% of its members were black, while 80% of its clergy were white. To find a workable solution to this structure of "white control"

each bishop made a serious consultation in his diocese.

The diocesan consultations culminated in an *Inter-Diocesan Pastoral Consultation*, (IDPC) held at St Peter's Seminary, Hammanskraal, in August 1980. It was the biggest gathering ever held by the Catholic Church to facilitate dialogue among laity, Religious, priests and bishops in Southern Africa. It is interesting that this meeting also highlighted action for social justice as *the* most pressing need.

The consultation was followed by a series of smaller meeting to draw up a plan of action, guided by a vision that would guide the Church in meeting this new challenge. The result was the Pastoral Plan entitled *Community serving Humanity*

Pastoral Plan

Launched on Pentecost Sunday 1989, the Pastoral Plan aimed at guiding the Catholic Church to take two important and practical steps to undo the harm done by apartheid. The first was to undo the mentality and structures of division that characterised the apartheid system by building community among our members, a community modelled on that of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The second was to carry over into society what we had learned and put into practice in our parish communities.

The Catholic Church today

Today the Church in Southern Africa is once again concerned with helping its people meet the challenges posed by globalisation, relativism, materialism and individualism. A sign of the change of focus is the change of name from the Department for the Pastoral Plan to the Department for Evangelisation.

The Department for Evangelisation brings together most of the agencies engaged in any kind of work aimed at the spiritual and

Interview with Michael Buykx

Here we publish an interview conducted by Nelleke Wijngaards Serrarens with Michael Buykx. He has been a deacon since 2006; he is aged 44 and married to Hanna; he is the father of children aged 11, 9 and 6 and a teacher of Classics (Latin & Greek) and of religious studies. He lives in Zwolle, the Netherlands

human growth and development of those whom the Church serves. Consequently in the Archdiocese of Durban since 1989 when the Pastoral Plan was launched using the RENEW process, which was borrowed from the Archdiocese of Newark in the USA we have been engaged in a process which today we are calling 'personal Evangelisation'.

This is an attempt to convince our Catholic people that the Christian faith is about knowing, loving and serving Jesus as someone who has been met (encountered) and whom we know on a personal level. He is not simply an object of belief or of worship.

We are trying to achieve this goal by engaging in a process of personal renewal, which includes reading the scriptures, reflect on them, praying them and planning how to put them into practice in our daily lives.

To enable members to meet on a regular weekly or fortnightly basis small faith-sharing or gospel-sharing groups are formed in different parts of the parish. In many rural parishes these groups are more like mini-parishes than prayer groups, because most 'parish' activities such as teaching catechism, preparation for the sacraments, collecting and administering funds take place there.

Conclusion

The Holy Father's visit to Cameroon and Angola just last week¹ compels me to add some remarks, which relate to the life and ministry of the deacon. Since the Pope came to Africa to launch the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the synod, there are aspects of his visit that must be considered, even if in the conclusion of my talk.

Allow me to situate these remarks within the vision of God for his people as proclaimed by the Prophet Ezekiel:

'I will gather you from among the nations where you have been scattered; I will pour clean water over you: I will take out of you the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh instead; I will teach you to keep my ordinances; I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; You will be my people, and I will be your God!' (36:24ff.)

The Pope's message as he launched the final stage of the preparations for the African Synod was very simple: 'God loves you and cares for you. Therefore he wants the best for you. Love one another as he loves you. To show that you love one another, be reconciled, work for justice and live in peace. Then God will bless you, your country and your Continent'.²

Concluding Message

My hope and prayer is that what has been started as a gathering of deacons from different parts of the world, will work towards making this kind of vision a reality in the life of every man, woman and child whom we serve in the name of the Lord.

Thank you and God bless you! ■

N.W.S. Michael, something intrigues me after talking with you about the diaconate: How did you come to think about the diaconate? Who or what inspired you?

M.B. It started in the year 2000. To be honest, I had never before heard of the diaconate. I had been living with my family in Africa for some years. My wife was working as a doctor in a Diocesan TB project and I was teaching Classics at a seminary in Angola. It being the Jubilee Year it was customary in Angola to undertake a pilgrimage. I decided to do so as well, during our leave in my home country.

In Limburg, whilst walking along some part of the Route to Santiago de Compostella, I strayed into a peaceful church which happened to be open (most churches were then closed). My eyes lit upon a leaflet: *Is priesthood for you?* I thought: *Of course not, I am married.* Then there was another leaflet: *Would you like to become a deacon?* Spontaneously I said: *Yes!* And this without the faintest clue even as to what the diaconate was! This event was in fact my moment of vocation. I began to read things about the diaconate. I found it interesting because you can be married, live your ordinary life and you can assist the Church and people in need.

Because we were living in Africa, I was not tied to a particular diocese in the Netherlands at that time. So I sought out information concerning several institutes of formation in order to learn more about their vision and methods of training for the diaconate. Whilst doing so I came across the website of the Dijnseburg Diaconate

Formation Institute belonging to the Archdiocese of Utrecht. This type of formation really seemed to be my cup of tea: the motivation to become a deacon is based on your faith and spirituality on the one hand and on the perception of social needs on the other hand. I immediately discerned: this is a very sophisticated type of education which aims at a holistic formation of the entire person; it is not just about academic skills, but also about a set of personal skills.

I spoke with two formation team members and we agreed how to continue to communicate in the meantime during the last years of our stay in Angola. After our maternity leave we flew back with a suitcase full of books of theology, as well as assignments on the diaconate and on the prophet Amos. We had agreed to integrate our work with study and essay writing. Sometimes Hanna, my wife, and I took an afternoon off, went to the beach and started to talk about the assignments. It gave us the opportunity to reflect on our life, our goals, our priorities, and our future back home after Hanna's employment in the tuberculosis and AIDS project came to an end, and so on.

We were also blessed with two spiritual directors who were real pearls for us and helped us in the whole process. They were so very, very inspiring. Both were members of the Congregation of the Divine Providence. They taught us what providence can mean in your life! One example

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2 For the full text see www.vatican.va

of this being how I obtained my job when we were planning to return home. Simply through email contact from Angola I was accepted as a teacher of Latin and Greek at a grammar school in Zwolle. Normally, in the Netherlands, such a thing would never happen that way, nor would we ourselves have had the confidence to accept God's guidance that this apparently was the place He meant for us.

N.W-S. What did this period of growing towards the diaconate mean for you?

M.B. The formation for becoming a deacon was a school for my eyes and my heart and faith. In Angola it made us open up to accepting what is there. In Angola we lived in clerical and health service ambiances. My wife Hanna was working as a doctor in a TB/HIV programme and I was teaching English, Latin and Greek at the seminary and helping in the diocese, e.g. by repairing computers for priests, or book-keeping in the TB project. Since there was a Trappist monastery right adjacent to the health centre we often took part in the noonday office there. This context of friendship and spiritual sharing turned out to be providential for our mission as well. On account of our contacts in the diocese we were trusted and accepted as part of the diocesan family and allowed to address "family problems" like HIV/AIDS which were taboo topics for other NGOs. The civil war in Angola was a more acute problem at the time than AIDS, but we managed to start a slow process of HIV awareness amongst the clergy. Various *expat* colleagues on AIDS programmes who had at first pitied our strong ties with the Church ended up by envying us ...

The impulse to draw attention to HIV/AIDS has stayed with me ever since, for ten years now. The schooling of the eyes, as I just said, also meant learning to see poverty and what its effects on people's lives, and even here in the Netherlands also.

N.W-S. How did you experience your return to the Netherlands: living, working and studying in quite a different setting?

M.B. It definitely was a shock to the system, coming back. In Angola, we were both working within the same project and surroundings. Now both of us were experiencing quite different circumstances. For Hanna it was particularly difficult. Instead of working in the health centres all day, she was now alone at home with the kids and studying public health. For me, once again teaching Latin and Greek to well to do Dutch teenagers felt like a "return to zero" after my rich experiences with the poor in Africa. However, the weekends at the Diaconate Formation Centre were a lifebuoy, also for helping to deal with the culture shock. For me it was a very inspiring time – although it was a strain for a young family.

Another significant point is that my wife is a member of the Russian Orthodox Church. Being members of different churches brought its own challenges. But we have learned we are welcome in both churches. So in time we became accustomed to the situation. I feel very much accepted as a Catholic deacon by the members of the Russian Orthodox community. At my ordination I even received an icon of St Stephen from an Orthodox deacon, which I have passed back again when another Orthodox friend was ordained. This double loyalty to both churches has its consequences for our children too. On the positive side is the fact that they experience Christ in both settings. Easter and summer camps are wonderful experiences in Orthodoxy for them! But sometimes they complain that Church is a bit too present in their life. We asked the teacher of our eldest daughter not to push her too much in the role of a missionary in her class. But the teacher objected: "She is the only one who can answer all my questions!"

N.W-S. How do you experience your diaconate in your work as a teacher?

M.B. I am very grateful that I can, as a Catholic deacon, aside from Latin and Greek also teach religion in a Protestant school. The way I try to do this has fundamentally to do with the essence of my diaconate. I am constantly trying to make connections between school and society. In my teaching I try to reach out to my students in a way that is relevant for their life. To give an example: I invited all 120 of them (aged 15) to do a live interview with someone who knew more about poverty in our town, such as a doctor, or a policeman, and so on.

I ask them:

1. What is poverty and what does it mean for people?
2. How does it affect or touch you?

I learnt this mode of questioning from my teacher of spirituality at Dijnseburg and it has proved to be very inspiring! Most of them were shocked that poverty was so close to hand and that even peers could thereby be excluded from school excursions, etc. They have learned to discern. If only 5% of my students in the long run are influenced by this and become enabled to think about the huge effect of poverty on one's life and chances of growth I shall be a happy man! In the end, poverty in a developed country has effects comparable to AIDS in Africa: people are experiencing shame and are excluded from social life.

N.W-S. What about your work in the parish?

M.B. In fact at the moment the most important part of my diaconate has to do with my work as a teacher. And because three years after my ordination I began to study theology at university level, my time for active parish ministry is very much restricted. But the contact with priest, pastoral workers and volunteers is excellent.

Whenever there is an occasion that is relevant for a deacon, be it Easter, the Feast of St Lawrence, or World Aids Day, I assist at the liturgy and occasionally I preach. In Lent I did a special Way of the Cross dedicated to the subject of the suffering brought about by AIDS in Africa. I translated it from Michael Kelly S.J. in Zambia <http://www.jctr.org.zm/downloads/faithaids.doc.pdf> and re-posted it on my www.wereldzonderAIDS.nl for colleagues and pastors. Another parish initiative over which I preside is a reading circle, focusing on the ideas and the spirituality of Père Joseph Wresinski, the founder of the 4th World movement A.T.D. (*Aide à Toute Détresse*). Père Joseph asked for our solidarity with people who have been very, very poor for generations. Moreover, he asks us to listen instead of judging, and empowers people rather than making them objects of charity. So in the parish we have our eyes being schooled by Père Joseph. After reading the Gospel readings of the day, we exchange our experiences concerning that Gospel, and the writings of Père Joseph, and how this affects our daily life.

N.W-S. Connecting people is very important for you?

M.B. A decade ago I had been very active in the Association of Teachers of Latin and Greek. At that time my zeal was for innovative pedagogy for Classics, publishing teaching materials, and so on. Looking back, I see that I always have felt it to be my vocation to connect people; to prevent people from being or feeling isolated; to open the minds of pupils who are well off so as to see people who are less fortunate in life. In essence, it all had to do with promoting a change of mentality: formerly by means of the classics, now by way of *diaconia caritatis* and the Gospel. I try to open new perspectives concerning important social questions for my students. Also as a tutor in my class I try to bring people together. For instance, it once happened that a divorced couple, who

normally only communicated through their lawyers, managed to focus on the distress of their son at least during the parent-teacher evening. I had the feeling of being used as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, in connecting people, in creating a short moment of peace and mutual concern.

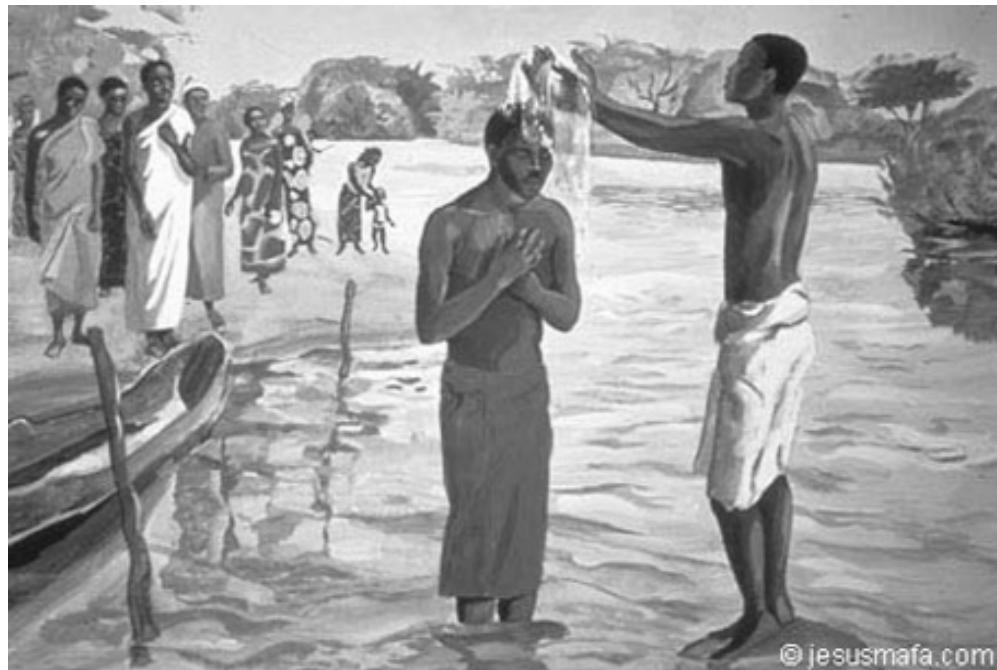
N.W-S. What has been the influence of the pictures of *Jesus Mafa* on your work?

M.B. This beautiful series of 63 pictures is like my “African mirror” on the Gospel.

A missionary asked the Mafa people in Cameroon to act out how Jesus Christ and the Gospel narrative would look if it took place in their own culture. An anonymous painter then painted “The life of Jesus Mafa”. These pictures are a visual example of enculturation. www.jesumafa.com. Mary is a beautiful black woman in blue. This picture hung in the hospital where my wife was working and for me it is the ‘Mary, Mother of Africa’ of John Paul II’s prayer for all those that suffer of AIDS.

In the pictures you are confronted too with the clash between the influence of modern westernisation and the original African way of living. Mary listening to Jesus wears a Western dress and earrings whereas Martha in traditional ethnic dress does the heavy work, grinding maize with mortar and pestle. At the Last Supper, Jesus lifts up a calabash instead of a chalice. Mary at the moment of annunciation is also in traditional dress, cooking on firewood.

I am using these beautiful pictures as a metaphor during workshops about HIV/AIDS. The picture of the adulterous woman (John 8) can draw attention to stigmatisation: she stands (literally) higher than the men accusing her and so looks morally above their hypocrisy. In Africa the community is involved in reconciliation and acceptance of outcasts: home based care for AIDS patients needs the support of the community. So the prodigal son <http://www.jesumafa.com/anglais/imag36.htm> is a scene in which the mother, and the entire village share in joy. Essentially it has to do with spirituality. These Biblical



pictures, like biblical-drama, ask us: what would you do? I connect this question to the suffering of people living with HIV/AIDS: they have something to teach us. The core of the matter is Matthew 25: “All you have done for the poor, the sick, the lonely, you have done for me.” Bishop Kevin Dowling of South Africa who sat in the shacks next to his dying miners and their girls and orphans is my inspiration for this view: AIDS asks for a God of healing and of compassion. (<http://www.nouwen.org/nl/dowling.php>).

I don’t agree that we should feel overwhelmed by the massive numbers at a great distance away. In seeing the suffering of the Aids patients and their stigmatization, we are inspired to think about stigmatization in our own surroundings. We can fight AIDS by praying and even by taking action against bullying in a school class-room or against prejudices in the parish. In my preaching I always try to make these connections too. So essentially it has to do with connecting people, making them aware of suffering and inviting them to react. We were trained in Dijnseburg with the words Mgr. Cardijn used to say to the Belgian Workers Youth Movement: **See, judge, act**. By looking at any society and seeing the suffering of the poor, one comes to the conclusion that it has to do with injustice and that is unacceptable according to the tradition of the Gospel. So you have to act and try to connect people and set people free!

N.W-S. How are you able to combine all those tasks, being a husband and a father, a deacon, a teacher, a student of theology ...?

M.B. It has to do with a passion, with an ambition: I want to focus on those things in life that really matter. What keeps me going are moments of reflection. This also has to do with a schooling of the eyes, about my children, my marriage, my work. Writing my diary, making an occasional

retreat in a Trappist monastery, going on a pilgrimage or simply watching our children grow up is what connects me to my inner self. Those are the moments my emotions and faith come through. These are moments of God. Reflection helps me to discern on a very deep level what is worthwhile doing.

That is how I came to take up academic theology a few years after ordination. I felt that this is at this moment what I ought to do. In studying theology at the university I have several objectives:

1. To become more profound in my teaching of religion at school.
2. It is a requisite if, in later future, I want to work full-time as a parish ministry.
3. Since my involvement with HIV/AIDS in Africa is constantly geared to opening the Church towards African theology and culture, I need the “language” of academic theology in order to get the message across.

