

The Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Southwark



Diaconate Update – October 2016

(F)-Formation (OGF)-On-going Formation (G)-General Diaconate

Recent Events

Candidacy Mass at Strood (F)

On Thursday 8th September Bishop Paul Mason conferred Candidacy on Arthur Champ (Rainham), Martim Smith (Waldeslade) and “JayJay” Atmosfera (Battersea West) who commenced formation for the Diaconate on 10th September. They were joined at Wonersh by Errol Jadoc (Woolwich), who was unfortunately unable to attend the Mass and will receive Candidacy next year, and Roy Cavey (Ordinariate) who received candidacy from Mgr. Keith Newton .

Retreat at Emmaus on 15th to 17th September (OGF)

Unfortunately this event had to be cancelled due to the withdrawal of the retreat giver after only four deacon’s had booked places.

Diocesan Diaconate Day at Canterbury (OGF) – Report by Deacon John Letley

On Saturday 1st October, 14 Deacons along with four wives spent an informative day at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury exploring the Papal Exhortation *Amoris Lætitia* led by Fr David Gibbons formerly Director of the Catholic Centre for Formation and soon to be Parish Priest of St Thomas of Canterbury in Sevenoaks. The morning was spent looking at the finer detail of each chapter of *Amoris Lætitia* and how parishes can use them in preparation for the Sacraments, in particular Confirmation and Marriage, but also in the wider work of evangelisation. After Mass and a sumptuous lunch the attendees broke into two groups to address the questions on how we could use the Papal Exhortation *Amoris Lætitia* as a resource for Marriage Preparation and also discussed the various forms of Marriage Preparation employed across the Archdiocese. The second question was about how we, as Deacons, bring the subjects of marriage and family into our homilies. As you can imagine the answers were numerous and varied but made for an excellent discussion.

The day concluded with Vespers and the attendees headed home looking forward to the further Ongoing Formation planned for this Academic Year. The details of the next On-Going Formation events appear later in this update.

Diaconate Celebration at Westminster Cathedral (G) – Report by Deacon Barry Mellish

A colloquium on the Deacon and the Jubilee Year of Mercy followed by Renewal of Diaconal Vows Mass took place at Westminster

Each year the Bishop from one of the Dioceses that support the Diaconal Formation Programme at Wonersh makes a formal visit to the seminary. This year it was the turn of Westminster Diocese. HE Cardinal Vincent Nichols decided that as it was the fiftieth anniversary of the Permanent Diaconate in England and Wales he would like to have a reunion of all those whose diaconal ministry was formed at Wonersh. Due to the possible

numbers of deacons and wives it was felt that this should be held at Westminster Cathedral rather than Womersley.

The colloquium, which was held in the cathedral hall, lasted just under an hour and was excellent. The cardinal based his talk on quotations from His Holiness The Pope. His talk was well received and was followed by an interesting discussion.

Mass was held in the Cathedral and Cardinal Nichols continued the theme of the deacon and mercy in his homily. During the Mass we all reconfirmed our diaconal commitment.

After the Mass many of us went for lunch together to renew our friendships and strengthen the bonds that unite us. It was a very good day that was enjoyed by all who took part.

The one disappointment was that so few of us were there. There were approximately sixty deacons present, most of whom were accompanied by their wives. This was out of a total possible attendance of 300+. This does rather beg the question do we see ourselves as part of a brotherhood of deacons or as individuals working in isolation?

The photo shows the majority of the Southwark deacons who were present lining up prior to processing into the cathedral.



The text of the Cardinal's homily at the Mass is attached to this update.

Forthcoming Events

Diocesan Diaconate Day at Bromley (OGF)

The second DDD of the new programme will take place at St Joseph's Church in Bromley on Saturday 11th February 2017. Details of the day and a booking form are attached to this update. The third DDD for the year will take place at Southwark Cathedral and will include conferral of Candidacy and Renewal of Diaconal Commitment.

Retreat for 2017 (OGF)

The Diocesan Retreat for Deacons and Wives will take place at Hothorpe Hall, Lutterworth (www.hothorpe.co.uk) from Friday 19th to Sunday 21st May. Please put this date in your diary now and watch out for further information on booking so that we can make this event a success. This will be the one organised retreat for 2017.

Advance notice of Ordinations and Minor Ministries for 2017 (F)

Minor Ministries will be conferred on all men in formation by Bishop Paul Hendricks at St Elphege Church, Wallington at 12 noon on Sunday 18 June. Ordinations are provisionally organised at Forest Hill on 12 June, Westerham on 6 July and Beckenham Hill on 29 July.

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**The Second DDD for the Academic year 2016/7 will be held at
St Joseph's RC Church, Bromley on Saturday 11th February 2017.**

**The subject is 'Maintaining the Church's vision after the referendum: the
deacon's role' and will be led by Fr Ashley Beck**

The programme for the day:

10.00 am	Arrival, Registration, Coffee.
10.30 am	Opening Session
11.15 am	Short break
11.30 am	2 nd Session
12.30 pm	MASS
1.30 pm	LUNCH
2.30 pm	Group session
3.45 pm	Evening Prayer
4.00 pm	Finish

Note that Morning Prayer will be said in the Church starting at 9:45 am if you wish to join the parishioners

PLEASE SEND THIS SLIP FOR BOOKING THE DDD BY 18th January 2017

To: Rev Barry Mellish, 19 Murray Avenue, Bromley, Kent, BR1 3DG

Please reserve my place at £50 for the DDD day at St Joseph's Bromley

Please also reserve a place for my wife at £20 for the day.

