

MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

THE DEACON AS SACRAMENT: AN ASSESSMENT AND
REFLECTION
ON THE SACRAMENTAL-PRESENCE OF THIS APOSTOLIC OFFICE

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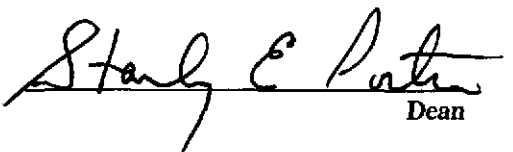
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ABSTRACT

Deacon as Sacrament considers the identity of the deacon from a biblical, historical and theological perspective as well as from the experiences of deacons themselves. The findings drawn from this descriptive study contribute to an understanding of diaconal identity and provide a framework from which diaconal programs are able to develop the means to assist deacon candidates with incorporating the meaning of sacrament.

The thesis project was prompted by two distinct opinions concerning the identity of the deacon. Should the deacon be considered a symbol, a concrete expression of the *diakonia* of Christ or as a service provider? According to the literature review both opinions were given equal support. Nevertheless, the descriptive portion of the study suggested that the identity of a deacon should not be restricted simply to a person authorized to perform certain functions. While the study discovered that certain duties and functions had been delegated to the sacred office of deacon, it also found that the Church restored the permanent diaconate as a means of acquiring a visible and concrete sign of the Church's *diakonia* in the world. While these two descriptions of diaconal identity are supported within various Church documents, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the sacramental role is critical to understanding diaconal identity. As a result, it is the author's thesis that the emphasis on function obscures a deacon's sacramental role.

While the study demonstrated there was ample support for this conclusion, it also addressed the manner in which one merges the specific functions assigned to the sacred office with the responsibility of being a light for the world. Here the incarnational, sacramental and ministerial theologies advanced by Karl Barth, Eduard Schillebeeckx and Hans urs Von

Balthasar were helpful. The work of these scholars provided not only a basis from which to consider how one might encounter Christ in another, but also illustrated how one could become a living testimony of Christ.

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

THE DEACON AS SACRAMENT:

AN ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION

ON THE SACRAMENTAL-PRESENCE OF THIS APOSTOLIC OFFICE

Introduction

When Pope Paul VI in 1967 reinstated the right of Episcopal conferences to restore the permanent diaconate within their respective boundaries, he rejuvenated an ancient and sacred office that had occupied a special and distinctive place in the Christian community; an office that had become almost redundant after it lost its permanent character and was considered only a transitional stage to the priesthood. Following Paul VI's momentous decision, there have been numerous publications dealing with this restored apostolic institution. This literature has contributed to the understanding of this sacred office and has laid a foundation for the development of a contemporary theology surrounding the diaconate. However, it is unfortunate that much of this rich theology has been blurred by the failure of priests, laity and deacons themselves, to understand fully the nature and character of the permanent diaconate.

The search for discerning a true diaconal ministry and the distinct order goes on. . . The idea of servant Church is hard for ordinary people to identify in the sign language and baggage that we have evoked since the fourth century . . . the only contemporary

experience of deacons was of young men who were aspirants to the priesthood, so it was not surprising that people tended to see the diaconate as a halfway house to being a priest.¹

It is my hope that by fleshing out the identity of the deacon through Church decrees, theological speculations, a review of their experiences and a survey that solicits deacons' own perception of their unique character, we will be able to construct a clear understanding of the nature of this sacred office as understood after 1967.

As a result of this need it is my intention to explore the identity of the permanent diaconate from a spiritual perspective.² I have chosen this approach since spirituality from an historic Christian viewpoint has always been a matter of becoming configured to Christ. This term configuration³ is crucial since it imparts the sacramental connection important to understanding spirituality. In the sacraments of initiation and vocation⁴ one is bestowed with an 'indelible character.' While the sacraments of initiation, baptism and confirmation, call one

¹Austin W Hunt, "Solving an Identity Crisis," *Deacon Digest* 18 (March/April 2001): 7.

²Spirituality for this paper refers to something more than an encounter with the Divine. It is also a pattern of life which is expressed through the distinctive manner in which a person is configured to Christ. A configuration that flows from the special and indelible 'character' or seal, received in the sacraments, such as baptism, confirmation and holy orders which permanently relate the person to the communion and mission of the Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Liguori, MO: Liguori Publication, 1994) no. 1121. Herein after known as "Catechism."

³ Configuration refers to how a person who has been aligned to Christ in a particular way will acquire specific Christ-like attributes. See page 18 where this term is defined in a more precise manner.

⁴Although the Church teaches that marriage does not bestow an indelible character because it can be repeated, at least once by one party, it does share with holy orders a certain sacramentality as a state of life, not just a liturgical ceremony. The couple through this sacrament receives their 'charism' and first grace. They are empowered to live so as to make Christ the Groom and his Church the Bride visible. As Paul VI pronounced in *Humane Vitae*, in marriage the couple enters into a 'specification' of their baptismal vocation. Paul VI, *Humane Vitae* (On the Regulation of Births) issued 29 July, 1968, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1978), 19-21.

to live in such a way as to make Christ himself visible, in the sacraments of vocation, marriage and holy orders, the recipients receive an additional 'specification' of their baptismal-confirmation vocation. In other words, by investigating the identity of the deacon from the spiritual standpoint one is prompted to ask, how is the deacon configured to Christ? What charism does he receive in holy orders? Does the 'specification' of the baptismal vocation shift the emphasis to the functional over the sign value? How must the ministries of the deacon be shaped and positioned so as to exert a truly sacramental influence on the Church? How does the deacon's ministry of charity, liturgy and the Word structure his relationship to the community as sign in which all find their Christian identity brought to a clearer focus? In doing this it is necessary not only to explore the biblical, historical and proposed theological foundations but also those diverse opinions that have shaped the identity of the deacon, both perceived and official.

Considering the Diaconate from a Spiritual Perspective

In the Gospel of Mark (10:35-40) the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus and asked to be given the highest place of honour in the kingdom, that is at the side of Jesus. Jesus in his response to them expresses his concern whether they can drink from the cup which he must drink and then addressing all of the twelve declares: " anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant . . ." (Mk 10:43) This encounter with Jesus is an important starting place to reflect on the spirituality of the deacon since when one chooses to follow Jesus in ministry, one is not just seeking a title and possibly the honours associated with the position but rather,

one is attempting to be configured to Christ in a unique way. “We in him, he in us, so that it may truly be said, I live now no longer, not I, but Christ lives in me.”⁵

Christ calls each of us to follow him, each in our own unique way. However, in our discernment of that call we sometimes superimpose our own perceptions and opinions on the identity of that vocation and the nature of its spirituality. In order to comprehend the true character of the vocation and the identity we are called to live out, we need to begin with an understanding of Christian spirituality, which was defined earlier as being configured to Christ in a unique way. That is, those who are called to remain in the lay state, single or married, will live out their spiritual identity different from those who are ordained. In turn, priests will live out their spirituality differently from deacons. Tibor Horvath in his commentary on the permanent diaconate touched on this difference when he proposed that the priest is the vertical beam of the cross, drawing and pointing others to Christ, while the deacon, is the horizontal beam, reaching out to the people, making the invisible Jesus visible within their midst.⁶

It is this unique spirituality of the deacon, who is configured to Christ in a distinctive way, that shapes the identity of the permanent deacon. With this aspect in mind, I propose to investigate how scripture, tradition and historical experience have understood this distinctive vocation. While this descriptive analysis is essential to clarifying diaconal identity, what will make this study unique will be the exploration of how contemporary

⁵ Richard J. Huneger, “Diaconal Spirituality,” *Deacon Digest* 18 (May/June 2001): 21. See also Galatians 2:20. Here Paul is suggesting his union with Christ does not destroy his personality, but rather sustains and molds his Christian life. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (NRSV) (New York: Oxford Press, 1991), 266.