Connecting people is an ongoing inspiration in my life, with the help of the Holy Spirit. And with the help of my family of course!

N.W-S. How does the diaconate influence your marriage and family life?

M.B. I always have been very busy with a lot of things. So it would seem as if the diaconate risks making our life even busier. But, actually, it does help us to make choices. During our formation – and after ordination as well – it was always stressed that we should never neglect our family on account of the diaconate. There should be no competition, but only complementarity. Since it is the diaconate which helps me to use the brakes!! It is not just the diaconal activities, but *being* a deacon in the different spheres of your life: that is what is essential and that is what brings the moments of great joy and gratitude. ■

Where are we?

This article is the second part of a paper written by Father Alphonse Borras, who is Professor of Canon Law at the Catholic University of Louvain and Vicar General of the diocese of Liège. The first part appeared in the last issue of this journal and the overall paper is a sequel to 'The Sacramentality of the Diaconal Ministry' by Father Didier Gonneaud which appeared in our first issue a year ago.

The question of 'character'

If the sacramentality of the diaconate must henceforth be affirmed without deviation, it raises the question of a 'character',¹ as a 'seal' or 'sign' in the sense of creating a social or ecclesial import, its 'significatum' ('sign' or 'seal' on the soul).² The character 'marks' the ordained and makes him participate in the mission of Jesus Christ, in his triple prophetic, priestly and royal functions.

The Thomistic doctrine of the character is that it is a 'distinctive' sign (*signum distinctivum*): it has a connotation of 'belonging' or 'accreditation' ('at the service of', and the protection which this implies). In

practical terms, speaking from the point of view of sociology, the mark signifies a status granted and from that point on a role assigned – a status and role for which social accreditation is given. The character is a 'configuring' sign (*signum configurativum*) in the sense that it outlines or represents an authority which belongs to the individual (somewhat parallel to the emblem of the emperor granted to a soldier).

The adjective 'configurative' is not purely and simply a stamp nor, in the first instance, a resemblance, but a reference by which credit and protection is granted for the service for which one is singled out from others. This 'configuration' derives its sense – and its finality – within the task committed to the candidate by the competent authority.³ In other terms, it is the mission confided to someone or the selection for a task (deputing) which is, accord-

ing to St Thomas, the point of comparison between a cultural usage of 'branding' and the sacramental character. This, then, is the meaning ('thing signified') of the seal or character, the purpose of which is decisive, namely, 'the new spiritual destiny which Christ, in and through his worshipping ecclesial community, commits to one who agrees to submit to this ritual.'⁴

The sacrament is character. It is the characterising rite of sacrament which signifies, on the one hand, a distinction from others

... the character impresses not a resemblance with some feature of the Christ, but, indeed, a reference to Christ himself

– non-Christians, those not believing in baptism or confirmation – and from lay believers not seeking ordination; and, on the other hand, as a reference to a stratum

in the Church. God grants an introduction into his communion of life through baptism and confirmation, or into the service of that communion by ordination.⁵ From this perspective the character is a *power (potestas)*, an aptitude or authorisation.⁶

According to St Thomas, the character is a product of the priesthood of Christ, a configuration to himself, that is to say, making reference to himself as the Christ.⁷ In every sacrament which confers it, the character impresses not a resemblance with some feature of the Christ, but, indeed, a *reference* to Christ himself. This is the sense, it seems to me, which is closest to the Latin verb *configurare*. In a way similar to that of bishops and priests, deacons are ordained, that is to say, sent out for the service of the Church and distinguished in their mission by contrast with others (*signum distinctivum*), and referred to the source of their mission (*signum configurativum*) as a people of God to whom they are destined.

1 I refer once again to my study: A Borras (2007) 'A diaconal character', in *Nouveau Revue Théologique*, No.129, pp.45-63.

2 The theologians of the middle of the 12th century brought about a change in the notion of *sacramentum* as an 'external sign', replacing this with a mystical reality which they called a *signum gratiae*, in as much as grace is produced by the external sign and necessarily tied to it. The external sign does not remain any less 'marking': it is this 'character' inherent in the sacrament, *signum gratiae*, which becomes by this fact *distinctivum*, distinctive as between the faithful incorporated into the Church and those non-baptised (baptism and confirmation), or between the faithful laity and the ordained (Holy Orders). One might add to this that the character is by way of consequence, *configurativum*, namely impressed by Christ on the soul, thereby stamping in the image of the Trinity. Saint Albert the Great and Saint Bonaventure will see in this *signum gratiae* that the character is a disposition to grace (Latin: *dispositio ad gratiam*). Saint Thomas Aquinas bound himself to this doctrinal elaboration. His original contribution will be, however, to present it in another light, namely, Christian worship as the priesthood of Christ.

3 The character is in effect that sign by which one is marked out in relation to some purpose: 'a character, strictly, *est signaculum quoddam quo aliquid insignitur ad ordinandum in aliquem finem*.' ('a character is a specific sign by which something is marked as ordained to some end.') (St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q.63.3 resp.)

4 Schillebeeckx, E (2004) (Original Dutch version, 1952) *LEconomie sacramentelle du salut*, Fribourg Academic Press: 'The sacrament itself, the "external sign", is a "distinctive and configuring sign", a *characteres* by which in the view of the Church (*in facie Ecclesiae*) a baptised person, a confirmation candidate or an ordained priest is really distinguished, for the other members of the Church, from non-baptised, non-confirmed and non-ordained persons; these three sacramental rites are living, visible testimony to a new mandate.' (p.412).

5 Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, d4, q1, a2, sol.1, ad2.

6 The sacramental characterisation – the sacramental 'seal', respectively of baptism, confirmation and Holy Orders – is nothing other than forms of sharing in the priesthood of Christ, a participation which derives from Christ himself: *sacramentales characteres, qui nihil aliud sunt quam quaedam participationes sacerdotii Christi, ab ipso Christo derivatae*. (ST. III, q.63,3, resp.).

7 The character produces a new reality in the soul, which is signified and realised by the rite. It is in this sense that it is described as 'spiritual', (*character spiritualis*). The character is not an inner reality on the soul in isolation from the exterior; it is this reality produced inwardly in so far as signified by the sacrament.

Vatican II makes no explicit reference to the sacramental character in relation to the diaconate. By contrast, the *motu proprio Sacrum diaconatus ordinem* would speak, in 1967, of the ‘indelible character’ of diaconate. The analytic index to the 1997 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* returns to the expression ‘sacramental character’, including in this priestly ordination, but with no explicit reference to the diaconate; and then, among the articles dealing with the subject, the one on the ordination of deacons it says: ‘Deacons participate in a special fashion in the mission and in the grace of Christ.’ (*Lumen Gentium* 41; *Ad Gentes*, 16). The Sacrament of Orders marks them with an imprint (character) which no one can

Catechism distinguished, on the one hand, the ‘indelible’ character (1581-4), and, on the other, the grace of the Holy Spirit (585-9).⁸ Referring to the latter it says that it ‘configures to Christ-the-Priest, Master and Pastor of whom the ordained is constituted minister.’ (1585).⁹

The configuration to Christ

‘The diversity of sacramental characters’, writes Didier Gonneaud, ‘does not come on Christ’s part: from this point of view, there is only a single and unique configuration. It comes from the finality or purpose of the character: in view of which is it not the case that baptised, confirmed, deacon, priest and bishop are configured to Christ himself?’¹⁰ This is the question as regards purpose: what is in view when one is ‘configured’ in Christ by the Sacrament of Orders? The verb ‘configure’ might, in this case, have an information-meaning such as ‘to programme a system element in order to secure its functioning according to a certain mode.’

These considerations make us attentive in the face of indiscriminate use of the theme of configuration, which must not be reduced simply to a resemblance to Christ-the-Servant. The theme has appeared in recent theology of the diaconate and in certain documents of the magisterium¹¹ –

The verb ‘configure’ might, in this case, have an information-meaning such as ‘to programme a system element in order to secure its functioning according to a certain mode.’

wipe out and which configures them to Christ who made Himself ‘deacon’, that is, the servant of all. (Mk 10:45; Lk 22:27; St Polycarp, *Epistle*, 5:2). When treating of these effects of the Sacrament of Orders, the

8 Under the title referring to the effects of the Sacrament, in the text which follows, the character is described as ‘an indelible spiritual character’ (italics in 1582), and in the précis of this section, an ‘indelible sacramental character’ (no italics). It should be noted that in speaking of the ordination of priests the *Catechism* says that the ‘ordination of priests ... is conferred by means of a particular sacrament, which, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, marks them with a special character’ (1563, which is a literal repeat of *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 2a). This latter text goes on: ‘and [this particular sacrament] configures them thus to Christ-the-Priest in order to make them capable of acting in the name of Christ-the-Head in person.’

9 One should note the tie between the mention of ‘character’ and the theme of ‘configuration’: this latter is, however, repeated in order to affirm that ‘the grace of the Holy Spirit proper to this sacrament [of Orders] is that of a configuration to Christ-the-Priest, Master and Pastor, whose ordination constitutes the ministry.’ (1585).

10 Gonneaud, D., *La Sacramentalité du Diaconat*, p.12.

11 See the Congregation for Catholic Education: *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, 5, where the deacon is said to be configured to ‘Christ-the-Servant and Lord’, and, because of this fact, considered as the ‘specific sign of Christ-the-Servant.’

without, however, finding usage in current discussions of the diaconate. It makes its appearance as a ‘novelty’ by way of reference to Vatican II. It should, however, be subject to theological critique. There is, in fact, a danger in the current vogue of ‘sacramentalism’ of exaggerating the quality of ‘sign’: ‘the deacon as sign of Christ-the-Servant.’¹² This proliferation of ‘sign’ may have for consequence to slip into a pure consideration of it as a matter of being rather than of action – a kind of ontologism of doubtful provenance. Then, in the exercise of ministry there arises a circularity of being and action.

Another more surreptitious danger is that of identity, namely personification.¹³ The notion of sacrament implies always a dis-

Beyond the moral weight which should always affect the individual – what deacon could ever support such a burden as to resemble Christ?

tance with respect to what is signified and realised between the *sacramentum* (sacra-

ment) and the *res* (reality): it will not do to act so as to liken the ministry to Christ in the form of personal dependence on him prior to the ecclesial reality, such that it becomes entirely a matter of *representation*, whereas there should always be respect for one’s anchorage in the Church, and the value of the mediation of the Church, the ecclesial Body of Christ.¹⁴ Beyond the moral weight which should always affect the individual – what deacon could ever support such a burden as to resemble Christ? Configuration understood as resemblance certainly supports the Christological dimension of the diaconate. It runs, however, a double risk: first, that of an exaltation of these new servants of the Church, using the status of ordination to distinguish themselves from other ecclesial ministers; and, secondly, correlatively underestimating the pneumatological approach to the ministry in the diversity and complementarity of charisms and services in the Church.¹⁵

Very wisely, the International Theological Commission recalls that the vocabulary of ‘configuration’, namely of the ‘sign’ arose late in the post-Conciliar period. The

12 I repeat the expression of Robert Scholtus, who utilises it to stigmatise the approach of priests who employ excessively the word ‘sign’ to describe their identity, in recurrent use of the ‘sign’ of Christ-the-Head.’ Scholtus, R (2005) ‘Let Us Speak of Priest’, in *Etudes* 34, p.646.

13 Jean-Paul II has affirmed on 2 March 1985: ‘in its own degree the deacon personifies Christ-the-Servant of the Father, in participation of the threefold function of the Sacrament, through the occurrence of the Sacrament of Orders.’ *Insegnamenti*, 649, quoted in ITC, ‘Le Diaconat’, p.76.

14 It is certainly the *res*, argued the ancients, which is realized – the grace which it confers- but it remains the *sacramentum* which signifies that which is not yet fully given: the Eucharist, for example, is the actualization of the mystery of salvation, but it is not a representation or a repetition of the sacrifice of the cross.

15 The life of the Church shows us deacons arguing about this configuration in order to place themselves, in contrast to the laity, as being in ecclesial charge. The theme of the configuration of deacons to Christ-the-Servant could take us on the same troublesome tour as that other theme of the *alter Christus* in Tridentine theology and in the spirituality of the French Church of the 17th century. The priest as ‘another Christ’ enthroned himself in a holy vision of priest as a higher being of the Church, in a kind of quasi-identity with Christ. See Castellucci, E., ‘The future of the priest in forthcoming Christology and ecclesiology’, in *Seminarium* 30 (1990), pp.1201-21

thematic remained for some exploration of the meaning of certain texts of the Council, which spoke of deacons as ‘fortified by grace’. (LG, 29a *gratia sacramentali roborati*), or that they ‘participate in a special way in the mission and by the grace of the High Priest (LG 41d – *peculiariter modo participes*), ‘strengthened by the laying-on of hands ... in order that they may exercise efficaciously their ministry by the sacramental grace of the diaconate.’ (AG 16f – *per impositionem manuum corroborari*).¹⁶ In all the evidence, these texts are extremely restrained: they invoke, rather, the force of the grace of the sacrament.

The documents of the post-conciliar magisterium would come to invoke an inef-

This configuration should not be reduced to a resemblance to Christ; it should be understood all the more as a sacramental representation of Him

faceable ‘seal’ which brings configuration to Christ-the-Deacon,¹⁷ namely that of a *character* ‘which corroborates the fidelity of God to his gift, implies non-repeatability of the Sacrament, and stability in ecclesial service.’¹⁸ The configuration of deacons is realised by ‘an outpouring particular to the Spirit’, writes the *Basic Norms on Formation* (1998). This configuration should not be reduced to a resemblance to Christ; it should be understood all the

more as a sacramental representation of Him (*Basic Norms*, 3 & 7), and seen, rather, as a form of reference to Christ, but also to the Church.¹⁹ Like bishops and priests, deacons are henceforth ‘bound to service’ of their brothers and sisters in the ecclesial community, reminding them that the gift of God is irrevocable, definitive.

Since then one can apply *mutatis mutandis* to deacons what Vatican II said about priests: ‘By their vocation and their ordination they are in a certain way set apart in the midst of the people of God’; but this is not with the intention of separating them apart from the people nor from any other person, whoever that may be; it is, rather, ‘to render them totally consecrated to the work for which the Lord has called them.’ (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 3a). The fact of being ‘set aside’ for the ministry recalls the distinctive aspect of the ‘character’ (*signum distinctivum*); and the fact of ‘totally consecrated’ can recall the aspect of configuration (*signum configurativum*). To deacons it is necessary to apply the doctrine of *character* which connotes dedication to service, disposition to the grace inherent in ordination – that of serving the Christ and the Church – a distinction with effects in relation to the rest of the faithful, referring to Christ and his ecclesial Body, and to the indelible seal which is, therefore, not repeatable and equally irrevocable.

I appreciate the formula of Mgr Albert Rouet when he writes that ‘ordination to

the diaconate conforms a person to the service which Christ renders to the history of humanity, in order to lead it to its achievement.’²⁰ The verb ‘conform’ makes us think of the Latin word *configurare*; ordination engenders conformity to the work of Christ. Now, this demands to be recognised ‘at the heart of the world’. The reception of the diaconate brings with it participation in the diaconship of Christ, according to the logic of the gift in its extremity. The deacon is marked to this effect; his ordination destines him for the work of God in the course of leading this world to its fulfilment.

Deacons in Persona Christi?

In virtue, truly, of ordination and of the sacramental character, deacons act with the authority of Christ, in his name, and

... while fulfilling in the person of Christ-the-Head the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing

that leads to action *in the person of Christ-the-Head*, that is to say, in the role of Christ, head of his ecclesial Body. Never does Vatican II say of deacons that they act

in persona Christi in the sense of literally in the role or in the person of Christ. It does say this defensively of bishops and priests.²¹ In the post-conciliar Roman magisterium, the expression *in persona Christi* continued in use in order to legitimate the ministry of priests,²² notably in the Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (20).²³

The expression *in persona Christi* has begun to be applied to deacons, undoubtedly in deference to Canon 1008 of the *Code of Canon Law*, which affirms that ordained ministers have been ‘consecrated and deputed to pasture the people of God (*Dei populum pascant*), each according to his degree, while fulfilling in the person of Christ-the-Head the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing.’ My translation respects the use of the verb *pascere*, ‘to pasture’, which metaphorically signifies ‘to lead (while taking care)’; and then, the official translation – though not authentic – in the French language says ‘in order to be pastors’. One can understand that the theologians may be able, justifiably, to put a good face on what they consider to be read as an assimilation of deacons and pastors – bishops and priests – which they are not. (See LG 29a ‘not to the priesthood’, *non ad sacerdotium*).²⁴

16 See ITC, ‘The Diaconate’, p.92.

17 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1570/1121) treats of the character in general for the three sacraments in question, ‘by which the Christian participates in the priesthood of Christ and takes part in the Church according to different offices and functions.’

18 Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* (1998), 21 & 28.

19 What *Catechism* 1121 underlines for the ‘character’ in general is: ‘... the configuration to Christ and the Church, realized by the Spirit, is indelible (See Council of Trent DS 1600). It adds: ‘It remains for always in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, like a promise or guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship, and the service of the Church.’

20 Rouet, A (2004) ‘Towards a theology of the diaconate’, in *Etudes*.400, p.798.

21 See par. from LG, 21b; 27a; 28a; PO 2b,c; 7b; *Apostolicum Actuositatem* 2b; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 33b; AG 39a.