I enclose a cheque for £..... (Please make cheques payable to "RCAS Permanent Diaconate")

Dietary Requirements:

Names:

Address:

Cardinal Vincent Nichols' Homily at the Jubilee of Deacons Mass

Jubilee of Deacons for the Year of Mercy

Given at the Jubilee of Deacons Mass for the Year of Mercy at Westminster Cathedral on the feast of Our Lady of Walsingham, 24 September 2016.

Today we gather for this celebration of Mass for deacons in the great Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Let us listen again to the words of Pope Francis as he invited the Church to observe this year:

'How much I desire that this year will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman bringing the goodness and tenderness of God. May the balm of God's mercy reach everyone' (*Misericordiae Vultus* 5).

It is not too late for us to renew our efforts to live to the full this Year of Mercy. In doing so, the perspective of the diaconate can help us, for the diaconate is a focal point, an embodiment, of the quality of service which pervades every aspect of the life of the Church. The diaconate, and therefore the deacon, is the living icon, and reminder, of this truth. This entire quality of service in the Church flows from mercy: the mercy of God received by us in our need, which then shapes and inspires us to show that same mercy to others.

Here in the Cathedral we have established a way of mercy, which I invite you to follow after our Mass is ended. It begins with the door of mercy. As we enter we see an image of the Trinity, for Divine Mercy is the source of all mercy and, as Pope Francis put it graphically, mercy is the name of God.

The image we see is taken from 14th century English iconography. It depicts the Father holding in his outstretched arms the crucified Son, with the Holy Spirit hovering between them. It is known as the Seat of Mercy. Sometimes a gathering of tiny figures can be seen held, in a cloth nest, to the heart of the Father. They represent the Spirit-filled members of the Church, the Body of Christ. Here we can see that mercy ebbs and flows within the life of God, between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for mercy is the very life of God, love, reaching out to us in our weaknesses. Pondering this image today we can sense how the ministry of the deacon is that of serving this ebb and flow of mercy, encouraging, supporting the work of service in the Church. Caritas is the service of mercy.

The second step on this way of mercy is the image of the Baptism of Jesus, reminding us that our participation in the life of the Blessed Trinity comes from our baptism. From there that gift of the Holy Spirit develops and diversifies into every unfolding of our vocation. Within the Church the light of the one baptism refracts, like light in a chandelier, into the glory of every particular Christian way of life: in marriage, in dedicated single living, in religious life, in priesthood and, of course, in the diaconate. Each shines with the light of God's grace; together they make up its full spectrum.

The third step brings us to a chapel which celebrates the Father of Mercies. Here the image is that of the prodigal son, or rather that of the forgiving father. As we well know, one of the most revealing things in this parable is that the Father is always ready to take the initiative in bringing about reconciliation.

Speaking of the role of the deacon, Pope Francis said this:

'The deacon is to be an apostle in his family, in his employment, in his community and on the new frontiers of mission today. He is to be an apostle of service, proclamation and charity, working with his fellow deacons, in close unity with the priests and in faithful communion with his bishop.'

Now an apostle is 'one who is sent'. Certainly it is true that the deacon is sent by the Church. Certainly through his ordination he shares in the sending of Christ by the Father, in that initiative of the Father to go out and reach every prodigal son and daughter. But I think we may also say that the deacon is most profoundly sent by the Father to be the companion of his Son in this work. Every vocation has its root in the will of the Father. It is he who sends us to his Son, giving us, out of love, to be his Son's faithful companions.

The fourth step in this way of mercy shows Jesus as Mercy Incarnate. Here the icon is that of his descent into hell and his reaching out to grasp the hand of Adam to draw him out of the realms of hell into the region of his redemptive light. Here we see Christ's victory over both death and sin.

This too figures in the ministry of the deacon who often has the task of accompanying those who are living through moments of desolation and loss at the death of a loved one. Often the deacon also leads the funeral service, proclaiming the mercy of God who, in his love, gives us a share in this victory over death itself. The deacon also can find himself in the position of speaking with those who are caught in the living death of sin and its consequences. Tending to all the wounds to be found in the body of humanity, the Body of Christ, is an important manifestation of the work of God's mercy. Indeed, one of the favourite themes of Pope Francis, whenever he speaks about pastoral ministry in the Church, is that of closeness: the closeness of the bishop to his priests; of the priest to his people; of the deacon to those to whom he is sent to minister. There can be no true pastoral ministry at a distance. Closeness is the quality we need.

The next step of this way brings us to reflect on the work of the Holy Spirit. Here the images are those of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, for it is the Holy Spirit, dwelling within us, who makes our hearts beat to the rhythm of his impulses, in tempo with the life of God. The Holy Spirit aligns our efforts with the will of God for his people.

Here, then, we find such a true echo of the first reading of our Mass, taken from the Letter to the Galatians (*Gal 4.4-7*). We do well today to read this text with the eyes of a deacon. Yes, the Father sends the Son to enable us to be adopted as sons. The deacon too is sent by the Father to be the companion to the Son, to share in this redemptive task. And the Holy Spirit is sent into our hearts to seal this bond, so that, with the Son, we cry out 'Abba, Father!'

The Gospel today (*John 19.25-27*) helps us to complete our way of mercy, for both the Gospel and this way direct us to Mary, given from the cross to be our Mother and always our Mother of mercy. She constantly urges us into the arms of Jesus and to the tender embrace of mercy. As Pope Francis said at the very first of his appearances at the window of his study, only when we experience the tender caress of Jesus in his mercy will we become his disciples and messengers of that same mercy.

Let Mary lead us. She who fully welcomed the Word of God shows us how it is to be done, how to serve, how to be *diaconia* in the Church today.

Amen