⁶Tibor Horvath, S.J. “Theology of a New Diaconate” *Revue de l’Universit e d’Ottawa* 38, no 3 (1968) : 515.

deacons' perceive their own spirituality, which not only shapes their identity and how they live out their vocation, but also their relationships with priests and laity.

This investigation into the spirituality of the deacon is important since it is here that the key to the future is held. It is my opinion that unless the Church clarifies the identity of the deacon through formation and catechesis this sacred office may once again disappear and the Church will be left without an important servant figure. A model that the Church holds as the key to unlock the door that bars the Church from relevance to the world.⁷

Literature Review

In my literature review I discovered that there has been little concrete research done in this area. What has largely been published are position papers that emerged from a combination of speculation based on Church decrees, the works of various scholars,⁸ studies conducted by committees appointed by both the Canadian and United States Conferences of Bishops and the personal experiences of deacons themselves. Nevertheless, the literature review has been helpful in locating the primary concerns within the Church

In addition, my literature review revealed that many of the articles concerning the permanent deacon was predominately concerned with nature, function, formation and identity. This examination revealed that the various authors who explored the identity of the permanent

⁷ Edward P. Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church, Past and Future* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1971), 128.

⁸Especially those scholars, such as Karl Rahner who were asked to prepare the background papers for the bishops of the Second Vatican Council.

deacon were primarily supportive of the sacramental character associated with this sacred office. However, within the literature there were references to the perception held by many priests, laity and a few theologians that the identity of the deacon is shaped by the functions ascribed to the office. Although within these two divisions, sacramental and functionary, there is general agreement on the nature of the service deacons provide, and even some consensus that deacons are strengthened by a sacramental grace, the chief difference appears to be found in the understanding of the deacon either as a social worker or an icon of Christ. This discrepancy in perception has a significant impact on how a deacon lives out his spirituality and his identity. It is an inconsistency that prompts the following questions: is it the spirit with which one performs the functions associated with ministry that makes a difference?⁹ is it that the minister is configured to Christ in such a manner that the person through “the power at work within him is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Eph 3:20).

Those who advocate that the spirituality of the deacon depends on the sacramental notion of the deacon’s identity describe the deacon as a sacramental sign, representing the mystery of Jesus Christ¹⁰ and herald of the Gospel, sacramentally commissioned to believe, teach and practice all that has been taken to himself in imitation of the Servant of Christ.¹¹ According to these sacramental and symbolic advocates the deacon is a sign of the servant character of life

⁹ Huneger, “Diaconal Spirituality” prefaces his remarks by explaining that contemporary society tends to define spirituality as the “spirit with which one does something.” It is an individualistic stance not community based. It is based on self made religious emotionalism removed from any communitarian reality, such as “Church” or “cross.”

¹⁰ John Paul II, “Papal Address of Permanent Diaconate, October 5, 1993,” *Deacon Digest* 11, (January/February 1994): 22.

¹¹ Frank J. Silva “Situating the Diaconate in Today’s Church,” *Deacon Digest* 10 (July/August 1993):18.

in the Kingdom.¹² He is the minister of the mysteries of Jesus Christ,¹³ who represents the face of Christ to the world¹⁴ and through sacred ordination is constituted as living icon of Christ.¹⁵

The historical literature and official Church teaching reveals that the diaconate flourished when the deacons were perceived as a sacramental sign of the presence of Jesus but as they became increasingly bound to the altar and were more active in a liturgical ministry than of direct service to those in need, the diaconate began to decline and eventually lost its reason for existence in the Church in the West¹⁶ and soon became just a necessary stepping stone for those preparing for ordination to the priesthood. As a result of the Church losing the sacred office that provided the sacramental sign of servant it became increasingly monarchical.¹⁷

Lumen Gentium teaches that deacons are not only participants in the sacramentality of the Church but an integral part of it, which the Council defined as the social and historical sign

¹² Robert Hannaford "The Deacon's Ministry, Servant of Christ" in *The Deacon's Ministry* ed. Christine Hall (London: Gracewing, 1991), 39-46.

¹³ *Apostolic Letter Containing Norms for the Order of Diaconate (Ad Pascendum)* Vatican II, August 15, 1972 in *Vatican Council 2 - The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. ed., Austin Flannery. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1981): 433-440. Herein after known simply as "*Ad Pascendum*."

¹⁴ William W. Emilsen, "The Face of Christ. The Ministry of Deacons," *Expository Times*, 110, (1998/99): 217.

¹⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference Publications, 1998) 28. Herein after known as "*Basic Norms*."

¹⁶ "*Catechism*" no. 1571, 1994. See also "*Ad Pascendum*" 435. In addition, Tibor Horvath, S.J. "Theology of a New Diaconate," *Revue de l'Universit e d'Ottawa* 38, no 2 (1968): 248-276 states that the reason for the disappearance of the permanent diaconate was the creation of a new form of diaconate from the third century on, that is the presbyterate in its new form making the old form of diaconate unnecessary.

¹⁷ Samuel Taub, "Catechetical Development of the Servant Theme," *Deacon Digest* 14 (January/February): 21-23.

and instrument of God's redemptive Word and Grace.¹⁸ It is this image of the Church to which the Permanent Deacon is called to serve and a vision where the permanent deacon must find his identity and role.¹⁹ It is in the union of faith with life that deacons become, as it were, sacraments.²⁰

The deacon -not the disembodied generalization of the diaconate, but the actual person - becomes the ritual medium whereby Christ is active and effective in a specific way in the lives of believers and in the life of the broader human community.²¹

When the Second Vatican Council attempted to delineate the sacred office of the deacon, they did so by examining the manner in which this ordained minister was configured to Christ. They concluded that as the Bishop represents Christ the Shepherd,²² the presbyter, Christ the Eternal High Priest,²³ it is the deacon that represents Christ the Servant.²⁴ Several years later, when Cardinal Mahony, was offering his reflections on this subject to the National Catholic Diaconate Conference he said, that although the whole Church is called to the service of charity,

¹⁸ *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, (Lumen Gentium)* Vatican II, 21 November 1964 in *Vatican Council II. "The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents"* Austin Flannery, O.P. ed. (Northport, NY:Costello Publishing Co., 1981), 350. Herein after known as "*Lumen Gentium*."