22 As a signal, furthermore the ITC states: ‘the liaison of the *in persona Christi* exclusively with priests for the consecration of has been accentuated in the post-conciliar documents.’ And the ITC refers to the Synod of Bishops of 1971; cites the letter *Sacerdotium ministeriale* (1983); and the *Code of Canon Law* (1983), Canon 900*1. See ITC, ‘The Diaconate’, p.95, No.1.

23 In this passage, the expression follows shortly after the appeal for the configuration of priests ‘to Christ, the head (or principal) and pastor of the Church’ (21 & 22), where, on its occurrence, it is said that in virtue of this the priest is correspondingly placed in a quasi-marriage relationship with his own community (*Positus est in eiusmodi relatione sponsali erga propriam communitatem*). See John-Paul II *Pastores dabo vobis*, in DC, 89, pp.462-463.

24 See, for example, H Legrand, *Le diaconat dans sa relation à la théologie de l’Eglise et des ministères*, pp.13-41; ‘L’originalité du ministère des diacres. Une réflexion théologique’, in *Cahiers de l’Atelier*, No.401, 2001, pp.59-75; B Sesboue, ‘Quelle est l’identité ...?’ Pp.255-257; ‘Le diaconat permanent a-t-il vraiment trouvé ses marques dans l’Eglise?’ in Dumons, H & Moulinet, D (eds) ‘Le Diaconat Permanent’, (forthcoming at the time this original article was written).

Differently from its first edition of 1992,²⁵ the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not use in its final edition of 1997 the expression *in persona Christi* to qualify diaconal functions.²⁶ I rejoice and salute the choice of the *Directory on the Life and Ministry of Permanent Deacons* (1998), which prefers to use the formula *in nomine Christi*, ‘in the name of Christ’ (28, 37), thus avoiding the mode of expression which is typical of the priesthood and the Eucharist, *in persona Christi*.²⁷ One cannot any longer affirm without further comment that all ordained ministers, including deacons, may act *in persona Christi*. That will depend on the meaning given to an expression whose history in theology gives us to understand that it has a precise technical meaning. The

It seems to me, therefore, more correct theologically to qualify the action of deacons in nomine Christi, ‘in the name of Christ’

sense is twofold: in its strictest sense, the formula *in persona Christi* applies to the priest in the Eucharistic action; in the wider sense it designates the function of representation or reference, certainly sacramental, of ordained ministers for Christ in virtue of the character inherent in sacramental ordination.

It seems to me, therefore, more correct theologically to qualify the action of deacons *in nomine Christi*. This formula is used for bishops and priests, but not to qualify their activity in the context of Eucharistic celebration. It is not necessary, however, to use it in a purely juridical sense – in the sense that the deacon contracts himself for service of the people of God. It carries the meaning of legitimating diaconal activity *in nomine Christi* in a proper theological understanding of the Church which God calls together, leads and edifies through Christ and in the Spirit. The formula *nomine Christi* will be understood, then, as honouring the ecclesial mediation of the action of Christ.

That recaptures in every way the specific manner in which deacons ‘represent’ Christ. “Even if one qualifies the action of deacons *in persona Christi capitis* (‘in the person of Christ-the-Head), it is still necessary to characterise, writes the International Theological Commission, their specific manner of making Christ present, differently from the way in which bishops and priests do.²⁸ One would say spontaneously that this will be represented in his qualification as Christ-the-Servant, but this shade of meaning will put us back into difficulties earlier noted relative to ‘configuration’ to Christ. It remains that the representation of Christ as Servant by deacons cannot play a role differentiated

by specific criterion, ‘given that the service should be considered as a characteristic one common to all ordained ministers.’²⁹

The institutional and qualifying effects of Diaconal Ordination

In and *For* the Church, deacons accomplish, therefore, *nomine Christi* an ecclesial function or charge. The accountability of the sacramental diaconate raises the question sooner or later of the *potestates* (‘powers’), that is, the powers tied to the reception of diaconate. ‘The other two degrees of Orders, bishopric and priesthood, confer a capacity, by reason of sacramental ordination, for the tasks which no

... he remains a member of the people of God, inscribed in the ecclesial family, while at the same time he is set out before his brothers and sisters so as to signify for them that the Church is set up by Christ, in the Spirit

non-ordained person would be able to fulfil (validly)’, writes the International Theological Commission, which hurries on to add immediately: ‘Why should it be otherwise with the diaconate?’³⁰

Diaconal ordination is not the grant of officialisation of what one is already doing. Vatican II has spoke of ‘the men who

accomplish a true diaconal ministry’, and who would from then on be usefully ‘strengthened by the imposition of hands... and more strictly united to the altar for which they will acquire their ministry more efficaciously, by means of the sacramental grace of diaconate.’ (AG 16f). The expression ‘ministry truly diaconal’ is regrettable. At the most, should one understand it in a descriptive sense related to tasks performed by the laity, those conferred on deacon being only similar? This exhibits an insufficient comprehension of the sacramentality of the diaconate, which is not simply a ‘sacramental grace in order to accomplish efficiently the tasks of ministry’, but the entry into an Order at the heart of the apostolic ministry. The ordination is not simply declaratory, but instituting.³¹ It installs one in a new manner in the Church; he remains a member of the people of God, inscribed in the ecclesial family, while at the same time he is set out before his brothers and sisters so as to signify for them that the Church is set up by Christ, in the Spirit.

The ministry founded on the Sacrament of Orders establishes an originality of status for service of the Church and of the Gospel. To paraphrase a passage of Vatican II relative to priestly ministry (LG 10b), there is not simply a difference of degree between the deaconship of all and the diaconal ministry of the few, as if this latter were just a prolongation, namely an offi-

25 CCC 1992: ‘...No one can confer grace on himself; it must be offered and given. This presupposes ministers of grace, authorised and deputed by the action of Christ. From Him they receive the mission and the faculty (‘sacred power’) to act *in persona Christi Capitis* (‘in the person of Christ-the-Head’), 875.

26 The CCC of 1997 says that from its time onwards bishops and priest who have received ‘the mission and faculty (‘the sacred power’) of acting *in persona Christi*’ and deacons ‘the strength to serve the people of God in the diaconate of the liturgy, the Word and charity, in communion with the bishop and the presbyterate.’ (875).

27 In the list of corrections of the CCC of 1997 and in the choices before the *Directory* of 1998, would it not have been better (given that the case had arisen) to make similar correction of the provision of Canon 1008 of the 1983 Code to take up the refined formula of the CCC (875), namely to replace *in persona Christi* with *in nomine Christi*?

28 ITC, ‘Le diaconat’, p.96. I would prefer to say ‘represent’ Christ.

29 ‘The Diaconate’, p.97, No.31. The ITC cites the CCC of 1997. After saying of deacons that they receive ‘the strength to serve the people of God in the ‘deaconship’ of the liturgy, the Word and of charity, in communion with the bishop and the presbyterate’ (875) the CCC is precise: intrinsically tied to the sacramental nature of the ecclesial ministry is its *character of service* (in italics in the text of 876). 876 continues in these terms: ‘In effect, entirely dependent on Christ who give the mission and authority, ministers are truly slaves of Christ (Rom 1:1), in the image of Christ who freely took for us the form of a slave (Phil.2:7). Because the work and the grace on which they are the ministers are not their own, but those of Christ who has confided these to them for the sake of others, they will willingly make themselves the slaves of all. (1 Cor 1:19).

30 ITC, ‘Le Diaconat’, p.83.

31 H Legrand, ‘Le diaconat dans sa relation à la théologie de l’Eglise et des ministres’, pp.31-32.

cialisation of the former. By virtue of sacramental ordination there is a constitutive difference, in the double sense of essential and instituting, which fits some for the service of all in the name of Christ, with his authority and in the power of the Spirit.³²

The reception of Ordination equips the candidate for ecclesial functions (creates an *officium*, an ‘office’, in the sense of Canon 145*1), or at least for a task or ecclesial charge (*munus*). This aptitude is inherent in ordination, so that among the

faithful laity this capacity depends on their suitability and on the call of the Church (Canon 228*1).³³ It is, then, in virtue of their ordination that the deacons are fitted for ministry.³⁴ The ordination is the foundation of ministry (conferring a *potestas sacra* – ‘a sacred power’); the nomination, including a letter of mission, is its determination (making precise its execution).

Deacons, guarantors of the apostolicity of living faith

If the ministers place themselves ‘as providing the services of what is actually what

32 The ITC has understood well when it describes *on the contrary* ‘if one denies its sacramentality, the diaconate would represent a form of ministry rooted solely in baptism.’ (ITC, ‘Le Diaconat’, p.93).

33 The laity are able to cooperate in a *potestas* in which clerics have been clothed by the Sacrament of Orders. The actual right prepares them in certain circumstances to exercise ‘a power of jurisdiction’. For the exercise of this power (of government, i.e. jurisdiction) the faithful laity must co-operate with the law (Canon 129*2), announces the general principle of which *2 constitutes the exception: ‘...to the power of government which in the Church is truly of divine institution and is still called ‘power of jurisdiction’ those are apt, according to the dispositions of the law, who have received Sacred Orders (Canon 129*1). How do those ministers of the laity think when honouring the bond between sacrament and community: What does baptism fit for? For the exercise of an ecclesial charge or function, is a ministry sufficient? Is it necessary to speak of a *baptismal* ministry by its very foundation? If yes, that would mean that baptism *as such* creates the capability for an ecclesial charge or function along the model of the Sacrament of Orders which does fit the candidate to receive a ministry. Baptism, then, of itself does not suffice to make baptised people ministers: is it still necessary that they should be fit (*laici sunt habiles*- See Canon 228*1) to receive a ministry, in function of the suitability required in the Head (*laici qui idonei reperiantur* – ‘laity who are found to be suitable’), and mediating the call of the Church (*ut a sacris pastoribus assumantur* – ‘that they may be accepted by their sacred pastors). To put it differently, for the faithful laity who see themselves committed to an ecclesial charge or function, their collaboration with the bishop should be legitimated by verification of required aptitudes and the decision of the episcopate who determines the terms of choice by nomination, accompanied by a letter, of the corresponding mission. Among the laity exercising a ministry, their collaboration is not intrinsically tied to their condition as baptised people: it is not endogenous to the baptism, such as, among those who are ordained, it is endogenous to their Holy Orders, and even immediately, in the case of a diocesan bishop (who receives his charge in the very act of episcopal ordination at the throne for which he is designated)); but ‘mediately’ for priests and deacons, that is to say, mediating charges and functions as further attribution through ordination.

34 I refer again to my study on this subject: Borrás, A., ‘Diaconal ministry and *potestas sacra*’, in B. Dumons & D. Moulinet (eds) *The Permanent Diaconate* (forthcoming). One supports here the wish of Vatican II ‘to root all *potestas sacra* in the Church in a sacramental form’ as ITC recalls (‘Le Diaconat’, p.87).

the community is called to be and to do³⁵, what, then, does diaconal ministry signify in its fulfillment and fulfil in its signifying the mission of the Church? Deacons are called, consecrated and sent out in order to realise in all this ‘charge’ the ‘diaconate of Christ’ – and, *through him, with him and in him*, his ecclesial Body – and at the same time they realise it in signifying it ‘in the name of Christ and with his authority’, and with the power of his Spirit in reference to choice and the sending out of the Twelve by Christ. The diaconate of Christ thus creates a place for the ‘diaconate of the Church’,³⁶ at the heart of history. It gives the ecclesial Body to human beings to whom God wills to communicate his life and to reveal his love. The Church attests to the Kingdom inaugurated by the Easter of Christ; it works for his coming in the

It gives the ecclesial Body to human beings to whom God wills to communicate his life and to reveal his love

course of history, in the attempt for his full realisation.

Deacons work for the opening up of the Church to the work of the Kingdom in history.³⁷ Under this title, they are sent at once as witnesses and ‘authorised’ workers. In the dynamic Easter of baptism, the Church serves, by the Word which it announces, celebrates and attests, the re-establishment of human beings in their fundamental dignity as children of God, and conjointly the promotion of a true fraternity where the little ones, the poor and

the outcasts are already first to be invited to the alliance. Deacons attest to the calling of the Church to be at the heart of the world – a servant Church and a poor one, made so by the struggle to be sanctified in taking the Gospel seriously – and to make a Church which moves within this dynamic of the gift of Christ in the Spirit and makes it part of the super-abundance of the love of God.

In the triple diaconate of the Gospel announced, celebrated and lived by the whole Church, there is first and foremost the charge of the Gospel *lived* or the ‘diaconate of charity’ which deacons are called to manifest, of such a kind that it has the totality of its Christ-like value. They have the charge of witnessing that *Christian* charity results from the gift of Christ to the human beings whom God loves. Deacons thus go out to share the concern of Christ for the brothers and sisters of humankind. Then, this love of Christ for us on the part of the Father transfigures our loves, our solidarity with others, our aid in regard of those who are in need. Every human being thus becomes a beloved brother or sister of God. The service of human beings is inseparable from the service of God. Deacons go out to extend this ‘diaconate of charity’ to the barren way of daily life, there to where the Church is sent – there where pastoral solicitude is needed.³⁸ It is as ministers of the Church that they go, by their presence at the heart of history or the germ already of the Kingdom, to tell the story of Christ’s concern for the human race.

Why not attempt an alliance with those

35 See Congar, Y (1971) ‘My journeyings through the theology of ministry’, in *Ministeries and ecclesiastical Communion*, Paris: Ed. du Cerf, p.19.

36 On the emergence, the meaning and the usage of this expression – always to be put in place with the diaconship of Christ as explained earlier – I recall Grau, A., ‘Diaconie du Christ’, pp.34-39.

37 Rouet, A (2004) ‘Towards a theology of the diaconate’ in *Etudes*, No.400, p.798.

38 Rouet, A, ‘Diaconat du Christ’, p.34-39.

who have been the major intuition of the ‘Worker Priests’?³⁹ Like them, deacons witness today ‘as a full human yeast’ to this concern of Christ, the love of the Father and the action of the Spirit ‘at the heart of the world.’ But, differently from the Worker Priests, deacons are in general *from the beginning*, this human yeast: in the professional sector, socio-cultural contexts or bodies where they work, or in the caring and welfare services, going from the social to the medical and passing through education. Even before their ordination, deacons were already in the centre of things as baptised people. From now on, by their ordination they are called to it, consecrated and sent as

By their secular involvement, their this-worldly engagements, their diaconal tasks in the midst of daily life, they give a strong signal – dare I say it? – that the Church takes embodiment in this place in a search for the heavenly Jerusalem

ministers of the Church, servants of the Gospel, and witnesses authorised by the extreme gift of Christ. In virtue of their ordination, they are guarantors of the apostolicity of the faith which requires from every baptised person the offering of the self. By their secular involvement, their this-worldly engagements, their diaconal tasks in the midst of daily life, they give a strong signal – dare I say it? – that the Church takes embodiment *in this place* in a search for the heavenly Jerusalem. In this perspective, ‘it is the very diaconate of the baptised which lives the same secular situation which is revealed, undoubtedly, in all its dimensions and in its profundity.’⁴⁰

The *charge* of charitable work committed to a deacon as a gift of the life of Christ is intrinsically tied to the liturgy or is celebrated in the filial offertory prayer of our Lord and Master, and lives the action of grace through the Paschal Mystery. The liturgy is, thus, for deacons a place for the witness of the apostolicity of the faith. Their liturgical action is at the service of the priesthood of all to inspire and activate and fertilise the participation of the faithful. It is, at the same time, at the service of the sacerdotal ministry of presidency (of the community) so that the latter may activate *in persona Christi* the real presence of the Paschal Mystery by which the Spirit sanctifies us and make us into ‘an eternal offering’ to the glory of the Father.⁴¹ It is thus that the ecclesial Body takes part in the priesthood of Christ, the unique mediator between God and humankind. (1 Tim 2:5). Must not the deacons manifest in the liturgy that which they accomplish in their apostolic tasks? Their ministry raises up, therefore, like an effect of rapture, what the community has called into being – a Church in the state of service – because a Church which does not serve is a Church that serves for nothing. The price of neglecting this is the apostolic authenticity of the Gospel. ■

*Translated by Frank McHugh, Research Fellow, St Mary’s University College Twickenham. The full paper was originally published in the **Révue Théologique de Louvain** (2007), pp. 3ff., and this translation appears with the permission of the editorial team and the author. The translation of Latin texts and French quotations are the responsibility of this translator.*

39 These reflections have been inspired by Manceau, M., ‘The Sacramentality of Diaconate: service of the brother and service of the altar’, in *Cahiers de l’Atelier*, 2001, No.491, pp.44-59.

40 Manceau, M ‘The Sacramentality of the Diaconate’, p.53.

41 See de Cagny, O. (2001) ‘The deacon in the Roman liturgy: service of the bishop, service of the people.’ in *Communio* 26/2, pp.53-63.

International conference on the sources of the diaconate

How it came about and how it turned out. A first report ...

Introduction

I was in Rome. I was visiting some universities in order to investigate whether there might be some interest in convening a conference on the sources of the diaconate. Again and again I found that professors and heads of universities were interested in the subject and were even quite willing to cooperate. But quite a few of them reluctantly said that though the theme might be very important, they did not have amongst their staff anyone who would be particularly knowledgeable specifically about the diaconate. Eventually the president of the *Augustinianum*, Rev Professor Robert Dodaro, together with his faculty, decided that the diaconate might very well be a very interesting theme for their annual conference of scholars of Christianity in Late Antiquity. Following one of the preparatory meetings, we had dinner in the refectory belonging to the Augustinian community who live alongside the Institute. At table I discovered that my neighbour was one of the eminent patristic scholars of that Institute. We began to speak about the diaconate in the early church. I then referred to some recent literature about, and some specific texts on, the subject and whilst we were eating and sharing our knowledge I could see how this professor became more and more excited by and involved in the enterprise. I saw almost literally how the engine of his thinking started to get up steam. ‘It is more interesting than I thought,’ he said smiling. ‘And it would be nice if we could get somebody to explore

Some forty years ago the Second Vatican Council (re)introduced the diaconate in its permanency. There exist, however, very few studies regarding the role and function of the diaconate in earlier centuries. This was the principal motivation for the joint organisation by the Faculty of Catholic Theology (Tilburg/Utrecht in the Netherlands) and the Pontifical Patristic Institute (the Augustinianum, Lateran University, in Rome) of an international conference on the meaning of the Greek word *diakonia*, on the *diaconiae* as centres of *caritas* in Rome, on deacons and diaconesses. Prof. Dr. Bart J. Koet was one of the organisers and submits a first report of the conference: he teaches at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Tilburg. He is a deacon of the Diocese of Haarlem-Amsterdam.

Ambrose’s *De officiis*,’ he added. ‘Of course we should note that Augustine wrote his Treatise ‘On the Catechising of the Unlearned’ (*De catechizandis rudibus*) in response to deacon Deogratias’ request for help in his work.’

This dinner-table talk is fairly representative of the reception of my proposal to hold an international conference on the sources of the diaconate. Gradually, after further reflection, theologians, biblical and patristic scholars became increasingly interested in a historical investigation of the diaconate and related themes. And subsequently a stream of interesting ideas often began to flow.

Lacunae

This is not all that unexpected since the history of the diaconate is to some extent a secret or hidden history. For throughout the history of the Church there have been deacons. There have been deacons who remained deacons. One illustrious exam-

ple is Saint Francis and right up to the last century one could find very special 'permanent' deacons in Rome: cardinal deacons. The last cardinal who was ordained only deacon, but as a cardinal deacon participated in the conclave of 1878, was Teodolfo Cardinal Mertel (a cardinal for 41 years). He died in 1899. Throughout the ninth and tenth centuries deacons were elected and ordained directly (without intermediate ordination to the priesthood) bishops of Rome. It is St Gregory VII who in 1073 as a deacon is ordained presbyter before his ordination as bishop of Rome and this then becomes the definitive pattern according to which deacons who were elected to be bishops should first receive the presbyteral ordination.¹

Although it is over forty years ago that the Council restored the permanent diaconate, relatively few studies have been undertaken into the role and function of the historical diaconate. Within the context of his reflection on *caritas*, Benedict XVI in his first encyclical speaks of the

In practice, quite a number of deacons have principally liturgical ministries. There are quite a few theologians who advocate that the deacon should be the social face of the Church

office of the deacon in the early church as a concrete expression of love.² Using Acts 6:5-6, he points out that it was seen as a service to the community and as a religious function. The encyclical followed the line set out earlier in the paper issued by the Pontifical Theological Commission on the diaconate in the Catholic Church.³ Both documents indicate a striving towards establishing an image of this office and seeing this as a challenge.

In practice, quite a number of deacons have principally liturgical ministries. There are quite a few theologians who, in line with what Karl Rahner and his assistant Herbert Vorgrimler, advocate that the deacon should be the social face of the Church.⁴ In the Netherlands we find that there are deacons who have important administrative functions in the church. One deacon is chancellor of the diocese, whilst both the chief chaplain of the armed forces and the chief chaplain of the prison service are deacons. At a number of universities around the world there are to be found deacons who lecture on Scripture or on practical theology.

In recent years research has been carried out and tomes published in which just several aspects of the diaconate have been uncovered. Thus studies have appeared on the position of the diaconate in the *cur-sus honorum*, and also quite a few on

issues relating to deaconesses.⁵ Important philological research has taken place on the importance of the word *diakonia* and related expressions in classical Greek and New Testament Greek, such as in the Gospel of Luke, his Acts, and in the Paul's letters. We have to mention here the name of the Australian John Collins who in his dissertation showed that the view that *diakonia* refers only to low-service is not compatible with the Greek of Hellenistic and Christian sources. Recently a German scholar, Anni Hentschel confirmed most of Collins' theses.⁶

A number of important questions relating to the diaconate have, however, not been answered. For example, we lack a thorough review of the exact tasks and functions of the deacon in the early church. What was their function in liturgy? What was their function in the religious community? How did the deacon function as a teacher? The International Theological Commission made an inventory of these

Only through scrupulous research into the relevant texts, written in the first centuries in different regions of early Christianity, will we be able to discern the characteristics of the early diaconate

questions and recommended further research as well as further evaluation of the experience of the restored permanent diaconate in the Catholic Church.

In early Christian literature no explicit and

thorough descriptions are given of the tasks of the deacon. Therefore, only through scrupulous research into the relevant texts, written in the first centuries in different regions of early Christianity, will we be able to discern the characteristics of the early diaconate. Only then will the different views of the office of deacon which existed in different particular churches, in the East and the West, be firmly established. Only then will it become clear how the diaconate functioned in different periods. Rob Mascini the Netherlands deacon who, whilst working full-time in hospital ministry and later on in parish ministry, was also for more than twelve years President of the International Diaconate Centre, has for a long time been advocating further study into the role and function of the deacon in the past and the present.

Rob Mascini consulted the author of this article and Dr. Paul van Geest – Professor in Augustinian Spirituality at the Faculty of Catholic Theology in Tilburg and Director of an Institute dedicated to the study of patristic literature. As a result of this consultation the proposal to hold a scientific congress on the origins of the diaconate was launched. After a number of fact-finding visits by both Rob Mascini and Bart Koet to, for example, the Ushaw College in England and a couple of universities in the USA (Boston, San Francisco and New York) and Germany it appeared to be true that in many theological circles the need for a re-examination was recognized, but it also became apparent that resourcing such a conference would not be particularly easy. The likeliest venue where the supporting framework for such a congress was going to be in place turned out to be Rome.

1 See John St. H. Gibaut, *The Cursus Honorum. A Study and Evolution of Sequential Ordination*, (Patristic Studies, 3), New York, 2000, 296-297.

2 *Caritas in Veritate*, 21.

3 International Theological Commission, *From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diakonia of the Apostles. A Historico-Theological Research Document*, London, 2003. See the new translation of this document by Tony Schmitz in this issue and the previous two issues of the *New Diaconal Review*.

4 See only Herbert Vorgrimler, 'Liturgie, Diakonie und Diakone', in: Benedikt Kranemann *et alii*: *Die diakonale Dimension der Liturgie*. (QD, 218), Freiburg, 2006, 236-245, esp. 237; see my 'Diakonie is nicht nur Armenfürsorge. Neuere exegetische Erkenntnisse zum Verständnis von Diakonie' in: M. Sander-Gaiser, C. Gramszow, H. Liepold, (eds.) *Lernen wäre eine prima Alternative. Religionspädagogik in theologischer und erziehungswissenschaftlicher Perspektive*, (Fs Helmut Hanisch), Leipzig, 2008, 303-318.

5 See e.g. Gibaut, *The Cursus Honorum*. and K. Madigan – C. Osiek (eds. & Transl.), *Ordained Women in the Early Church. A Documentary History*, Baltimore/London, 2005.6 J.N. Collins, *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, New York-Oxford, 1990. The second edition is published this year.

6 Anni Hentschel, *Diakonia im Neuen Testament: Studien der Semantik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle von Frauen*, (Wunt, 2 Reihe, 226) Tübingen, 2007.

The Pedagogy of God

Many deacons and laypeople are involved in catechetics. Here Monsignor Paul Watson, Director of the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham, reflects on the Church's theology of catechetics.

So after more consultations in Rome we could rest assured, as I said above, that the *Augustinianum* was prepared to dedicate their annual conference to the philological meaning of the Greek word *diakonia*, to the phenomenon of the centres called *diakonias*, to the diaconate itself, to deacons and also to deaconesses. From the 7th till the 9th May 2009 the Thirty-Eighth Conference of the Study of Ancient Christianity (*XXXVIII Incontro di Studiosi dell' Antichità Cristiana*) took place during which some sixty scholars from fourteen countries gave presentations.

Ressourcement

In his opening address the Dean of the Faculty of Catholic Theology (Tilburg-Utrecht) Professor Adelbert Denaux, a member of the Pontifical Theological Commission, emphasised that this conference was a sign of joy and hope.⁷ He argued that the theology of the diaconate is one of the least developed aspects of the theology of ordained ministry. He suggested that in order to lay a foundation for a

She referred to the fact that for example the study of Patristics can help us to find inspiration in the cultural sources of Europe. It is even possible that we could find in the multi-cultural and multi-religious setting of Christianity in Late Antiquity models for our own living in the multi-cultural and multi-religious setting that is contemporary Europe.

Whilst we have seen published in recent years quite a few studies in respect of the sources for deaconesses, this conference was a first attempt to give attention to the material in respect of male deacons and to the positions held by deacons and deaconesses in the setting of the Early Church. At the same time it was necessary to re-evaluate views of the diaconate on account of the philological research of Collins and Hentschel, as we observed above.⁸ Collins and Hentschel were both present and both spoke at the conference.

Because there are many more texts where deacons are mentioned in patristic literature, it is clear that the aim of this conference had to be modest. It could only be an initial investigation. The volume in which the lectures of this conference will be published will have the character of a first collection and cannot yet offer a more synthetically argued presentation. We hope that it will stimulate other scholars to investigate further the diaconate, which, it so happens, offers a fruitful perspective for attaining a view of the richly colourful world of Early Christianity. That there is still much work to do is clear from the fact that at this conference nobody spoke about the *De officiis* of St Ambrose. ■

It is even possible that we could find in the multi-cultural and multi-religious setting of Christianity in Late Antiquity models for our own living in the multi-cultural and multi-religious setting that is contemporary Europe

theological overview of the diaconate it is necessary to go back to the sources, *ad fontes*. From a totally different angle the Dutch ambassador to the Holy See, Monique Frank, praised this conference.

⁷ This opening address and most of the papers will be published by the *Augustinianum* in one of the Volumes of their series.

⁸ See e.g. my contribution '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, S.J., CBQ Monograph Series, 44, Washington, D.C., 2008), 163-185.

I recently attended a catechetical conference on the theme of 'The Pedagogy of God'. The title reflects the fact that one of the principal changes or developments in magisterial catechetical documents is the additional chapter on 'The Pedagogy of God' inserted into the *General Directory for Catechesis* in 1997. This document was a revision of the 1971 *General Catechetical Directory*, produced in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. The language of the Pedagogy of God has not been particularly familiar to us, and I suspect, the concept has not yet been fully understood or explored. As a result, it is probably not yet influencing significantly our approach to catechetics and indeed, our formation programmes for catechists. It was, therefore, with some anticipation and expectation that I took part in the conference, hoping that my mind would be opened to penetrate in some further depth this important theme.

It seems appropriate to be writing about the 'Pedagogy of God' in the *New Diaconal Review*, since the deacon has an important role in the mission of catechesis in the Church and may well be involved with the formation of parish catechists, or with the programmes of catechesis such as RCIA, and other sacramental preparations. The 'Pedagogy of God' should also play an important role in the ministry of preaching, since the deacon along with the other ordained ministries (priest and bishop) is a minister of the Word. Surely, it is to Jesus, the 'Master Pedagogue', that we turn, not only to see Him as our model, but more deeply to be configured to his likeness. The GDC begins with a reflection on the para-

ble of the Sower. Both preaching and catechising, and indeed, evangelisation are occasions for incarnating the reality of Jesus the Sower in the world today. It is therefore, of immense importance to the deacon to have some understanding of 'Divine Pedagogy' for enriching his diaconal ministry.

Perhaps the most important reason for understanding 'Divine Pedagogy' is, as the GDC makes clear, that the 'Pedagogy of God' is both the source and the model for what is known as the pedagogy of the faith. In other words, it is from God himself that the Church has learned how to communicate and teach in such a way that an individual not only gains wisdom and knowledge of the faith, but also is personally liberated and transformed by this knowledge, and ultimately, enters a personal relation-

... an individual not only gains wisdom and knowledge of the faith, but also is personally liberated and transformed by this knowledge, and ultimately, enters a personal relationship with God Himself – a dialogue in which the person allows him or herself to be guided by God

ship with God Himself – a dialogue in which the person allows him or herself to be guided by God (GDC 139). The 'Divine Pedagogy' begins in the Old Testament but reaches its zenith and perfection in the person of Jesus Christ. 'In his words, signs and works during his brief but intense life,

the disciples had direct experience of the fundamental traits of the ‘pedagogy of Jesus’, and recorded them in the gospels: ‘...Inviting his disciples to follow him unreservedly and without regret, Christ passed on to them his pedagogy of faith as *a full sharing in his actions and in his destiny* (italics mine).’ (GDC 140).

While the practice of catechesis today certainly draws upon modern wisdom and pedagogical methods, it is the pedagogy of God Himself that must really determine the practice of teaching and passing on the

The effect of Revelation is that God liberates the human person from the ‘bonds of evils and attracts him to himself by bonds of love’

faith. The process of transmitting divine revelation is radically different from the ordinary human means of teaching and communicating. God’s pedagogy is first and foremost a work of grace, since God is primarily communicating Himself. The GDC speaks of this communication also as a dialogue of salvation or redemption. The effect of Revelation is that God liberates the human person from the ‘bonds of evils and attracts him to himself by bonds of love’ (139). This transforming effect is the product both of God’s creative and redemptive love and His condescension in accommodating Himself to the situation of humankind – ‘to the diverse ages and life situations’. Thus while the pedagogy of God is unique as a result of the transforming power of grace, nevertheless, the GDC insists, there can be no opposition or separation from the pedagogical action of man. It is significant to notice the various words the GDC uses to describe the relationship between the pedagogy of God and the ped-

agogy of man – without confusion, separation or opposition. These words are strongly reminiscent of the words describing the relationship between the divine and human natures in the incarnate Person of the Word – Jesus Christ. The implication is that Jesus Christ himself is the complete revelation of the pedagogy of God. Jesus is the Master pedagogue in which both divine and human pedagogy are joined – without confusion, separation or opposition. This means that our catechetical methodology can never simply be a matter of adopting modern pedagogical models, but always judging and adapting them in the light of Jesus himself. The Deacon/Catechist must therefore be prepared to immerse himself/herself in the Gospels – reflecting on the encounters between Jesus and his disciples, between Jesus and the many others whom He leads to faith.

So far we have been speaking of the pedagogy of God as the model for our own pedagogy or catechesis. When we speak of models, we usually imply that we have something to imitate – a pattern already established which we then follow. However, the relationship between the pedagogy of God and the practice of the Catechist is much more profound and draws upon the theology of the Second Vatican Council, especially the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. The Council teaches that ‘the Church is, in Christ, in the nature of a sacrament’ (LG 1). In other words, the Church itself is not simply a gathering of those who profess to follow Jesus; the Church is a mystery (*mysterion* was the original word in Greek from which the word *sacramentum* is a Latin translation). In fact, the Church shares in and continues the very mystery of the Incarnation. This is the reason that the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* expounds, using various biblical images, the relationship between Christ and the Church. The most profound image is that of the Body. The Body

of Christ is, like Christ himself, a reality both divine and human.

‘...the society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element. For this reason the Church is compared, not without significance to the mystery of the incarnate Word’ (LG 8).

It is here that we have arrived at a teaching of immense depth and importance. It is not, of course, a new teaching of Vatican II but traces its roots in the New Testament itself, and especially in the Patristic interpretations of the Scriptures. It is, however, a teaching that needs to be highlighted and stressed again today. It is not untypical to find many today speaking of the Church in language that derives more from sociology and from the language of democracies and politics. The result is that, while still using the theological language of the Body of Christ, in practice the profound significance of the sacramental nature of the Church is largely emptied of its meaning.

The Church is sacramental insofar as she is both the sign and the effective presence of the saving mystery of Christ himself. She is the continuing presence of Christ in the world albeit a visible organisation made up of sinful human beings. The divine element is precisely the mystical Body of Christ endowed with all the qualities, virtues and power of Christ himself (*Lumen Gentium* describes these as ‘heavenly gifts’). Traditional theology has used the concept of ‘*communicatio idiomatum*’ to describe the communication of the divine qualities of the second Person of the Trinity to the human nature of Christ. In

the same way, there is a *communicatio idiomatum* between the person of Christ and the Church. The Church actually shares in and perpetuates in time and space (geography) the very qualities of Christ. Hence His salvific activity is continued in the actions (esp. the sacraments) of the Church. His virtues are incarnated in each person in the Church through the gifts of the Spirit. His word, indeed the very speaking of Christ, is made present in the announcement of the Gospel, in the teaching of the Faith and in the ministry of consolation and healing that is the very stuff of the life of the Church.