¹⁹ Deacon Jim and Bonnie Swiler, "Diaconal Life and Ministry," *Deacon Digest* 17 (May/June 2000): 22-25.

²⁰ Huneger, "Diaconal Spirituality" 21.

²¹ Timothy J. Shugrue, *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986), 14.

²² *Lumen Gentium*, 385.

²³ *Ibid.*, 384.

²⁴ *Ad Pascendum*, 433-4.

it is in the deacon that the whole Church's service in charity is sacramentalized. It is in the deacon's ministry, the servanthood of Christ's Church is rendered, visible, tangible, audible - especially for the poor, weak, the wounded, the last, the littlest, and the least.²⁵

Tibor Horvath in his article, *Theology of a New Diaconate*,²⁶ expands this sacramental notion by connecting the sacred office of the deacon to the unique eternal priesthood of the risen Christ who as the horizontal arm of the Eternal High Priesthood reconciles and renovates humanity within the external or material dimension. However, Horvath clarifies that the deacon's participation in the priesthood of Christ differs from that of the presbyter, since the priestly office is the vertical arm of the Eternal High Priesthood whose purpose is to reconcile and renovate humanity with the internal or spiritual dimension. These two aspects of the Christ's Priesthood are united in the episcopate, to which Christ conferred the completeness of his mission.²⁷

In the bimonthly publication, *Deacon Digest*, the identity of the deacon has found a permanent forum in which his sacramental character and functional role, along with his relationship with both the hierarchy and laity is explored. In one article, Bill Krumm while investigating the servant role of the deacon discusses the friction that exists between this sacred office, the priests and laity. He explains that while some deacons complain that their parish

²⁵ Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, "Address to National Catholic Diaconate Council - June, 2000, Maraga, California," *Deacon Digest* 17 (September/October 2000): 23-27.

²⁶ Horvath, "Theology of a New Diaconate," 248-276.

²⁷ Tibor Horvath, S.J. "Theology of a New Diaconate," *Revue de l'Universit e d'Ottawa*, 38 no.2 (1968):515. Horvath in many respects was building on the theology advanced by Edward P. Echlin, "The Deacon in the Church, Past and Future." Here Echlin argued that the deacon by sharing in the priesthood grounds the Eternal High Priesthood of Christ in the midst of the human family. 128-29.

priest only gives them those ministries the pastor does not want to do, the priest criticizes those deacons for being unwilling to carry out the assigned tasks and at the same time lay people protest that deacons have taken over their traditional role. Krumm solves the dilemma by concluding that deacons do not own service ministries, but rather are present to manifest the servant image of Christ. According to Krumm permanent deacons are ordained to serve as a sacramental symbol, not to own the service ministries in any possessive way.²⁸

The literature reviewed for this paper indicated that what Krumm dealt within his article is representative of the majority of the laity and a considerable number of priests. In the *National Study on the Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States, 1994-95*,²⁹ it is reported that the ministry of the permanent deacon is seen to be effective and important for the Church but many do not believe that ordination is important for the exercise of the actual ministries. The data also suggests the need for more catechesis on the diaconate, especially for the laity who are most accepting of the deacon but least sure of the role of the deacon apart from his sacramental ministry, where he is viewed as the priest's assistant and not as a ministry configured to Christ in a unique way.³⁰

The identity of the deacon based on what he does, not who he is for the life of the Church, was explored by Samuel Taub in reaction to the National Study done by the Bishop's

²⁸Bill Krumm, "Oh No, Allow Me!" *Deacon Digest* 9 (September/October 1992): 21-22.

²⁹ United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "*National Study of the Permanent Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States, 1994-95*," (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1996), 12-16. Herein after known as National Study of the Diaconate.

³⁰Ibid. In part this impression may have been held by the deacons themselves since the survey conducted on behalf of the Bishop's Committee for the Permanent Diaconate showed that a majority of deacons reported that their liturgical ministry and the area defined as Ministry of Word absorbed more of their time, and may even command more of their interest, than had first been expected.

Committee on the diaconate. Relying on canon law and the wisdom of Archbishop Crescenzo Sepe, Secretary for the Congregation for the Clergy,³¹ Taub demonstrates that from a juridic view point the office of deacon not only is recognized by canon law as being sacramental but has the right to be identified in this manner.³²

The National Association of Deacon Organizations (NADO) on acknowledging the misunderstanding of the identity of the deacon prevalent within the United States Church has encouraged the need for catechesis. According to the President of NADO, this is not only an important task to carry out but also an experience that will realize benefits for the parish and for the ministry of the deacon.³³ In order to promote this catechesis the President of NADO encourages the distribution of their national news letter which highlights various ministries of deacons across the United States, as an excellent instructional resource for parishes.³⁴

This understanding of the diaconate based on its function and not spirituality may have been stimulated by the principal documents dealing with the restoration of the diaconate. Although these documents clearly do not dismiss the importance of sacramental graces received through ordination, nor do they discard the servant image of Christ, the *motu proprio* of Paul

³¹ Archbishop Crescenzo Sepe, "Address to the National Catholic Diaconate Conference, New Orleans, July 21, 1994," *Deacon Digest* 11 (September/October 1994): 10-15. Archbishop Sepe states that the theology of the diaconate, its spirituality, its juridic dimension, its ministerial activity are completely developed in the context of Holy Orders.

³² Samuel Taub, "The Juridical Expression of Diaconal Ministry," *Deacon Digest* 14 (March/April 1997): 16-17.

³³ Bill Brown, "Catechesis On the Diaconate," *Deacon Digest* 17 (November/December 2000): 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

VI and the earlier decree on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* contain elements that appear to support the functional nature of the office. This bias is implied by the Council and later by Paul VI when they suggested, first of all, the need to reinstate the diaconate is a response to human needs which are not being met effectively.³⁵ Secondly, when the Council phrased the character of the office to be restored, they did so in such a way as not to offend those who taught the diaconate was not sacramental.³⁶ Finally, after briefly recognizing the sacramental nature of the diaconate, the Council immediately shifted the emphasis to the manner in which the ministry would be exercised by setting out a list, albeit not exclusive, but nevertheless specific of tasks necessary for the life of the Church;³⁷ responsibilities that the Church believed would be encompassed within a threefold ministry that was ordained for service (*diakonia*) the liturgy, of the Gospel, and works of charity.³⁸

Another aspect that has led some individuals placing the emphasis on the functional nature over the sacramental quality is the notion of "cursus honorum" which requires a person to hold various offices of differing and increasing responsibility as a demonstration of qualifications. As the person moves up in the hierarchy responsibilities and duties are increased. In this model ministry is seen in terms of power and honor rather than service.³⁹

³⁵ *Ad Pascendum*, 436.