The GDC takes this more general teaching about the relationship between Christ and

... the Church is compared, not without significance to the mystery of the incarnate Word

the Church and applies it specifically to the Church’s mission of Catechesis, stating: ‘From her very beginnings the Church, which ‘in Christ, is in the nature of a sacrament’, has lived her mission as a visible and actual continuation of the pedagogy of the Father and of the Son, ‘as our Mother is also the educator of our faith’ (GDC 141). Thus, the Church does not so much imitate the divine pedagogy as continue it and perpetually makes it present in the world. The catechist, as a member of the Church, and indeed, a representative of the Church, is also the means by which the divine pedagogy continues and is effectively present. This, of course, has tremendous implications for the catechist, and also for the deacon, both with regard to the goals of their catechetical activity – since the goals are precisely those of divine pedagogy – liberation of the catechumen from

bonds of evil and attraction to God Himself by bonds of love, and with regard to the personal formation and preparation of the Catechist/Deacon – nothing short of personal conformity to the Master, Jesus Christ, and of incarnating, in each and every particular situation, Christ the Teacher.

It is worth noticing at this point something in the *General Directory for Catechesis* that, at first, seems unusual. The first chapter of Part III, entitled ‘The Pedagogy of God, source and model of the pedagogy of the faith’, has various subsections which speak of the ‘pedagogy of God’ and ‘the pedagogy of Christ’, but, perhaps strangely, inserts ‘the pedagogy of the Church’ before the section ‘Divine pedagogy, action of the Holy Spirit in every Christian’. This clearly reflects the importance of what has already been said above about the nature of the Church and the nature of the Church’s pedagogy. It appears that the GDC wishes to emphasise precisely that the Church is continuing the pedagogy of Christ. The Spirit’s role is in fact, through

God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ

his gifts and his activity, to conform the Church to Christ, and indeed, to conform the individual disciple in such a way that the disciple’s activity continues the pedagogical and redeeming mission of Christ Himself. Hence, we can say that ultimately the pedagogy of God is the sending (the

mission) of the Son and the Spirit, for the purpose of bringing humanity into communion, into participation in the divine life.

The Characteristics of Divine Pedagogy

The primary characteristic of divine pedagogy is that it is progressive. As the Catechism states: ‘God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.’ (CCC 53). The Catechism takes up the idea of St Irenaeus that God and man had to become accustomed to one another. John Henry Newman expressed the same idea and indicated that it was because of sin that humankind needed gradually to be introduced to God – sin determines even the manner of the Incarnation – ‘He once had meant to come on earth in heavenly glory, but we sinned; and then He could not safely visit us, except with a shrouded radiance and a bedimmed Majesty, for He was God. So He came Himself in weakness, not in power.’¹

But it was not only in the Incarnation that God chose to communicate with humanity slowly and in stages. The whole history of salvation, especially in the Old Testament, is testimony to this gradual unfolding of Revelation. God in his loving condescension accommodates Himself to the human condition. Principally, it was through transforming ‘events in the life of his people into lessons of wisdom’ (GDC 139) that God thus adapted Himself ‘to the diverse ages and life situations’ (139). And so the events of Israel’s history become pregnant with divine meaning and are thus the vehicles of the divine pedagogy. God progressively reveals Himself and his purpose for humanity through the

historical events of Israel and the key characters who play a role in shaping that history – e.g. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Elijah and the other prophets. Many other individuals too form the backbone of the history, each with their limitations and foibles, each within a particular context, but their lives and the events in which they are involved are transformed by God’s participation in them into divine pedagogy – at once partial in terms of the whole revelation of God and yet containing within them the essence of that fullness finally revealed in the coming of Jesus. This, of course, is the

The Greek word paidagogos did not refer to a teacher but rather to the slave who took the child to the teacher, (perhaps carried the utensils the child would need in school) then led the child safely home again

basis for the Catholic tradition of the spiritual reading of Scripture and the concept of the unity of the Old and New Testaments. The Fathers of the Church saw Christ hidden within the events and persons of the Old Testament. This remains today the reason that we continue to read the Old Testament and proclaim it in the liturgy. In the pedagogy of the faith, in other words, the Church’s practice of Catechesis, which, as we have seen, is a continuation of divine pedagogy, the principle of gradual and progressive revelation is respected through the Catechesis of narrating the history of salvation and also in the liturgical events that make up the process of Christian Initiation (especially in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults – remember that this is essentially a *Rite*, a liturgy – a succession of sacred events with divine power and meaning).

The Christological reading of the Old Testament does not however exhaust the significance of the divine pedagogy in Israel’s history. God’s adaptation of Himself to the human condition also has the purpose of revealing that human condition. Divine pedagogy has, therefore, also the aim of revealing the slavery to sin in the human heart and at the same time, through His grace, of liberating and transforming the heart so as to make it capable of communion with Himself. Here we touch another important element of divine pedagogy – the Law.

In his letter to the Galatians, St Paul describes the Law as a ‘pedagogue or guardian’ (3:24). The people of Galatia were pagans, in other words, they had no knowledge of the religion and history of Israel, no knowledge of the Old Testament. During the evangelisation of Galatia, emissaries arrived from Antioch demanding that the Galatians be instructed in the Old Testament. The question for Paul was whether access to the divine teacher was now direct – does it now require passage through the Old Testament? The Greek word *paidagogos*, which we translate as ‘pedagogue’, did not refer to a teacher but rather to the slave who took the child to the teacher, (perhaps carried the utensils the child would need in school) then led the child safely home again. The Law, according to Paul, performed the function of the *paidagogos*, leading the people of Israel on a journey forming them to be capable of being taught by God. The journey through the wilderness of forty years was a very slow process. It was a kind of pilgrimage of formation. The Law embodied this formation, while it became interiorised in the people. The focus here is on *interiorisation*. The Law only achieves its purpose if it become interiorised. This interior process is the work of grace, a divine activity in the human mind and heart. Par excellence, it was the prophets who emphasised this interiorising of the

¹ *Discourses addressed to Mixed Congregations* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), pp. 321-2, 358.

Law and Covenant, and who castigated those ‘who honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me’. The Psalms too were seen as exemplaries – articulations of a heart transformed by God and as a result reflect a heart that is in communion with God. Once again, we touch upon the reason why the Old Testament, in this case the Psalms, are so much part of our liturgy today – especially the Divine Office.

So what was Paul’s answer to the question? Do we still need the Old Testament and the Law. In one sense, No. The law performed the function of a guardian until the individual came in contact with the divine teacher Himself. Now the New Law, the Law of the Gospel, is the grace of the Holy Spirit, who brings us to the Divine Teacher, Christ, and ‘makes known to you all that is mine’ (John 16:15), and all that belongs to Jesus is from the Father. In the new dispensation the divine pedagogy takes place as we learn to live in the Spirit, and in the Spirit learn to come to Jesus, to put our faith in Him and learn from Him

The Lord prescribed love towards God and taught justice towards neighbour, so that man would be neither unjust, nor unworthy of God. Thus, through the Decalogue, God prepared man to become his friend and to live in harmony with his neighbour

how to order the use of grace in our lives. Through our union with Christ, our lives, our actions and our words, become the fruit of grace – not the mere following of a law. We have in fact returned to the earlier point made about our Christian lives in

which the goal is conformity to the image of Christ. Docility to the Holy Spirit in our lives, whether it be in moments of darkness or enlightenment, is the goal of moral formation or development. Again it is a process of interior transformation, cooperating with the action of the Spirit, conforming us to Christ and leading us to share in Christ’s filial relationship with the Father.

In another sense, Paul answers ‘Yes’ to the role of the Law. The Law cannot justify us, cannot transform us or make us capable of communion with God. And yet it functions as a revelation of our sinful condition and indeed continues to function as a pedagogue in the sense that the Law (in particular, the Decalogue), leads us to Christ, and is by Christ deepened and made fully capable of being interiorised by the grace of the Spirit. The Catechism, once again, quotes St Irenaeus: ‘The Lord prescribed love towards God and taught justice towards neighbour, so that man would be neither unjust, nor unworthy of God. Thus, through the Decalogue, God prepared man to become his friend and to live in harmony with his neighbour ... The words of the Decalogue remain likewise for us Christians. Far from being abolished, they have received amplification and development from the fact of the coming of the Lord in the flesh’ (CCC 2063).

This aspect of the divine pedagogy teaches us the importance of moral development in our Catechesis, yet it reminds us that only the divine action itself can touch the heart from the inside. This is the way of grace. The Decalogue or Ten commandments serve the action of the Holy Spirit. The Church (as Mother) must do as God does. In the formation and education of the child, the father and mother act in collaboration. So, the Father (through the mission of the Son and the Spirit) and the Mother (the Church) act together in gracing the catechumen so that the heart is

transformed and conformed to Christ.

Summing up so far, our exploration of the divine pedagogy as source and model for our own Catechesis, has led us to recognise the goals of Catechesis – communion with the Trinity, and also God’s method of progressive and staged revelation and transformation through the events of salvation history, and through the Law, which is now seen as a metaphor for the New Law of the Spirit, which does not abolish the Law but deepens and transforms it in Christ. This divine pedagogy is continued in the Church in the progressive handing

... the Father (through the mission of the Son and the Spirit) and the Mother (the Church) act together in gracing the catechumen so that the heart is transformed and conformed to Christ

over (*traditio*) of the Creed (Part One of the Catechism), in the redemptive events of the Church’s liturgical life -and RCIA in particular (CCC Part II) and in the moral development of the catechumen in the new life of the Spirit (Part III).

The Divine Pedagogy and Prayer

It remains to be said that the divine pedagogy, insofar as its goal is communion, is ultimately a ‘dialogue of salvation between God and the person’ (GDC 143). Our pedagogy of faith, equally cannot be simply a matter of information. It is not only *formation* but a leading of the person into intimacy with God. And so we arrive at the matter of Prayer as an integral part of Catechesis. As Part IV of the Catechism makes clear prayer is essentially our entry into the filial prayer of Jesus. In this, it is

Jesus Himself who is the Master Pedagogue and it is the Spirit who makes us capable: inspiring us to respond in faith to the thirst of God (manifested by Jesus’ thirst on the Cross) for human beings to come to Him. In the Catechism there is a copy of a picture – a miniature from the Monastery of Dionysius on Mt Athos, showing Christ praying to the Father and St Peter turning to the other and pointing to Jesus as the Master and the Way of Christian Prayer.

The divine pedagogy of Prayer also includes the Old Testament prefigurements – Abraham, Noah, Moses, David and Elijah, while in the New Dispensation, after the Divine Master Himself, there is Mary and the cloud of witnesses – the Saints. Prayer is a response to God’s call and involves the embracing and contemplating of the whole truth of God and profoundly grasping the spiritual reality thus communicated by God (CCC 2651). For the Catechist to serve this end of divine pedagogy, it is vital that he or she also be a witness – in other words, someone who knows personally the ‘manner’ in which God teaches us, knowing both the consolations of prayer as well as the ‘battle’, and who knows that dryness in prayer reveals that faith is both light and obscurity, and in times of the latter we are called to humble and persevering vigilance, when faith grows in a peaceful way – the Holy Spirit praying in us ‘in sighs too deep for words’. According to the Catechism, it is above all ‘the Lord’s Prayer’ that forms or conforms us to the filial prayer of Jesus. When the petitions of the ‘Our Father’ truly express the desires of our heart, then will the image of Christ have come to maturity in us. ■

The Liturgical Role of

Although only restored as a permanent order in the Latin rite after Vatican II, the diaconate has remained a distinct order in the Eastern churches. Here David Kennedy, Protodeacon of St. Elias Parish, Eparchy of Toronto, (www.saintelias.com) writes about the deacon's liturgical role in the rite of Constantinople. The second part of his paper will appear in our next issue.

Liturgical Foundations

Over the last fifty years there has been a substantial amount of inquiry concerning the nature of the diaconate and the specific role and identity of the deacon, primarily in the Western Christian world.¹ The literature reveals an ongoing search to articulate who and what the deacon is. The International Theological Commission of

Liturgy is a complex action of Christ and the Church. Through signs and words, the liturgy makes real the paschal mystery of Christ and reveals the eschatological reality of the Kingdom

the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its 2003 study² attempted to bring

some clarity to the situation. It seems that much of the question focuses on the meaning of *diakonia* and its cognates: what does the New Testament tell us about this word and how it was used in early Christian literature?³ It should be noted that these questions and the overwhelming literature on the topic has almost been exclusively from the perspective of Western Christianity. That is not in itself a fault, but it certainly gives a limited perspective.

This paper will look at the diaconate from a different point of view, namely, the liturgical tradition of the Byzantine or Constantinopolitan rite. It is the underlying premise of the author that liturgy is *theologia prima*.⁴ It is not just a source of theology but it is theology in action. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* speaks of the liturgy as both the summit and the fount of the Church's life or activity, 'from which all her power flows.'⁵ And while it does not exhaust the 'entire activity of the Church'⁶, no other activity 'of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the

- 1 One source for an accumulated bibliography is *Distinctive Diaconate Study Number 22*. To order DDS www.distinctive-diaconate.org.uk. A sample of recent publications from Paulist Press includes: Owen F. Cummings, William T. Ditewig, Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Theology of the Diaconate. The State of the Question*, 2005; Kenan B. Osborne, *The Permanent Diaconate. Its History and Place in the Sacrament of Orders*, 2006; James Keating, editor, *The Deacon Reader*, 2006.
- 2 International Theological Commission, *From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diakonia of the Apostles*, Hillenbrand, 2004.
- 3 John N. Collins, *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, Oxford, 1990. Cf. Collins, *Deacons and the Church. Making connections between old and new*, Morehouse, 2002.
- 4 Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Faith Press, 2nd Edition, 1975; Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, Pueblo, 1981; David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima. What Is Liturgical Theology*, Hillenbrand, 2004.
- 5 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10.
- 6 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 9.

the Deacon in the Constantinopolitan Tradition

same degree.⁷ The liturgy manifests the Church, the sacrament of unity, for 'the holy people are united and arrange under their bishops.'⁸ Liturgy is a complex action of Christ and the Church. Through signs and words, the liturgy makes real the paschal mystery of Christ and reveals the eschatological reality of the Kingdom.

'Do this in memory of Me; for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim My death and confess My Resurrection. Therefore, Master, as we too remember his saving passion, the life-giving Cross, the burial for three days, the resurrection from the dead, the ascension into heaven, the sitting at Your right hand, O God and Father, and His glorious and dread second coming; We offer to You, Yours of Your own, in behalf of all and for all. [*While this is being said, the deacon, having crossed his hands, elevates the holy diskos (a paten with a foot) and the holy chalice.*]⁹

What Christians do, what the Church does, what is unique to them and therefore their unique claim in and for the world, is that they celebrate the paschal mystery of Christ. And their celebration is the action of Christ, for they are his Body and he is the head of the Body,¹⁰ without him they can do nothing and with him they can do all. From this perspective, there is simply no other place to begin a reflection on the diaconate than in the Church's liturgical life.

Broadly speaking what does the deacon do liturgically? The answer is clear: the deacon does what the Church does and that is the celebration of the paschal mystery. The specific question is how does the deacon do it? This paper will explore some of the specifics of how the deacon does it. While a short paper cannot examine every textual and rubrical detail, a summary can be made of the textual and rubrical paradigms derived from the diaconal liturgical role. It should be remembered that the liturgy does not exhaust the life of the

We offer to You, Yours of Your own, in behalf of all and for all

Church, so likewise the liturgy will not provide an exhaustive vision of the diaconate but it should, and will give us an *essential* vision of the diaconate in relationship to the paschal mystery of Christ. Without this essential liturgical vision, we are simply lost, for what we have lost is the paschal mystery, for the pre-eternal Word became incarnate to make present this mystery which was hidden from before the ages.

The Constantinopolitan Tradition

The array of Churches in Eastern Christendom often appears complex and bewildering, especially to those who have had little contact with Eastern Christians.

7 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

8 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 26.

9 From the Anamnesis of the Byzantine Anaphora [Eucharistic Prayer] of St. Basil the Great.

10 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

Mistakenly, all of these Churches are frequently put into the same category. An excellent guide through this maze is Ronald Roberson's *The Eastern Christian Churches. A Brief Survey*.¹¹ The Churches of the East can be categorized by communion and by liturgical rite. This paper will focus on liturgical rite. The Churches of the Constantinopolitan or Byzantine tradition have a common liturgical rite but all of them are not in communion with one another.¹² What is the Byzantine rite? Very briefly, it is that liturgical tradition that was synthesized in the City of Constantinople between the ninth and fourteenth centuries.¹³ It draws upon the cathedral uses of the Cities of Constantinople and Jerusalem along with the monastic prac-

tices of the same regions. Byzantine liturgy has its own ritual celebration, setting and interpretation: it is a complex of text, ceremonial, music, setting, architecture, iconography and various minor arts.¹⁴ Robert Taft, S.J. describes the *Symbolgestalt* or symbolic matrix:

‘The impact of this *Symbolgestalt* is forever enshrined in the legend of the delegation sent to Constantinople in 987 by Prince Vladimir of Kiev ‘to examine the Greek faith.’ The emissaries were led to Hagia Sophia for the liturgy, ‘so that the Russes might behold the glory of the God of the Greeks.’ On returning home they reported what they had experienced in terms that have become emblematic for

the *Erscheinungsbild*, or unique impact created by the sensible splendours of the Byzantine Rite: ‘We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations for we cannot forget that beauty.’ ‘Heaven on earth.’ This classic phrase, repeated so often it has become a topos, actually derives from the opening chapter of the earlier liturgical commentary (ca 730) of Patriarch St. Germanus I of Constantinople: ‘The church is heaven on earth, where the God of heaven dwells and moves.’¹⁵

and placed them in a wide space, calling their attention to the beauty of the edifice, the chanting, and the offices of the archpriest (i.e. the patriarch) and the *ministry of the deacons*, (italics are the author's) while he explained to them the worship of his God.’¹⁶

Because liturgy manifests the paschal mystery of Christ in the midst of the Church, which is hierarchically structured,¹⁷ it reveals who Christ is, it proclaims the good news of the Kingdom of God and thus can lead us to repentance, to a change of mind, to the putting on of the mind of Christ. When the envoys of Prince Vladimir experienced the liturgy as celebrated in the Hagia Sophia, the whole complex of liturgical elements worked on their hearts to bring them to conversion, to bring them into the Body of Christ. And we can see that the liturgical ministry of the

We should note here, that the deacons of the Hagia Sophia, played a significant liturgical role in the conversion of the Rus’, for we read in the *Primary Chronicle* from which Taft quotes above:

‘... The emperor sent a message to the patriarch to inform him that a Rus’ delegation had arrived to examine the Greek faith, and directed him to prepare the church and the clergy, and to array himself in his sacerdotal robes, so that the Rus’ might behold the glory of the God of the Greeks. When the patriarch received these commands, he bade the clergy assemble, and they performed the customary rites. They burned incense, and the choirs sang hymns. The emperor accompanied the Rus’ to the church,

We should not underestimate the power of liturgy to change lives and bring us to Christ

deacons played no small part in this conversion. We should not underestimate the power of liturgy to change lives and bring us to Christ.