³⁶ See Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church, Past and Future*. 115.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, 387.

³⁹ James Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. (Seabury N.Y. The Seabury Press, 1979), 1244-46. Barnett argues for the elimination of passing through ministries. He believes that success in one ministry does not mean success in another. While people need to be tested in ministry, they do not, he believes, have to be formerly instituted in various ministries. In addition he thinks that these other

In conclusion, the literature reviewed for this paper revealed that there are two basic opinions concerning how the identity of the deacon is perceived. The first viewpoint believes that the identity of the deacon is sacramental, expressing the image or character of the Church as servant; while the other considers the deacon's identity as being linked with his function. Both find support within the documents originating with the Second Vatican Council and they both recognize the permanent diaconate as a legitimate and necessary element in the hierarchical nature of the Church,⁴⁰ a sacred office which provides the necessary witness to the Servanthood of Christ. However, they differ in the application and interpretation of servanthood and mission.

The viewpoint which stresses the function of the permanent deacon as emerging from the three fold ministries enunciated in *Lumen Gentium*, claims that the deacon is more of an animator of service within the Church than a mere extension of its presence as a service agent.⁴¹ The promoters of the symbolic or sacramental perspective emphasize the Servanthood of Christ, whose identity - like that of the priest or bishop - is linked with the nature and mission of the Church, rooting its identity within the universal sacrament of salvation.⁴² This side of the argument insists that the Church left the function of deacon undetermined,⁴³ while emphasizing

ministries cannot stand on their own as proper ministries.

⁴⁰*Ad Pascendum*, 434.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 435.

⁴²*Lumen Gentium*, 1ff

⁴³*Lumen Gentium*, 387.

the Servanthood of Christ, a role that brings the Church's diaconal nature to concrete, sacramental expression.⁴⁴

These two distinctive perceptions drawn from an examination of various primary and secondary sources were informative but they generally failed to provide any concrete data concerning the portrait of the permanent deacon, a profile which the Second Vatican Council said they would leave for future deacons to construct.⁴⁵ However, in the study Timothy J. Shugrue undertook in 1986 he links the functional side of the deacon's ministry with the sacramental.⁴⁶ Here he claims that it is the exercise of the deacon's threefold functions, liturgy, word and charity that permit the deacon to be the minister of the mysteries of Jesus Christ.⁴⁷ According to Shugrue the deacon-as-sacrament is extended beyond the duties ascribed by the Second Vatican Council to embrace any of his encounters with persons, including living out his family life and secular occupation.

The deacon thus can be seen truly as a minister through whose incarnation of Christian sensitivity and response others can enter into a moment of sacramental encounter with the Lord Jesus.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ *Ad Pascendum*, 433.

⁴⁵ Andreas Weiss, "The Permanent Deacon. Theological Canonical and Sociological Reflections Based on Survey," *Canon Law Science Research*, 10 Wuerzburg: (1991): 76.

⁴⁶ The Church is understood as a community of believers united with Jesus. This union is facilitated by the witness of the ordained ministers, a servanthood expressed in manifold ways. In the case of the deacon, the ministries of charity, liturgy and the Word structure his relationship to the community as a sign in which all find their Christian identity brought to a clearer focus.

⁴⁷ The reference here to "mysteries of Jesus Christ" is emphasizing the description of deacon as depicted in *Ad Pascendum*, 433.

⁴⁸ Shugrue, *Service Ministry of the Deacon* 10.

Although the literature considers the sacramental nature of the office as preeminent and at times even links the duties of the office with the sacrament, it fails to address the questions posed by Shugrue: How, in fact, do the deacon's ministries of charity, liturgy, word 'serve' the Church? How must the ministries of the deacon be shaped and positioned so as to exert a truly sacramental influence on the Church? How do the deacon's ministries of charity, liturgy and word structure his relationship to the community as sign in which all find their Christian identity brought to a clearer focus? How do the deacon's activities outside of his traditional ministerial context carry with them a 'sacramental-presence'? Is the deacon perceived as significant by the unchurched whom he meets, or by non-Catholics or non-believers? The failure to investigate these questions has left a vacuum in the understanding of the permanent deacon, a deficiency that deprives the Church community of truly comprehending the spirituality of the diaconate.

Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objective for this study is to determine how the deacon perceives himself, not just within his traditional ministerial setting but also outside of it. I have chosen this as the purpose for the study since the literature has unquestionably indicated that deacons through ordination are imbued with a 'sacramental-presence'⁴⁹ which extends beyond the *ecclesia* community to the whole world. In other words, through ordination the deacon becomes a 'ritual

⁴⁹For definition of 'sacramental-presence' see page 19.

sign' not just for believers but for both non Catholics and non believers.⁵⁰ Since this notion of being sacrament implies that there is an expectation that the deacon's life and ministry are fully integrated,⁵¹ and not something that the deacon activates only when acting on behalf of the Church, then it is reasonable to postulate that the deacon's spirituality is something quite different from priests, religious and lay ministry professionals. If the deacon's ministry is one that, according to the teaching of the Church, is meant to reveal the interconnectedness of the sacred and secular then it is important to undertake a study that assesses the deacon's perception of how he sees himself and whether he envisions himself as the face of Christ to the world and what that might mean.

The Thesis Question

The preliminary planning of the design and methodology for this study commenced with the recognition that the deacon's identity as a 'sacramental-presence' is the variable that this proposed analysis intends to measure. As disclosed earlier in the literature review, there are two distinct view points that deacons and others have used as the defining aspect of the permanent deacon's identity and spirituality. These two opinions, based on function and sacrament, suggest that there are at least two possible hypotheses that could be phrased in regards to the identity of

⁵⁰If a diaconal ordination configures one to Christ in a unique manner, it follows that a deacon is not just a 'ritual sign' for the Christian community he serves but for all people he encounters. Although non Catholics and non believers may not readily recognize the deacon in this way, his presence should still give witness to his faith rooted in love, justice and a fidelity to the ideals of *diakonia*. And, it seems fairly clear, even within these environments, his ministerial character will likely be recognized. See Shugrue, *Service Ministry of Deacon* where he submits that deacons become the 'ritual-medium' whereby Christ is active and effective in a specific way in the lives of believers and in the life of the broader community. 14.