Taft ‘divides the history of Byzantine liturgical synthesis into five, sometimes over-

11 Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 6th Edition, 1999. [The 7th Edition is available electronically at <http://www.cnewa.org/ecc-bodypg-us.aspx?eccpageID=3>.]

12 The Orthodox Churches that follow the Byzantine Rite and are in ‘communion’ with one another are The Patriarchate of Constantinople (The Ecumenical Patriarchate), The Patriarchate of Alexandria, The Patriarchate of Antioch, The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, The Orthodox Church of Russia, The Orthodox Church of Serbia, The Orthodox Church of Romania, The Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, The Orthodox Church of Georgia, The Orthodox Church of Cyprus, The Orthodox Church of Greece, The Orthodox Church of Poland, The Orthodox Church of Albania, The Orthodox Church in the Czech and Slovak Republics, The Orthodox Church in America, The Orthodox Church of Mount Sinai, The Orthodox Church of Finland, The Orthodox Church of Japan, The Orthodox Church of China, The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, The American-Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church, The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora, The Russian Orthodox Archdiocese in Western Europe, The Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America, The Belarusian Council of Orthodox Churches in North America, The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

The following are not in ‘communion’ with the above Churches: The Old Believers (Ritualists) of Bielaja Krinitsia, The Old Believers (Ritualists) of Novozybkov, The Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kiev Patriarchate, The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, The Macedonian Orthodox Church, and various Old Calendar Groups that are not in communion with the other Orthodox.

The following Churches follow the Byzantine Rite and are in ‘communion’ with the Church of Rome: The Church of Albania, The Church of Belarus, The Church of the Byzantine Eparchy of Krievci, The Church of Bulgaria, The Church of Greece, The Melkite Greek-Catholic Church, The Italo-Albanian Church, The Church of Macedonia, The Church of Romania, The Church of Russia, The Ruthenian (Byzantine) Church, The Church of Slovakia, The Church of Ukraine, The Church of Hungary. Cf. Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, and *Annuario Pontificio 2008*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

13 *The Byzantine Rite. A Short History*, Robert F. Taft, Liturgical Press, 1992, p16.

14 *The Byzantine Rite*, p17.

15 *The Byzantine Rite*, pp17-18.

16 Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, Dutton Paperback, 1974, p67.

17 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* speaks to this experience in §26 ‘Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is ‘the sacrament of unity’, namely, ‘the holy people united and arranged under their bishops.’ The diversity of ministries are also manifested in this experience of the envoys and again *Sacrosanctum Concilium* addresses this in §28 ‘In liturgical celebrations each person, minister, or layman who has an office to perform, should carry out all and only those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the norms of the liturgy.’

lapping phases:

1. the paleo-Byzantine or pre-Constantinian era, about which we know little;
2. the 'Imperial phase' during the Late Antique or patristic period, especially from the reign of Justinian I (527-565) and his immediate successors, creating a system of cathedral liturgy that lasted until some time after the Latin conquest (1204-1261), thus overlapping with phases 3-4;
3. the 'Dark Ages' from 610 to ca. 850, and especially the struggle against Iconoclasm (726-843), culminating in the Studite reform;
4. the Studite era itself, from ca. 800-1204;
5. the final, neo-Sabaitic synthesis after the Latin conquest (1204-1261).¹⁸

(The reader who wishes to explore the history of the Divine Liturgy of the Byzantine rite would do well to consider the texts mentioned in this footnote.)¹⁹

The Liturgical Setting

Before examining the texts, it is good to get a sense of the place in which most of the services occur, namely, the church building. We should keep in mind that Byzantine liturgy is a manifestation of the heavenly liturgy. The church is divided into three major sections on an east-west axis. Through the western doors one enters into the narthex (the world that has fallen into sin, the world that needs to be redeemed and yet is still within the

economia of God's saving plan).

From the narthex one proceeds eastward into the *naos* or nave. This is the central body of the church. In the dome above is an icon of Christ Pantocrator, surrounded by the angelic beings. Further down the walls are icons of the Prophets who prophesized the coming of the Messiah, and other Old Testament figures, often ancestors of Christ. In the vaults are depicted many of the Great Feasts of the Calendar. In the pendentives are found the four evangelists. Also on the walls are found scenes of the miracles of Christ and finally near the floor of the nave, local saints. The nave is the place in which the baptized are gathered. It is the world that is being

We should keep in mind that Byzantine liturgy is a manifestation of the heavenly liturgy

redeemed, being sanctified, being divinized. Here, the visible Body of Christ gathers in the world to re-enact the paschal mystery.

At the east end of the nave is the *solea* raised a few steps above the nave floor. The semi-circle located directly before the holy doors of the iconostasis is known as the ambo. When in the nave, the deacon usually stands on the ambo facing eastward, and from it, he recites the *synaptēs* or litanies. (Originally the ambo was in the centre of the nave, and from there

the deacon recited the *synaptēs* and read the scriptures.)²⁰

East of the ambo is the chancel barrier or iconostasis. It is pierced by three doors; the holy doors in the centre and deacon's doors on the north and south. To the right of the holy doors is an icon of Christ, to the left an icon of the Mother of God. On the deacon's doors are portrayed either angels or saintly deacons. The altar or sanctuary is also depicted with icons. The dome of the altar usually depicts the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The walls have scenes of the heavenly and mystical Eucharistic Supper, involving the apostles and hierarchs, deacons and angels. At times there are Old Testament types of the Eucharistic, e.g. the sacrifice of Isaac.²¹ The Holy Table or altar table is centered in the middle of the sanctuary under the dome of Pentecost, for the Holy Spirit is continually descending upon the Church to sanctify her. In the eastern apse is found the cathedra of the bishop and the *synthronon* or bench for the presbyters. It should be noted that deacons do not sit when they are serving and thus, no place is allotted to them for sitting. The nave of a traditional church is also free from pews, although one will find benches along the walls for the infirm and elderly. Generally, the posture for prayer is standing, clergy and laity alike. Byzantine liturgy is a complex of persons, (bishop, priest, deacon, subdeacon, cantor/reader, laity) hierarchically structured in a setting that has cosmic, paschal and eschatological significance.

Liturgical Textual Sources

What sources can help us understand the deacon's liturgical ministry in the Byzantine rite? The Byzantine rite makes use of a number of large volumes. These texts are

used by the bishop, priest, deacon, cantor/reader and the assembly. The books that are needed by the deacon are the *Evangelion* or Books of the Gospels; the *Euchologion* or Book of Blessings – this contains the fixed parts or ordinary of the Divine Liturgy, Vespers, Matins, the mysteries or sacraments and various other services (e.g. funerals) and blessings; the *Archieratikon* or Pontifical or Bishop's Service Book) and the *Typikon* which contains the rules and rubrics for ordering the various services. The *Typikon* exemplifies the neo-Sabaitic synthesis of the Byzantine rite. For some of the propers (changeable parts), the deacon must consult with the cantor's unique set of books. There is another text that contains only the deacon's ordinary and some propers, namely, the *Ierodiakonikon* or Book of the Deacon.²² All of this can prove some-

The books that are needed by the deacon are the Evangelion or Books of the Gospels; the Euchologion or Book of Blessings

what daunting to a newly ordained deacon. But as we will see many of the ordinary texts are repeatable from one service to the next and many of the ordinary texts, e.g. the Great *Synapte* or Litany of Peace use a repeating structure and insert proper petitions, e.g. proper petitions are inserted in the Great *Synapte* for the Blessing of Water.

Now back to the liturgical texts. They instruct the deacon when to serve, what he recites, and generally through the rubrics, what to do and how and where to do it. The evidence of the liturgical books tells us that it is the norm of liturgical law for the deacon to serve at the

¹⁸ *The Byzantine Rite*, pp18-19.

¹⁹ *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford, 1991; Juan Mateos, *La célébration de la parole dans la liturgie Byzantine. Étude historique*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 191, Roma 1971; Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance. A History of the Transfer of the Gifts and other Pre-anaphoral Rites*, OCA 200, 1978; Robert F. Taft, *The Diptychs*, OCA 238, 1991; Robert F. Taft, *The Precommunion Rites*, OCA 261, 2000; Robert F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West. The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today*, 2nd Revised Edition, Liturgical Press, 1993. Hans-Joachim Schulz, *Die byzantinische Liturgie*, Paulinus-Verlag, 1980. (All of these texts have extensive bibliographies.)

²⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, pp75-76.

²¹ A. J. Philippou, editor, Leonid Ouspensky, *The Orthodox Ethos, Vol. 1*, Holywell Press, 1964, 'The Symbolism of the Church', pp155-168; Constantine Cavarnos, 'Iconographic Decoration in the Orthodox Church', pp169-185.

²² Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, *The Festal Menaion*, St. Tikhon's Press, 1990, Appendix II, 'The Service Books of the Orthodox Church', pp535-543.

Diaconal Prayer: Being Affected by Christ

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following: Divine Liturgy (Mass), Pontifical Divine Liturgy (Mass served by a bishop), Great and Daily Vespers (Evening Prayer), Great Compline but not Daily Compline or the Midnight Office, Matins (Office of Readings and Morning Prayer), Royal Hours but not the Daily Little Hours, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (Vespers with Communion from the Reserved Sacrament, served on the Wednesdays and Fridays of Great Lent), Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation) which are served as one service together, Betrothal and Crowning (Marriage), Holy Oil (Anointing of the Sick), Holy Orders, Funeral Offices, Great and Lesser Blessings of Water, Monastic Tonsure, The Order for the Founding of a Church, The Consecration of a Church, The Consecration of Holy *Antimensia*, The Consecration of Holy Chrism, The Blessing and Consecration of an Iconostasis, The Blessing of a Bell Tower, The Blessing of Bells, The Blessing of a Cemetery, The Blessing of Icons, The Blessing of Various Liturgical Objects, The Blessing of Various Foods, Services of Supplication or *Molebens*. There are a few small blessings that the bishop or priest does

the assembly gives its consent and affirmation through a sung response, e.g. 'Lord, have mercy' or 'Grant it, O Lord.' While the deacon sings the petitions and the assembly responds, the presiding bishop or priest silently recites a prayer that is usually addressed to God the Father. When the last response of the assembly is completed, the bishop or priest sings the concluding doxology aloud (e.g. For unto Thee do we render glory, to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages) of the prayer that he recited silently while the litany was being sung by the deacon, and the assembly responds with its Amen. In the Divine Liturgy there is assigned to the deacon eleven litanies. The number of petitions in each litany varies from two to fourteen or more. Generally, most of the petitions are being directed by the deacon to the assembly as a whole. However, there are exceptions to this rule: in the Ektenia of Fervent Intercession a number of the petitions are addressed to God. The deacon at the Lytia of Great Vespers and at Matins is assigned the prayer, 'O God save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance...' Yet in this petition, it is through the prayers of the saints that the Church hopes to be heard. The structure of those petitions in which the deacon addresses God does not resemble the structure of the presidential prayers assigned to the bishop or priest. These litanies reveal and involve the whole Church in prayer: the presiding bishop, the serving deacon and the responding laity. If you have been baptized into Christ, you are a member of the praying Church and you have a liturgical role in the Church's prayer. While there is a diversity of ministries, as there is a diversity of charisms, they are all given by the same Holy Spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ unto the glory of the Father. □

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While there is a diversity of ministries, as there is a diversity of charisms, they are all given by the same Holy Spirit

without a deacon but the most conspicuous service that does not include a deacon is Confession.

Generally, when a liturgical service takes place in the Byzantine rite, the deacon serves. What liturgical role is assigned to the deacon? We will first examine what he says. One of the distinctive characteristics of Byzantine liturgy is the litanic prayer known in Greek as *synapte*, *ektenia*, *aiteisis*. It consists of a series of petitions, in most cases addressed to the entire liturgical assembly and sung by the deacon. To each petition,

To be a man in the contemporary cultural west is to be a man who is somewhat alienated from interior movements of the heart. It is not easy for men to 'go in'. Allowing oneself to be affected by interior realities, however, is crucial to diaconal ministry. Deacons have to model lives of interiority for the people they minister to in the diocese. To be a deacon is to be a man called to spiritual living, and not simply one who executes acts of charity. In fact, executing acts of charity disconnected from interior communion with Christ is the surest way for a deacon to taste depression, sadness and apathy. If you are not drawing your ministry from the well of communion with Christ then from what

If you are not drawing your ministry from the well of communion with Christ then from what source are you drawing such self-donation?

source are you drawing such self-donation? The ego? Your own native wit, natural talent or charisma? If so, such sources of service will soon run dry and your diaconal ministry will not be suited for the long run, but only for sprinting. Our prayer is best when we just go to God and simply be with Him...without agenda or time lines...just being with Him despite worries or distractions. 'Don't worry', the Spirit says 'I will come to you...prayer is not your work, it is my healing.'

First and foremost the deacon is to be possessed by a spiritual truth; Christ wants communion with you in and by way of the sacramental Church. Such availability to Christ is the key to a faithful and powerful diaconal ministry.

Second, deacons are also men of the contemporary western culture. In general they too are not necessarily comfortable or eager to go in to the soul and receive the love of God as the integral power binding the mind, the will and affect all together in Christ. Such a personal encounter can appear to be more threat than promise. Many deacons have 'made it through' their formation process with little or no instruction in deep and sustained prayer. That is also true, regrettably, for seminarians and priests. The clerical formation system is dominated by academic models of formation and utilitarian models of ministry. We are 'heady' in our understanding of the mystery of Christ, and we are very 'busy' in our understanding of ministry. I would hope that slowly formation processes would be renewed and search for methods that facilitate a candidate's capacity to ask for the grace to receive the truths of academic theology *as prayer*. Further, we need to invite diaconal candidates to minister in ways that avoid the misconception that prayer is to be left behind in the 'busyness' of pastoral concerns. Our ministry IS NOT our prayer but from *within* our ministry Christ emerges to console, challenge and inspire us, and through us others. Alternately, our prayer time is NOT isolated from our desire to labor for the needs of

our people. Unless, however, we really make our hearts available to God in prayer our presence among the people will simply be ‘clever or virtuous or useful but it will not be holy, healing.

If diaconal ministry is to be fruitful it must flow from our communion with Christ. Interior intimacy with Christ is constitutive of ministry; otherwise we are simply ‘do-gooders.’ So, we are bid to go in...deeper than we imagine or probably think possible (we are to ‘pray without ceasing’, 1 Th 5:17). In so doing, we can then be sent from HIM to serve others, sent not from our ego or even from our ‘good intentions’ but *from Him*. We are sent from Him by way of the desires He purifies. We want to serve, He wants to serve within us, let Him. This kind of interior life can be understood as that habitual disposition to receive the gift of God’s love which in turn enables our capacity for active self-donation.

The spiritual energy for diaconal ministry is found by living dynamically out of two biblical truths, ‘it is no longer I who live,

Diaconal ministry is sustained and deepened at the confluence of interior prayer and our individual desire to serve the church

but it is Christ who lives in me’ (Gal 2:20) and ‘Here am I; send me!’ (Is 6:8). Diaconal ministry is sustained and deepened at the confluence of interior prayer and our individual desire to serve the church. When we live our lives as prayer, as lives of sacred exchange between our freedom and God’s own self offering in Christ, then we begin to move from the

mind we have now to a new mind. We allow the mind of Christ to possess us and we begin to think in new ways, we allow Him to ‘think in us’ as Jean Pierre de Caussade radically phrased it.¹ We *desire* to put on the mind of Christ because we know the darkness of our minds when they are left to their own self-enclosed ways.

So, there is no true formation as deacons without spiritual conversion, and there is no ongoing spiritual ministry after formation without deep attachment to the source of that conversion – the continual reception of the love of God in Christ: prayer.