⁵¹ Ibid., 92.

the deacon. The first hypothesis connects identity to function, while in the second, the identity is associated with the idea that through the sacrament of holy orders the deacon is configured to Christ in a unique manner. Since this proposed research paper is only interested in the latter hypothesis and the fact that literature review revealed a failure on the part of priests, laity and deacons themselves, to understand fully the nature and character of the permanent diaconate as a sacrament, I propose the following research question: How do deacons perceive their identity? What is the consonance / dissonance between their self perceptions and extant literature?⁵²

Methodology

The methodology that was chosen to examine this topic embraced four distinct ways of researching the subject matter. First of all, the identity of the deacon was considered from a biblical, historical and theological perspective. This was accomplished by an exegesis of relevant scripture passages, a consideration of the historical development and decline of this office and an investigation into the theological meaning of *diakonia*, especially in light of the notion of Jesus as Lord and Servant

After the identity of this sacred office was considered from these three pillars of our faith relevant Church documents and current literature surrounding the permanent diaconate were reviewed. This survey included an examination of written testimonies of deacons published in a variety of sources, such as, *Deacon Digest* and *NADO's Newsletters*. The third means of

⁵²This research statement is inspired by the fact that fifty-one percent of the lay leaders surveyed by the committee for the National Catholic Conference of Bishops in the United States believed that ordination was not necessary for the ministries performed by deacons in their parishes. "*National Study of the Diaconate, 1994-95*" 13.

achieving my goal was through a critique of the data gathered from two surveys conducted in the United States, both for the Bishop's Committee on the Permanent Diaconate. Although these surveys appear to be primarily concerned with facts and figures dealing with age, education and formation there were some personal insights discovered within the data collected.⁵³

Finally, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to permanent deacons serving in various dioceses throughout Canada.⁵⁴ A questionnaire was chosen to supplement my investigation since the literature review revealed a lack of specific research dealing with the perceptions deacons have of their identity and spirituality. Through this proposed survey of more than three hundred permanent deacons it was my hope that this flaw would be addressed and the data gleaned from it would be helpful for future research within this specific field.

Key Terms Employed in the Study

The following terms will be used in this study:

1. Configuration: Oxford dictionary⁵⁵ defines 'configuration' as "an arrangement of parts or elements in a particular form or figure." When this notion is applied to computing the

⁵³ The first survey, *National Study of the Permanent Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States* was conducted in 1994 and 1995. The second study conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate for the United States Bishops utilized statistical data gathered from the 1999 triennial survey of 155 dioceses on behalf of the Secretariat for the Diaconate of the United States Bishop's Conference. See United States National Catholic Conference of Bishops and Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate *The Permanent Diaconate Today* (Washington: NCCB publications, May 2000).

⁵⁴ Although cost of mailing out surveys was a factor in my decision to restrict the surveys to Canadian deacons, I believe that some of the data I was seeking for this thesis project could be attained from the two surveys conducted by the United States Conference of Bishops; a survey that did not consider Canadian deacons.

⁵⁵ R. E. Allen, ed. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 249.

dictionary suggests that these elements or parts are arranged in such a way as to accommodate a particular specification. If this understanding is applied to 'spirituality' it would suggest that a person has aligned him or herself to Christ in such a way that he or she takes on specific Christ-like attributes. In the case of diaconal ministry this would emphasize the servant aspect of Christ over kingship.

2. **Sacramental-presence:** This characteristic catholic term refers to how God is able to be perceived, disclosed and communicated through the finite; the invisible depths of the divine reality are manifested in visible ways. In the widest sense this would refer to God's self-communication through all reality: the cosmos, nature, history, events, persons, objects, rituals and words, and in particular through an encounter with Jesus Christ. While in the specific sense it would refer to God's self-manifestation through any baptized person, in particular the unique manner through those ordained to represent the ecclesial community. In this thesis project, as applied to the sacrament of ordination to the diaconate, sacramental-presence refers to the self-communication of God through the sacred office of the permanent deacon, in such a way that people encounter Jesus Christ. Since diaconal ordination configures the deacon to Christ as servant this would mean that people would meet the servant Christ.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire that I designed for this project, attached as Appendix A, was inspired by the unanswered questions posed by Timothy Shugrue in his consideration of how deacons

should be placed within the diocesan Church,⁵⁶ and by the United States Bishops' 1994-95 survey. These questions were chosen to form the basis of my study since they were capable of assessing the deacon's perception of how he sees himself, both within and outside his traditional ministerial setting.

The resulting questionnaire contained statements that were clearly and simply stated, utilizing jargon familiar to permanent deacons, while avoiding the use of leading questions. Each statement confined itself to one concept and could have been equally applied to all respondents.⁵⁷ In addition to seeking the attitude or opinion held by the respondents, the questionnaire also sought personal information from the candidate, such as, years of service and the time commitment to ministry. This information was essential since time commitment and length of service could influence the degree the respondent assigned to the question.

The questionnaire was offered to three hundred of the eight-hundred and fifty-eight deacons serving throughout Canada. While the names were randomly selected, the selection of candidates was made on the basis of location and service. In this way all fifty-three dioceses were given the opportunity to be represented as well as deacons whose service reflects the evolution of the diaconate in Canada over the past thirty years. Although this study surveyed only Canadian deacons, the mix of rural and urban, long term and newly established diaconal programs, provided a sufficient cross section of experiences that would be representative of deacons serving

⁵⁶Shugrue, *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, 89-109. See page 15 for a list of these questions.

⁵⁷Donald P. Warwick and Charles A. Linger, *The Sample Survey: Theory and Practice* (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1975) 140-150.

throughout North America and accordingly a vehicle that would be able to provide valuable information on how deacons perceive themselves.

Prior to the delivery and administration of the survey, the questionnaire was given to seven deacons serving within the Archdiocese of Kingston as a trial. The participants were selected from those who were in attendance at a previously scheduled meeting for all diocesan deacons. Since there were only twelve deacons serving within the diocese at that time, it was not truly random, but nevertheless it did avoid some of the bias associated with preselected candidates. All seven completed the pilot testing without difficulty, with completion times varying between twenty and thirty minutes. Each reported the instructions were clear and the questions were comprehensible and non threatening.⁵⁸

After the survey form was validated through this pilot administration and approved by the Ethics Committee at McMaster University, it was forwarded to the three hundred deacons selected through a direct mail campaign starting in October 2003. The first results came through within weeks of the questionnaire being distributed with the last of the returned survey forms being received in January 2004.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Jean M. Converse & Stanley Presser, *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire* (Beverly Hills, Ca:Sage Publications, 1986), 70-75. The authors of this text suggest that in the pretesting, one of the areas to be considered is whether any of the questions made them feel uncomfortable.

⁵⁹See Chapter Five for specific details of the survey administration and results.

Analysis of Data - Limitations and Value

The information which was collected was considered in light of the data generated by the biblical, historical and theological research, as well as the testimonies and reflections published in the various journals and news letters. This comparison, along with information gleaned from previous surveys was used as a means of corroborating the validity of data gathered from the questionnaire. However, it is important to note that this questionnaire was not meant to be a quantitative study but rather qualitative. It was simply intended to enhance the current knowledge of deacon identity as opposed to testing an hypothesis. In other words, the intention of the survey conducted was to develop a purposeful, systematic, intelligent, and accurate description of the deacon's identity.