The pathology found in our spiritual lives is always a movement toward isolation and away from this deep interior communion with Christ in the midst of the Church. Spiritual sickness originates in keeping the truth about ourselves to or even *from* ourselves. This is what Satan wants, he always wants us to feel that we are beyond hope, our problems and sufferings are too deep to be healed. He wants us cornered so he can attack us personally (‘you are an immoral man’, ‘you are a sick person’, ‘you are a unique sinner, no one is as bad as you are’) and then separate us from hope, to stop our prayer life. Ironically, it is through solitude that such isolation can be healed. In solitude we commune with Christ and He leads us to life giving waters. He names our sins but unlike Satan doesn’t besmirch our name. In isolation we suffer the agony of hiding from God in the manner of Adam in the garden. Primarily we hide in desolate affections (self-pity, envy, sadness, unhealed grief) and sin. From such a lonely place a deacon’s ministry cannot bear the leaves and fruit that heal others (Ez. 47:12). To be spiritual men we must not simply take on a MISSION we must

receive the MYSTERY. It is the MYSTERY, the encounter with and the continual living in the presence of the life, death and resurrection of Christ that gives our ministry *evangelical authority*. We have a relationship with Christ that is based upon Him taking us to the Father in the Spirit, thus giving us an identity. Flowing from this identity we are given a mission.

As we continue in the diaconal mission we need to deepen our attention to interiority, to the movements of the Holy Spirit as these are tested in spiritual direction and made clearer in acts of charity and fidelity to family and diaconal life. That Christ lives in us is true but without vigilance

That Christ lives in us is true but without vigilance such knowledge can simply become another way of approaching the ego

such knowledge can simply become another way of approaching the ego. There has to be a real way to distinguish my ‘I’ from the ‘Thou’ which is Christ. If Christ is not other than the ego then we can give up the ministry. His voice is NOT Our voice. His voice carries revelation and vocation, our voice consistently carries fears, rationalizations, justification. As we deepen the spiritual life we become attuned to HIS VOICE and HIS ALONE. Analogically this is what happens in an emotionally and spiritually healthy marriage. After a while a spouse learns to listen to his spouse’s voice, then he learns to pay attention to her gestures, then he incorporates the beloved’s well being into his conscience so that he knows what actions benefit his wife. This is the level of connatural knowledge. *I have internalized my spouse* so I know her. I know what to do and how to serve her needs simply as a result of this kind of inte-

rior knowing. Is Christ in us as another PERSON? Have we internalized His presence? If we have then we know Him and we know what to do, because we can FEEL, we can SENSE His interior movements. We have listened to Him in prayer, in spiritual direction, through Revelation, worship and virtuous living, and as a result we have internalized Him. Due to this internalization we can now discern His movements in our life.

In the end, with God’s grace, it is up to us to continually *choose to stay in His presence*. We can **choose to stay in His presence** by the internalizing process which accompanies the following truths: What we think about we become, what we choose we become, what we attend to we become. What we love we become.

If you think about the mystery of Christ you will become that mystery, if you choose to love Christ he will live his life over again in you, if you attend to His Spirit within you then this Spirit will create you anew!

Christ’s Spirit is in us to help us, not condemn us. The Spirit wants to move us deeper and deeper into communion with Christ, purifying us of our affection for sin and giving us the grace to endure our own conversions. The Spirit consoles us and encourages us to never give up in and through the power of Christ’s own mysteries. No matter how weary we get, how predictable our falls, how disheartening our own inability to live up to what we believe and preach the Spirit only consoles, only heals, only encourages. The Spirit who lives within us says to us: ‘Surrender, entrust and then receive. Be open, all healing is found in your acceptance of the love of God.’ The most fruitful human activity is to RECEIVE God.²

Here we can only marvel at the Mother of

1 Jean Pierre de Caussade, *Treatise on Prayer from the Heart* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1998) 145, n. 38

2 Jean Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005) 37.

Diaconate in the Apostolic Fathers

God, Mary and her life of contemplating and receiving the mystery of God's own Love, Jesus. Christ is our model of Servant-hood but His mother assists us in the ways of carrying this mysterious servant-hood *within us* and not simply *before us* as some 'plan of action.' She teaches the deacon *how to be with her Son interiorly*. Friendship with Mary is the way to becoming a contemplative deacon and in that truth one begins to see the diaconate as a way of being and not simply as 'something to do.' Many formation programs teach this truth about being and doing but if they neglect to establish the men in a relationship with Mary. If such a relationship with Mary is neglected such advice on

our hearts...that is the mission of the Holy Spirit.

Because we fear death we fear the spiritual life as it invites us to let God do the choosing for us, let God do the thinking for us. Out of fear we hold fast to the fat relentless ego. We need to seriously consider if we can die to this age before we end up dead, literally. We are called to be dead to sin and alive to Christ (Rom. 6:11). Until we are ordered toward the heart of Christ and what it contains (exclusive and rapt listening to the Father's will) fear and sin will form our minds. Love alone must form our mind. What we love always forms our minds. We just have to discern *if* what we are loving now, what we are paying attention to now, is worthy of our dignity.

Meditation: Take some time now to simply enter the Lord's Presence. Seek to find Him at the core of your heart and speak to Him honestly about your ideas and feelings around your vocation and prayer life. Listen to His response in the silence of your heart or from praying with Scripture. Note any movements within you that signal a healing or a better grasp of how much you are loved by Him. Throughout your ministry as deacon record the fruit of the experience of such prayer. To remember the graces of prayer deepens our gratitude toward God. Our memory becomes a true record of His coming to us and changing us from within.

Truly, we want Christ to affect us! ■

The goal of the spiritual life is ordered toward receiving the love of God, like Mary did, and giving God the core, the heart of who we are

being contemplative simply remains a concept, but not an experience.

The goal of the spiritual life is ordered toward *receiving* the love of God, like Mary did, and *giving* God the core, the heart of who we are. The *work* of the spiritual life is discerning if we have not yet done that fully. God does not want *what* we give Him; primarily He wants 'you.' And alternately, He does not want you to simply receive his *gifts* but *His very being*. Is God enough for you? As Venerable John Henry Newman pleaded, 'Teach me to love prayer; God teach me to love what will occupy my heart for all eternity.'³ By way of a moral, intellectual and affective conversion let the Holy Spirit bring Christ to life in our diaconate, in our ministry, and in

The NDR presents the next instalment of a fresh (and for the first time complete) translation from the original French into English of the International Theological Commission's important research document called The Diaconate – Perspectives on its Development published in 2002. Here the German and Latin footnotes have been translated for the first time. Tony Schmitz is a deacon of the Diocese of Aberdeen and co-editor of the *New Diaconal Review*. He is Director of Studies for the national formation programme for deacons in Scotland. The following is the second part of the Second Chapter.

establish their *episcopos* in observance of the law and their *deacons* in fidelity.²¹

When the author of Clement's Epistle speaks of liturgical functions he is alluding to the Old Testament.²² When he is explaining the institution of *episkopoi kai diakonoi*, he is referring to the will of God, as well as to the Apostles.²³ The order of bishops and priests was not an innovation; rather it was based in the will of God, and was accordingly a "due order"; their being sent originated in God himself. The successors chosen by the Apostles are the first fruits offered to God. The Apostles had tested these chosen men by the Spirit. Those who succeeded them would be established by the election of the whole assembly.²⁴

Here one finds the tradition of Pastoral Letters continued via: (1) the testing in the Spirit (cf. 1 Tim 3,1-7 and 8,10ff); and (2) the use of the paired words *episkopos kai diakonos* (cf. Ph 1,1), where *episkopos* does not yet correspond to the present

The successors chosen by the Apostles are the first fruits offered to God

appointed (*kathistanon*) men from their earliest converts after they had tested them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons (*eis episkopous kai diakonous*) for future believers. And this was not something new (*ou kainos*); for, indeed, a long time before, Scripture had referred to bishops and deacons (*egegrapto peri episkopon kai diakonon*); for somewhere it says: 'I will

21 Cf. Isaiah 60,17, where the Septuagint does not mention "deacons", which must thus have been added by Clement; cf. 1Clem. 42,1-5; SCh 167,173,168-171.

22 Cf. 40,1 et 41, 2-4.

23 J. Colson, *Ministre de Jésus-Christ ou le Sacerdoce de l'Évangile*, 228ff.

24 1Clem 44,3; SCh 167, 172-173.

3 John Henry Newman, *Meditations and Devotions* (London: Burns and Oates, 1964) pp. 26-7.

definition of a bishop.²⁵ It is noteworthy the way St Polycarp associates the ministry of deacons with the service of Christ the Saviour: “that they might walk in the truth of the Lord who became deacon (*diakonos*) of all.” (Epistle of St Polycarp to the Philippians 5,2).

Written before 130 AD, the text of the *Didache*, at 15, 1, mentions only bishops and deacons as successors of the prophets and *didaskaloi*, remaining silent about presbyters: “Accordingly, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are gentle, not attached to money, honest and dependable, for they too will render the holy service of the prophets and teachers.”²⁶ J.-P. Audet comments: “Admittedly, to our ears both of

... “that they might walk in the truth of the Lord who became deacon (*diakonos*) of all.”

these two words sound differently. But in Greek, at the time the *Didache* was written, an *episkopos* was an overseer, a foreman, a guardian, a moderator, a warder, a steward Whereas a *diakonos*, on the other hand was simply a servant, liable to fulfill different functions according to the particular circumstances of his service.

Both terms are general The concrete mode of appointment (*cheirotonein*) remains obscure to us. They were chosen and appointed, perhaps by election: that is all we can say.²⁷ The *Didache* says not a word about ordination. According to K. Niederwimmer, the term *cheirotonein* signifies election.²⁸

It is certain that in that early period deacons were responsible for the life of the Church in respect of the works of charity towards widows and orphans, as was the case in the very first Jerusalem community. Doubtlessly their activities were linked with catechesis and probably also with the liturgy. But the information on the subject in this document is so terse as to make it difficult to infer the range of the deacon's functions.²⁹

The Letters of Saint Ignatius of Antioch signal a new step. His affirmations on the ecclesiastical hierarchy, with its three grades, are similar to those of Clement of Rome: “Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, and also the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and as the college of the Apostles: for without these we cannot even speak of the Church.”³⁰ And again: “Follow your bishop, all of you, as Jesus Christ [follows] his Father, and follow the presbyters as the Apostles; and as to the deacons, pay respect to them as to God's law.”³¹ The texts of St Ignatius speak in the singular

about the bishop, and in the plural about presbyters and deacons. But they say nothing about the character of the diaconate. They simply exhort that deacons be revered as being appointed by God.

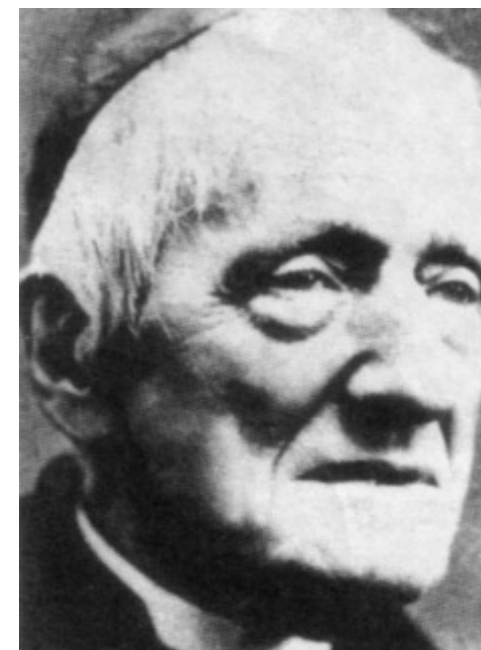
It is St Justin († 165) who especially supplies us with intelligence in respect of the liturgical activity of deacons. He describes the role of deacons at the Eucharist during the *oblatio* and the *communio*: “Then, bread and a chalice containing wine mixed with water are brought to the one presiding over the brethren At the end of these prayers and this thanksgiving, all present express their approval by responding: Amen. ... When the one who presides at the assembly has completed the prayer of the action of thanksgiving (the Eucharist) when all the people have given their assent, those who amongst us we call

deacons (*oi kaloumenoi par'emin diakonoi*) give to each of those present a portion of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the prayer and act of thanksgiving (Eucharist) has been recited; and they carry it also to those who are absent.”³² ■

... those who amongst us we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the prayer and act of thanksgiving (Eucharist) has been recited; and they carry it also to those who are absent

32 *Apol.* 1,65,3-5. Saint Justin, *Apologies*

News



Beatification of John Henry Newman

Many readers will be aware of the plans to beatify the Venerable John Henry Newman in England in 2010. For our readers it is significant that the man healed in the miracle which has been attributed to Newman's intercession, John Sullivan, is an American deacon who became ill during formation and has only been able to exercise his ministry because he has been healed. We hope to have more coverage in our next issue, which will appear at the same time as the beatification.

25 “Two ‘offices’ are mentioned, *episkopoi* and *diakonoi*. The first has been translated as ‘Episkopes’ to avoid the misunderstanding entailed by the use of the word ‘bishops’. In no way are we here dealing with the institution of the monarchical episcopate.” H. E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief. Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern*, Göttingen 1998, 446. Cf. E. Dassmann, *Ämter und Dienste in den frühchristlichen Gemeinden*, 40.26

26 J.-P. Audet, *La Didachè. Instructions des Apôtres*, Paris 1958, 241.

27 *Ibid.* 465.

28 “‘*Cheirotonein*’ here of course means ‘to elect’ and not ‘to appoint’.” *Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, Die Didache*, Göttingen 1989, 241.

29 *Didache*. 14,1-3; 15,1.

30 *Letter to the Trallians* 3,1; SCh 10, 113.

31 *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8,1; SCh 10, 163.

The International Diaconate Centre: Vienna 2009

William T. Ditewig

In March the International Diaconate Centre held its quadrennial Study Conference. Every four years, deacons, wives of deacons, priests and bishops gather to examine the contemporary experience of the diaconate. This particular conference was held in Vienna and was attended by more than 180 participants from 30 countries. While the theme of the Conference was on the spirituality of the diaconate, I found that the most important time of the gathering was in the various break-out sessions in which we could learn in detail from each other's experiences.

In particular, we enjoyed the presence of brother deacons from Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. We also learned about the fledgling diaconate within India, where the first 10 native-born Indian deacons (two prior to the Conference, and eight after it) have just been ordained. Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the Archbishop of Bombay was to have been one of our speakers, but was ill. His place was taken by the young priest who is forming the deacons in the Archdiocese, and his presence, excitement and enthusiasm for the diaconate impressed everyone who was there. We were also graced by the participation of three bishops, two of whom stayed through-

out the entire Conference. Cardinal Wilfrid Fox Napier, the Archbishop of Durban and Bishop Philipp Pöllitzer of Keetmanshoop, Namibia participated in every event; and the "bishop protector" of the International Diaconate Centre, Bishop Dr. Gebhard Fürst, addressed the Conference.

The members voted on a new Board and Assembly of Delegates. What was most significant in all of this was that the members directed the Board and Delegates to continue the initiatives already underway in Northern Europe and Latin America of establishing regional centres in order to support the ministry of deacons. We also expanded the Delegate Assembly to include more deacons from Africa and from India. Deacon Bert Cambre and I are already discussing the possibility of a "North American Diaconal Circle" for the United States and Canada following the lead of our brothers in the North European Circle.

Gatherings such as this one in Vienna can be a remarkable way to experience the universal Church, get new ideas, and provide mutual support and friendship, and I would encourage us all to find ways of raising our sights to the insights international diaconate can offer. There is new, fresh leadership in the central office in Germany and on the Board and Assembly of Delegates, and you will see new initiatives taking shape quickly, including more resources available in English and Spanish. We can all anticipate considerable creativity as the diaconate continues to mature and develop around the world.

Holme Lacey assembly

In our first two issues we advertised the next National Assembly of Deacons of England and Wales due to be held in February 2010 at Holme Lacey in Herefordshire. Unfortunately the Executive committee of Diaconate conference has had to cancel the booking because

not enough people have booked places. We are aware that this probably has a lot to do with financial pressures being experienced by many deacons and their families, and we are at present planning an assembly for 2011 at a cheaper cost.



There is nothing like a dame!

Nelleke Wijngaards-Serrarens has for many years been one of the foremost authorities in the world on the permanent diaconate. A member of the IDC board and the NDC-NEC board she has been involved in diaconate formation in the Netherlands, with her husband Aloys, a deacon, and in particular has carried out important research in relation to the wives and widows of deacons.

In recognition of this work on 29 April of this year Nelleke was honoured by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands by being made a **Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau**. She was given the decoration by the Mayor of Arnhem and Nelleke and the mayor (shown here).

Deacons' Assembly in Sweden

Deacon Göran Fäldt

The first joint assembly for active deacons and candidates to the diaconate in their last year of formation will be held in October this year at the Pastoral Centre Marielund, outside Stockholm. Some 50 persons, wives included, are expected to take part in this conference combining lectures, sharing of experience and getting to know each other. The conference will be led by Mgr Anders Arborelius OCD, Bishop of Stockholm, the Rev Fr Ingvar Fogelqvist who has been responsible both for the formation of the candidates and for the continuing theological and pastoral education of the 20 permanent deacons in the country. Deacon Tony Schmitz and Fr Ashley Beck, the editors of the *New Diaconal Review*, as well as members of the IDC-NEC board are also expected to stay over the weekend to learn more about the Nordic Scandinavian context and make

new friends. Guest lecturer is Mrs Nelleke Wijngaard-Serrarens from the Netherlands. Sweden has a surface area of some 450,000 square kilometers, compared to that of Scotland of 79,000 and that of the Netherlands of some 34,000. The country's population counts around 8.5 million inhabitants. Catholics amount to roughly 170,000 registered in 42 parishes in one nationwide diocese. 4 deacons live in the southern region, 8 in the middle part, 6 in the area around the capital Stockholm, 1 in the far north and 1 on the Isle of Gotland. The candidates are spread out in the same proportions roughly. 6 deacons are employed full-time, the others are non-stipendiary deacons with secular employment or are retired from secular employment. The first ordinations took place in 1982. Two are deceased but their widows are always invited to the weekend gatherings.