Although the questionnaire was careful to include certain variables, such as years of service, which could influence the perception of the deacon, the articles generally did not provide that back ground, and thus could account for some contradictions between the testimonies and those surveyed. Nevertheless, the information gathered from this widely distributed questionnaire and various testimonies is relevant to directors of formation programs and researchers and no doubt will stimulate further qualitative and perhaps quantitative research.

In addition, I was mindful of the danger that as a member of the group being studied my personal preferences might skew the results. However, research manuals also reassured

me that when the researcher engages his or her own experiences, he or she is adding another comparative to be considered in the final analysis.⁶⁰

Application of Results

This study was designed to fill the void caused by a lack of concrete research dealing with the identity and spirituality of the permanent deacon. It is my hope that the results of this study, which focussed on two key components, sacramentality and function, will enhance the emerging contemporary theology concerning the nature of this sacred office. A theology that will not only inform those involved in the training and formation of permanent deacons and deacons themselves, but will also highlight which I believe is the animating principle, sacramentality, that shapes diaconal identity. Although this principle which is rooted in the notion of ‘sacramental-presence’ is an abstract concept it is one that nevertheless must become an integral part of the formation of permanent deacons. In this way, it is my hope that this research will contribute to building a theology of diaconal ministry and clarifying the unique identity of this sacred office as it evolved after 1967.

⁶⁰William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 2000), 30.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF *DLAKONIA*

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the notion of '*diakonia*' and the concept of 'servant' from a scriptural perspective. This biblical notion of 'servant' is an important foundation for this dissertation since the restored office of permanent deacon in the Roman Catholic tradition drew its inspiration and theological basis from the early church, in particular the testimony provided by the New Testament. Although this subject matter could be a major research project in itself, I believe that limiting our treatment of this topic to a basic description of deacon as it emerges from scripture along with the related discussion of how the notion of '*diakonia*' or servant impacted on the identity of this ancient sacred office will provide the necessary foundation for the other descriptive chapters in this thesis.

Before considering how the New Testament word '*diakonia*' or '*diakonos*' shapes our understanding of the permanent diaconate, it would be useful to explore how our understanding can be deepened by reflection on the meaning of 'servant' in the Old Testament, in particular the Servant Songs of Isaiah [42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12]. Though each is unquestionably relevant to the theme, and though Isaiah 61:1-2 is most commonly cited in connection with the diaconal office, we will limit discussion so far as possible to the first of the songs (Is 42:1-7).

Here, a series of ideas are woven together that can serve as a rich resource for the theology and practice of the diaconate. Of particular importance in this connection is the association between the Servant's role in second Isaiah and the divinely-given task of establishing justice.

The Notion of Servant / Slave (*'ebed*) in Isaiah 42:1-7

In this portion of the chapter the consideration of *servant* as it is depicted in Isaiah 42:1-7 will be based on an exegetical analysis of this passage relying on the New Revised Standard Version translation.⁶¹ After quoting this scripture passage, a brief consideration of the literary unity, translation, and structure will be presented before moving into a fuller discussion of the poem, with a particular emphasis placed on the notion of servant, as developed in this song and its application to our contemporary Roman Church.

42{1} Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. {2} He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; {3} a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. {4} He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. {5} Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: {6} I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, {7} to open eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sat in darkness.

⁶¹For the purposes of this paper I primarily used the New Revised Standard Version. Although I did consult two other translations, the Jerusalem Bible and the *Tanakh* (See *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures, The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Text*, (Philadelphia, PA.:The Jewish Publication Society, 1985), I did not find a great deal of difference.

B. Duhm⁶², who originally identified this passage as one of the Servant Songs, indicated that verses 42:1-4 were a complete unit. John L. McKenzie⁶³ and other scholars have suggested that vv. 5-7 should be included. After considering their positions, in addition to those scholars⁶⁴ who believe 41:1 to 42:9 form one literary unit, I concluded that 42:1-7 is a distinct and separate piece. My decision is simply based on the fact that this unit of text disrupts the series of trial speeches, concerned with idolatry, that was introduced in Chapter 41:1 and resumes with 42:8. Although there is a reference to ‘servant’ in 41:8-20 the emphasis appears to be on consoling his servant Israel, as opposed to commissioning the servant to be his “agent, endowed with his spirit, who in a quiet way will bring justice to the nations.”⁶⁵

Textual and Literary

There are two speakers in this passage. The first is Yahweh and the second is the narrator. This poem consists of two parallel sections. The first, verses 1-4 designates and identifies the mission of the servant of Yahweh, while verses 5-7 summarizes, develops and elaborates the actions of Yahweh. The second part clearly emphasizes the power of God’s word in recreating the universe,

⁶² The Servant poems were first isolated by B. Duhm in 1892. *Das Buch Jesaja übersetzt und erklärt* (HKAT 3/1; Göttingen, 1902; 5th ed. 1968).

⁶³ John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1965), 791. However, McKenzie in his commentary on Second Isaiah in Anchor Bible series suggests that verses 8 and 9 should be included.

⁶⁴ Cf. Richard J. Clifford, “Isaiah 40-66” in *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, ed. James L. Mays, (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 573-576.

⁶⁵ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1975), 459. Anderson in his text suggests that this passage is part of 41:1 to 42:4. He does this in order to support his thesis as to the identity of the servant. However he fails to clearly establish his reasons for including the servant poem with the Trial of the Nations.

and that what happened at the beginning continues into the present - Israel emerges from darkness to light.⁶⁶

Verse 1: Yahweh commissions his servant

Yahweh, designates and consecrates the servant as one who is special, the "*chosen one*" of God, and confers upon the servant his '*spirit*'. The phrase "*I have put my spirit upon him*" suggests the creative power of Yahweh.

Verses: 2-3 Qualities of the Servant

Yahweh continues to speak, and states that the servant will accomplish his mission of restoring justice, with gentleness and confidence. Characteristics which partly reflect the gifts of the spirit described in 11:2, and are qualities which are associated with the Messianic age.

Verse 4: Justice will be restored

Yahweh proclaims that his servant will not fail nor be discouraged, and will persist until '*true justice is established on earth,*' and those in exile are restored. The reference to justice evokes memories of David, who became King and "*reigned over all Israel; and . . . administered justice and equity to all his people.*" (2Sam 8:15)

Verse 5: Yahweh, who commissions

The poem style changes. The narrator speaks, using Genesis language to identify that Yahweh, who commissions this servant, is the creator of the heavens, earth and all life.

Verse 6: Qualities of the Servant

Yahweh, now speaks and declares that he has chosen the servant, and called him in righteousness. Again creation language is used. This verse evokes images of the creation of the first human being (Gen 2:7) and describes how this servant was formed by him and chosen to be "*a light to the nations.*"

Verse 7: Justice will be restored

Yahweh continues to speak. Here the mission of the servant is further explained. The servant is called to open the eyes of the blind and free those in prisons so they can be cured - and only then can justice be restored. This reference draws on Psalm 107:10 "*Some sat in darkness . . . prisoners . . . for they had rebelled against the words of God.*"

In the first of the four Servant songs the identity of the Servant is unspecified. There are a wide variety of opinions concerning the identity of the Servant. Most of the debate has centred around whether the servant is an individual, historic or futuristic person, while others have proposed it as the people of Israel. John L. MacKenzie captures part of this portrait when he writes,

⁶⁶ For a discussion on this see Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. "Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer S.J., and Roland Murphy, O.Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:Geoffery Chapman, 1992), 335.

The title “servant” permits him to recall all those instruments of Yahweh’s saving deeds, whether Moses, the king, or the prophet; the title may be conceived as suggesting either a collective ideal figure who combines all these leaders or an ideal figure who possesses all the gifts of charismatic leadership.⁶⁷

The choice of this title is quite interesting, since the people at the time of Second Isaiah would have understood this designation as special. The Hebrew word *‘ebed* is literally translated as slave, derived from the word *‘abad*, ‘to work.’ However, *‘ebed* denoted not only actual slaves occupied in production or in the household but also persons who were in subordinate positions, mainly in regards to the king and his higher officials, thus imparting the meaning servant as a “privileged title of an official who ranks high in responsibility and in proximity to the monarch. . . .”⁶⁸ In addition to this notion the term *‘ebed* is also used to designate a special relationship or association, either with Yahweh or with the community. For example in the Hebrew Scriptures it has been used as an honorific title for Moses (Ex 14:31; Nm 12:7), and David (2Sam 3:18, 1Kgs 11:34, 36; Ps 89:4, 20-21) and even to the community of Israel, who frequently addressed themselves as the slaves of Moses and the Prophets.⁶⁹

The author of this passage clearly was intending to give his audience hope. The generation reading this poem had never known Jerusalem or the Temple, but their faith must have been kept alive by prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah, and those who followed in Isaiah’s steps. Here, we have a notion of salvation, a restoration of a society based on the justice

⁶⁷ Ibid., 792.

⁶⁸ McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 792.

⁶⁹ For a full discussion of the term see Richard J Clifford, “Second Isaiah” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol III. 470-501. ed. Gary A. Herion and David N. Freedman, (New York: Double Day, 1992), 470-472.

and compassion of Yahweh. All the elements as understood in their tradition were imparted in this short poem.

In verse 1 they are told that the servant is 'chosen' by Yahweh and endowed with his 'spirit' [*ruḥ*]. In this passage *ruḥ* indicates more than breath or wind. It suggests a divine dynamic entity by which Yahweh accomplishes his ends: salvation, creation and at times an agent of his anger. And when '*ruḥ*' is associated with the title 'the Spirit of the Lord', as it is in this passage, the reader would have understood it as a force which has a unique effect upon the person, indicating an endowment of qualities important for any extraordinary redemptive work "... which moves men to deeds of strength, courage and wisdom."⁷⁰ Those who read this passage would recall that the spirit of the Lord was used in relation to the promise of a Messianic King in first Isaiah (11:1).

In verses 2 and 3 the servant is not described as warrior, or triumphant king, or one who pushes aside the weak in the hope of winning conventional power but rather simply as someone who bears witness with quiet, patient gentleness and who does not cry out, nor seek pity. In this part and the next verse the servant is associated with *Mišpāt*, a form of judgment or justice. Again those who were reading this for the first time would realize that *Mišpāt* may refer to Yahweh's punishment, anger, judgment, and of course they would recall the verse from first Isaiah (1:27) that through judgment Israel will be restored to its former state.

One cannot read this servant song today without observing the different translations and the variety of meanings attached to it. The NRSV and the Jerusalem Bible use justice, while

⁷⁰John L. McKenzie, "Second Isaiah" in *The Anchor Bible*, Vol. 20 (Doubleday, New York 1968), 36.

the Tanakh utilizes 'right' and the Anchor Bible 'judgment'. These various opinions led me to conclude that *Mišpāt*, as employed in the verses under investigation, refer to a concept of justice, that Paul Hanson explains as:

the concept [that] lies at the heart of Second Isaiah . . . [and] *Mišpāt* is the order of compassionate justice that God has created and upon which the wholeness of the universe depends . . . ”⁷¹

In verse 4, we are told that the servant will not rest until Yahweh's *Mišpāt* is established on earth and the “coastlands wait for his teaching.” (v.4). *Torah*, which traditionally indicates priestly instruction, is used in reference to coastlands which implies the limits of the earth,⁷² suggesting a wider meaning for 'torah', proposing a form of revelation.⁷³

In the following verses, 5-7, Second Isaiah uses a form of parallelism or symmetry⁷⁴ in order to repeat his message, and to ensure that the reader is convinced that this Servant is extraordinary since he has been chosen not by any god, but by the God who is the creator of the universe and the source of all life.

Yahweh's Servant will bring light to all those who are groping in the darkness of ignorance (60:1-3) and offers an alternative vision of society. In this song there is a promise, which clearly articulates the hope that comes from the “public embrace of pain” and

⁷¹ Paul D. Hanson, “Isaiah 40-66” in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 42.

⁷² See John L. McKenzie *Second Isaiah*, 22. McKenzie suggests that the word refers to the coastal regions of Syria and Phoenicia, for the Israelites a remote area, the limits of the earth.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁴ Clifford, *Second Isaiah*, 571 - 596.

foreshadows the “release of social imagination”⁷⁵ as encountered in third Isaiah.

This poem is not a biographical sketch, but rather a passage to reflect on the nature of response demanded by anyone who has received a call from God. Paul D. Hanson suggests that:

We suspect that they also found in the description of the Servant’s vocation an invitation to reflect on the responsibility of all those [individuals or groups] who acknowledge God’s Sovereignty and recognize the dependence of all creation on God’s order of justice.⁷⁶

This servant, as depicted in this poem, is a description of what we, who love God, are challenged to become. The servant is one who lives consistently in the service of the justice of God, and whose life is patterned on the nature of God.

In summary then we are left with a title that indicates slave, but one with a special relationship to the King. This person, an agent of Yahweh, is called to bring justice and equity to all nations. This slave will lead the new exodus, and restore the Davidic Kingdom.

It is impossible for a Christian to read this passage, or the other three, without thinking about Jesus as the one who has realized the vocation of the Servant. This passage, Isaiah 42:1-7, is found in the common Lectionary in connection with Jesus’ baptism⁷⁷ in which Jesus is identified as the Servant to the Christian community.

In addition, Jesus probably heard it read in the synagogue several times, and the servant

⁷⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology, Essays of Structure, Theme, and Text* (Minneapolis, MN.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 268. Brueggemann’s reference to social imagination refers to the proclamation of justice that springs from social criticism that comes from the contact with pain.

⁷⁶ Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 41.