More souped-up Marxism

The publication of Pope Benedict XVI's third encyclical is a major event in the development of Catholic social teaching. In this review Fr Ashley Beck makes a preliminary examination of its importance, particularly for deacons

Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*

Author: Pope Benedict XVI

ISBN 978-1-86082-515-6

Price: £2.95

Publisher: Catholic Truth Society

It is the mind of the Church that permanent deacons should have a specialist knowledge of the social doctrine of the Church; they are also called 'to transform the world according to the Christian order'.¹ To be honest, this is often not the case: in the early days of the permanent diaconate formation programmes did not even include social teaching. Many deacons know as little about social teaching as priests and laypeople do. The last papal encyclical devoted specifically to the social teaching of the Catholic Church was Pope John Paul II's letter *Centesimus Annus*, issued in 1991 to commemorate the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*. This gap should not be seen as a marginalisation or down-grading of this part of moral theology; rather, in material which has been published since then we can see how the insights of social teaching have been more thoroughly integrated into other documents from the Magisterium, and this was particularly true of the material published for the Great Jubilee. The publication in England and Wales of the Bishops' document *The Common Good* in late 1996 attracted attention not only because it appeared in the context of the 1997 General Election: it caught people's imagination because so many Catholics and others had clearly never come across the

Church's social teaching before. The period has also seen the publication of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

In spite of this integration social doctrine is seen as the preserve of the specialist, and that the majority of clergy and laypeople can let it pass them by; one who shows some knowledge or interest is quickly identified. If you raise anything about the issues addressed by social teaching you are simply told that the Church should 'not interfere with politics'.² The third encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI enables us to break down this barrier and open up its insights to others, and it gives deacons in particular an opportunity to join in this. This is not because it is easy to read – in some ways it isn't – but because it address-

Benedict is not an 'occasional' theologian, simply reacting to different questions: we can see a clear system in his writings, and a clear sense of continuity

es very directly the current world financial crisis which affects everyone, and we know that its publication was delayed to take full account of this: deacons who work in this field have a particular opportunity to share the Church's teaching.

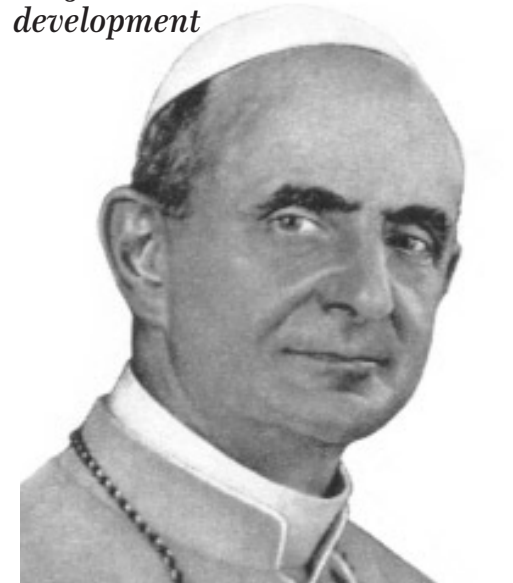
Firstly, this encyclical needs to be seen in the context of the pope's earlier writings. Perhaps more than previous popes, Benedict is not an 'occasional' theologian, simply reacting to different questions: we can see a clear *system* in his writings, and a clear sense of continuity. Two of the greatest influences on him as a theologian are St Augustine and St Bonaventure – so it is no accident that two of this three encyclicals dwell on love, on *caritas*. His

first letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, contained a detailed analysis of different forms of Christian love³, and made the point, repeated in the latest encyclical, that the exercise of Christian charity is complementary to the Church's witness for justice, not a rival to it⁴. Moreover, his second encyclical on Christian hope, *Spe Salvi*, looks at how the ongoing search for 'the right way to order human affairs' is never going to be completed on this earth; and humanity will be redeemed by love, not science.⁵ Other statements by the Holy Father about what can loosely be termed 'social justice issues' are also important; of particular note is his largely ignored World Peace day message for 2006, in which he declared that nuclear deterrence policies are 'not only baneful but completely fallacious'.⁶ It is often carelessly claimed that Joseph Ratzinger had little interest in issues of this kind as a theologian, but that ignores the wide breadth of his theological writing, and a collection of essays was published many years ago which contained many reflections on the relationship between the Church and political life.⁷

It is often pointed out that the idea, often termed a 'hermeneutic', of *continuity* is a vital key to understanding Ratzinger's thought. Perhaps we see this most clearly in the very clear choice of the name 'Benedict' when he was elected; he linked himself explicitly to the last Pope Benedict, 'that courageous prophet of peace'.⁸ So it is no accident that the first chapter of Benedict's encyclical on social

teaching is a tribute to, and an examination of, Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter on world development from 1967, *Populorum Progressio*. We are invited to 'remain faithful to its message of charity and truth'. Again Benedict stresses that the roots of all social teaching need to be clear – his predecessor's as well as his. This stress on continuity is particularly important here, since *Populorum Progressio*, for all that it has been rightly praised forty years on, was one of the most controversial things Paul

The first chapter of Benedict's encyclical on social teaching is a tribute to, and an examination of, Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter on world development



3 London: CTS 2006, 10ff.

4 Ibid., 29.

5 Encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* (London: CTS 2007), 25-26.

6 The message is available from the archive on www.vatican.va. See also the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* 508.

7 *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (Slough: St Paul, 1988). The original collection was written in German and published in Italy. See also *Europa I suoi fondamenti oggi e domani* (Milan: San Paolo, 2004) and Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), chapter 6, 'Modernity and the Politics of the West.'

8 First general audience, 27 April 2005. He said: 'In his footsteps I place my ministry in the service of reconciliation and harmony between peoples.'

1 *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, paragraph 81 (e) and the *Directory of the Life and Ministry of Permanent Deacons* (1998), 38.

2 Letter (by John DeWaal) to the *Catholic Herald*, 18 March 2004.

VI ever wrote. It was written as a response to the needs of poor nations after Paul VI's ground-breaking visit to India, and was widely praised in the developing world as the first specific response by the Magisterium to the needs of poor nations; but it was attacked in the prosperous west. The right-wing American Catholic commentator Michael Novak thought it was naïve and lacking in humility, and that it had been written as some sort of conspiracy by 'intellectuals who specialised in Third World development.'⁹ It was attacked by the *Wall Street Journal* as 'souped-up Marxism.' For those who portray the present pope as a conservative bent on turning the clock back, his close association with one of the most radical documents on social teaching of the 20th century poses some difficult questions. Some resort to the same tactics as Novak, while professing the same bogus loyalty to the papacy: the reaction to the present encyclical by Novak's associate George Weigel indulges in the same patronising smear tactics.¹⁰ In his assessment of his predecessor's letter Benedict stresses its continuity not only with the teachings of Vatican II but with social teaching before that, and roundly criticises those who divide social teaching in pre- and post-conciliar typologies (section 12). The two key insights both of the Council and of Paul VI's letter which the present pope commends are the teaching that the Church is engaging in 'promoting integral human development' when she performs works of charity, and secondly the assertion that '*authentic human develop-*

ment concerns the whole of the person in society' (11; the italics are the pope's). Paul VI 'grasped the interconnection between the impetus towards the unification of humanity and the Christian ideal of a single family of peoples in solidarity and fraternity.' (13) Also in this chapter Benedict looks at Paul VI's later teaching, such as the letters *Octogesima Adveniens* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* from the 1970s and the encyclical on birth control, *Humanae Vitae*. With regard to the latter those of us who teach social doctrine have often had to struggle to help people see this letter as relating to social teaching, so it is good to see this connection endorsed – 'The Church forcefully maintains this link between life ethics and social ethics..' (15). We can see this simply by looking at international aid policies. The rich nations of the world (including Britain) want people in poor countries to control population increase in order to reduce the aid which they should be giving; by contrast the Church (and other faith communities) has repeatedly shown that the link works the other way round: people choose to have smaller families when their economic situation improves. Benedict returns to this link later in the letter. The key vision from his predecessor's letter which the pope endorses is the moral argument – underdevelopment and world poverty are not inevitable material facts: they happen because people do not regard all others in the world as their brothers and sisters, and this vision can only come from God.

In the next chapter, 'Human Development in Our Time', Pope Benedict surveys

what has happened since 1967. He does not accept the claim, often made, that the Church in the 1960s was guilty of a false naivety and optimism. While a lot of economic growth since then has helped people, there have also been '*malfunctions and dramatic problems*'. These include the unregulated exploitation of the world's resources and 'badly managed and largely speculative financial dealing' (21). The world needs 'a profound cultural renewal'; it 'needs to rediscover fundamental values on which to build a better future. The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment...'

How should we 're-plan the journey'? In the rest of the letter the Holy Father, while

He does not accept the claim, often made, that the Church in the 1960s was guilty of a false naivety and optimism

making it clear that the Church does not have 'technical solutions', makes various specific recommendations. These are important, since critics often want to keep social teaching in the realm of general principles, so that specific policies can be left to (presumably) Catholic politicians to work out. The pope decries any 'downsizing' of social security systems 'under pressure from international financial institutions'; he reiterates, in the tradition of *Rerum Novarum*, the Church's strong support for Trade unions and regrets ways in which their influence has been diminished (25). Linked to this Benedict sees access for all people to steady employment as a central economic objective. He argues that the earth's 'state of ecological health' should be protected, and developed nations should lower their domestic energy consumption, switching to renewable forms of energy and new more sustainable lifestyles; the rich nations should also

open up global markets to the products of developing nations and increase the proportion of development aid within their GDPs. They should also avoid 'an excessive zeal for protecting knowledge', especially in relation to health care: this has been a big issue in relation to drugs used to combat HIV-AIDS. He argues that those who benefit from international aid programmes should be involved in their design and implementation, and that the bureaucracy sometimes linked to this work should be trimmed back. What has attracted attention in the encyclical is the way in which Benedict, following *Humanae Vitae*, not only attacks abortion and artificial birth control on moral grounds, but shows that 'openness to life' also makes long-term economic sense; he is also opposed to other measures which undermine the traditional family and abuses of biotechnology such as eugenics. A characteristic of social teaching and the Church's charitable work is defence of refugees and migrants, so Benedict calls for more generous immigration policies worldwide, recognising how much migrants contribute to host nations through taxation and to their countries of origin by sending money home. He also commends small-scale, 'micro-financial' arrangements for providing financial help to people, and consumer co-operatives (when he refers positively to 'pawnbrokers' in the English translation I think he really means Credit unions, since the former in this country are usually now associated with extortionate rather than low rates of interest). One of his most striking suggestions is for reform of the UN and international financial and economic institutions to create 'a true world political authority...with real teeth.'

I want to make now some observations about four overall characteristics of the letter, and one suggestion about where more work could be done. First, in the tradition of social teaching and in the light of the current financial crisis, the pope firmly rejects unrestricted, *laissez-faire* economics. The 'market' only works and is only ethical if it is directed towards the common good, with a

9 See Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI The First Modern Pope* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 484.

10 'Caritas in Veritate in Gold and Red', *National Review Online*, 7 July 2009. There is more history here: Cardinal Ratzinger, like Pope John Paul II, was a public critic of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Novak and Weigel both tried hard to undermine this opposition (see William Cavanaugh, 'To Whom Shall We Go? Legitimate Authority and Just Wars' in D. L. O'Huallachain and J. Forrest Sharpe (eds.) *Neo-Conned! Just War Principles: A Condemnation of War in Iraq* [Vienna, Va.: IHS Press, 2005], pp. 269ff.) A less trenchant, but still unfair, critique of Paul VI's letter in the light of Benedict's is made by Fr Aidan Nichols OP, 'Benedict gives social teaching an injection of theology', *The Catholic Herald* 17 July 2009, p.8.

special view towards the needs of the poor. Therefore there needs to be proper, effective and international regulation. This is controversial: while many are paying lip-service to the ideal, it is clear that politicians and financiers are renegeing on earlier promises – old ways have not changed. The Church, in imparting the pope's message, needs to be more assertive in challenging this.

Second, as has been observed already, the close link between defence of the sanctity of life and our social doctrine is clear in this letter, as has been true in the past. This needs to be taken seriously by all in the Church: so often those who campaign in relation to both sets of issues are not only not the same people – they seem to be at odds with each other and indifferent about the other.

Third, the pope asserts again the link between social teaching and the Church's charitable work, as he has done before. Again, all of us need to take this more seriously. It is a problem that charity law in most countries constrains charities from campaigning which could be construed as 'political' but in relation to aid issues agencies like CAFOD have achieved a great deal to raise the consciousness of Catholics.

A fourth characteristic, in many ways the most important, is the confident claims in the letter about the place of religious faith in the world and the letter's Trinitarian foundation. In chapter 5, 'The Cooperation of the Human Family', Benedict points out that his vision of 'the inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within the one community of the human family, built on solidarity on the basis of the fundamental values of justice and peace' takes as its model the relationship of mutual love and equality between the three persons of the Holy Trinity: in this way individuality is not lost, and people are

bound together by love and truth. This insight owes much to patristic theology and is found in some traditions in other churches (such as the Anglican Catholic social tradition) but has not been emphasised as much in 20th century Catholic social teaching.

Many of us have 'wish lists' of things we would like included in social teaching encyclicals but I think there is one area where more work could be done. The Holy Father's treatment of 'usury', the charging of excessive rates of interest, recognises the problem and calls, as I noted above, for smaller bodies to be able lend more generously. But perhaps the time has come for a thorough appraisal of traditional Christian opposition to all forms of lending or borrowing for interest – historically, 'usury' is not simply charging too much interest, but charging any at all. This is still the Islamic position and Christians who have practised it include the Catholic Worker movement founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin.¹¹ At the very least the Church should be calling specifically for interest rates to be controlled, as the author and financial journalist Edward Hadas has recently argued,¹² shown also in a recent inter-faith initiative of religious leaders delivering a strong call to the City of London to cap lending rates at 8%.¹³ This might pose an uncomfortable challenge to those responsible for handling the investments of dioceses and religious orders.

Caritas in Veritate is a consummate work, rich in insight and thoroughly grounded in the author's deep theological studies over his long life. As a reiteration of previous teaching – part of the 'hermeneutic of continuity' – and a response to the current financial crisis, it will remain an important source for

social teaching for many years. It also serves to integrate social teaching with the whole of the Church's message, so that it is no longer the preserve of specialist, the specialist often slightly patronised by others. The letter also defies the lazy pigeon-holing of Benedict as a 'conservative'. It is also a challenge: to clergy – bishops, priests and deacons – and to laypeople and deacons working in financial services, in business, in legal and other services attached to the world of finance, and in the teaching of these things in schools, colleges and universities. If we are honest about it we know that many of our people know little of social teaching and they do not like the little they do know – the pervasive right-wing culture of many Catholic writers, at least in Britain, is fundamentally uneasy about what Benedict XVI has done, in spite of paying lip-service to this encyclical. All of us in diaconal ministry and the formation of deacons should challenge this.

The Eucharist and Social Justice

Author: Margaret Scott ACI

ISBN number 978-0-8091-4566-9

Publisher: St Paul Publications 2009

Those involved in diaconal ministry are expected to have a strong commitment to Catholic social teaching, and this needs to be rooted in encounter with the Lord through the Eucharist, the central act of Christian worship, but comparatively little has been written to help us do this. This very accessible book fills a gap, written by Sister Margaret Scott of the congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart. For some years she was the order's Provincial in Britain and Ireland and is now director of their retreat centre in Pennsylvania.

It always surprises me how few priests and deacons show a close *theological familiarity* with the texts of the ordinary of the Mass. It's odd firstly because they speak or say these words every day; secondly, sacred liturgical texts are sources of doctrine (as the adage says, 'lex orandi, lex credendi') and are resources we should use in preach-

*This is an adapted version of an article originally written for **The Pastoral Review**, vol. 5, issue 6 (September/October 2009), reproduced by kind permission from the editor.*



ing and teaching. Or again, few clergy seem to be even aware of (let alone prepared to preach about) the riches of the texts of the fourth Eucharistic prayer, the Eucharistic Prayers for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions. In this we are put to shame by Sister Margaret in her book – she knows well the texts of the Missal and has integrated them into her prayer. It is part of the rule of her congregation that each sister spends an hour in prayer a day before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, and the fruits of this are so evident in this book. The Church's commitment to social justice is rooted so naturally in the constituent parts of the Mass and in the community's experience; this is fed too by the practical commitment of the author's order to the poor and oppressed of the world. She takes us chapter by chapter through the Mass showing how far the words of the sacred texts have informed her reflection about the world.

This is a very useful book and well worth buying

Ashley Beck

11 For a practical example of this, when Day returned a large cheque from the City of New York because it was interest, see Ashley Beck, *Dorothy Day* (London: CTS 2008), pp. 38-39.

12 *The Credit Crunch* (London: CTS 2009), pp.56ff.

13 See Jonathan Freedland, 'Heard the one about a rabbi, an imam and a priest, who walk into a bank?' *The Guardian* 22 July 2009. In his article Freedland comments, 'It has been left to the Pope to offer the most comprehensive critique of our devastated economic landscape...'