⁷⁷ *The Baptism of the Lord - Year A*, Lectionary no. 21. (Ottawa, ON.: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Publications Service, 1992), 93.

theme is expressed at the beginning of his ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth,

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Isa.61:1-2)⁷⁸

This passage from third Isaiah, as noted earlier, is often the choice for deacons considering a scripture passage that will be utilized on a remembrance card to mark the occasion of their ordination. The words of Isaiah 61:1-2 certainly depict an important aspect of the deacon's ministry. However, the notion of servant depicted in Isaiah 42:1-7 provides an illustration of diaconal identity touching on the importance of being called, and those who are chosen by God are anointed with his spirit so they may become agents of God's *Mišpāt* in the world. In this way second Isaiah captures not only the role but also the *diakonia* present within the mission of the laity or community.

New Testament Understanding of Servant (*diakonos* / *doulos*)

While the servant image that emerges from our reflection on Isaiah 42 was important for our understanding of diaconal identity, it is also necessary to look at the New Testament since here we have direct testimony of how the church in the first century understood this unique ministry. In order to accomplish this goal, it will be necessary to determine what is meant by the notion of servant as it applies to Jesus and then as it applies to a minister who acts as Christ's representative. This will be done by first of all considering the New Testament references to

⁷⁸See also Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 9:35; Acts 17:24-25, 26:18,23; Lk 2:32.

diakonos and its associated word *doulos*.

The manner in which *diakonos*, (servant) or *doulos*, (slave) are employed in the New Testament, especially *diakonos*, reflects the meaning of the Hebrew word *‘ebed* which is translated as slave, but carries with it an understanding of a servant who has a special relationship with the master. As the Hebrew word *‘ebed* gives a particular understanding of servant as depicted in Isaiah 42, so does the Greek word, *diakonos* in the New Testament. In fact, this Greek word *diakonos* and its associated and interchangeable word *doulos* lie at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.⁷⁹ Before examining these two Greek words in light of the testimony available in the New Testament, it would be useful to review the interpretation of *diakonos* currently held by scholars and favoured by the Magisterium.

Diakonos - A Contemporary Interpretation

The word deacon is derived from the Greek *‘diakonos’* which primarily means one who serves at table. Both the noun and the verb are found in the New Testament (Lk 10:40; Jn 2:5, 9; Acts 6:1 ff.) It is not clear when *diakonos* as used in Christian circles passed from the generic meaning ‘servant’ or ‘minister’ to the specific meaning ‘deacon.’⁸⁰ However, the metaphorical

⁷⁹In this chapter I will use these two Greek words interchangeably. Although they carry a different meaning and are used to contrast discipleship of Jesus, I concur with the scholarship of John N. Collins who concluded that these two Greek words are just complementary expressions, used to express forms of discipleship. See Collins, *Deacons and the Church*, 36-37. His treatment of these words *diakonos* and *doulos* have been widely accepted and now appears to be the normative understanding as noted in Frederick William Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 230-232.

⁸⁰Warren C. Trenchard “Deacon” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* ed. Donald Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 325.

sense, especially as used by Paul, extends the meaning of servant beyond waiting on tables, to include the following: servant or minister (1 Cor 3:5; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7); servant or minister of the gospel (Eph 3:7; Col 1:23); servant or minister of the church (Col 1:25); servant or minister of the new covenant (2Co 3:6), servant or minister of God (2 Co 6:4) servant or minister of justice (2 Co 11:15) servant or minister of Christ (2 Co 11:23) and ambassadors of God⁸¹ who came not to be served but to serve. (Mk 10:43-45; cf Lk 22:26-27). This broad range of activities associated with *diakonos* represents the general consensus among biblical scholars today since it suggests that *diakonos* means more than just exercising a ministry restricted to care, concern and love. John N. Collins, has argued that this former popular interpretation is no longer correct since,

those elements of meaning introduced into the interpretation of this word and its cognates by Wilhelm Brandt are just not part of the field of meaning.⁸²

Instead *diakonos* refers to someone who serves as an intermediary, an agent who at the behest of a superior gets something done. In this role as an intermediary, the person is identified with specific reference to an aspect of the divine message, such as apostles and other prominent Christians charged with its transmission.⁸³ However, Danker does not only dismiss care and

⁸¹Servant, '*diakonos*' has been described as emissary, spokesperson or ambassador with Paul providing the most ample evidence of this meaning in early Christianity. See J. Albert Harrill "Servant" in *Dictionary of the Bible* ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 1189. See also McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 182.

⁸²John N. Collins, *Deacons and the Church: Making Connections between Old and New* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002) 13. See also Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed., 230-232.

⁸³ Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 230.

concern as being the sole description of *diakonos*, he also adds that even the ecclesiastical title of deacon is unreliable, since it is simply a technical term, whose meaning has varied throughout history and is therefore inadequate for rendering New Testament usage of *diakonos*.⁸⁴ This interpretation of *diakonos* was quickly embraced by the Vatican. Although Cardinal Ratzinger's concern was the priesthood, his 1990 address to the Synod of Bishops in Rome dismissed the narrower interpretation associated with the Greek word *diakonia* and *diakonos* as being erroneous and misleading.⁸⁵

Diakonos - As illustrated in the New Testament

The two designations, *diakonos* and *doulos* were not just titles adopted by the early Church but were terms that Jesus used to define his own ministry.⁸⁶ In addition, Jesus instructed his disciples that in his kingdom if one wants to be great or first that person must become the servant of the others (Mt 20:20; Mk 10:35). According to Jesus being a servant also includes a

⁸⁴Ibid., 230.

⁸⁵Ratzinger based his understanding of *diakonia* based on the work of John N. Collins *Diakonia. Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). See Collins, *Deacons and the Church*, 20.

⁸⁶Congar in his consideration of the hierarchy of the Church as understood from the texts of the Gospels states that Jesus lived his mission and defined it in terms of the Isaian Servant, especially Isaiah 42:1. In addition the note in the Jerusalem Bible in reference to this biblical text reports that the New Testament (cf. Mt 3:17 +; Lk 4:17-21; Acts 3:13 +; 8:32-33) sees Jesus as this servant [Yves Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964), 26]. However, some scholars, such as Morna Hooker, while she agrees with the scripture passages cited above, argues that Jesus does not understand himself in this way. Instead, she makes the connection of Jesus as the Suffering Servant through the apocalyptic literature such as Daniel, which draws on the corporate identity and the Son of Man representing the nation of Israel which has undergone suffering and afflictions. Nevertheless, Hooker would agree that the title "My Servant" may apply as a description not as a designation to someone who by their quality of life may like Moses and David be described as true servants of God. Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), 147-163.

willingness to deny oneself and to take up one's cross and follow him. "For those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." (Mt 16: 25-26) This willingness to lose their life is implied in the titles of *diakonos* or *doulos* since these designations suggest that the person completely belongs to Christ.⁸⁷

This notion of losing their life and being possessed by Christ implies another aspect of discipleship. It suggests that those who are in service act on behalf of their master and teacher. This is why Jesus explains that "... whoever receives [the] one whom I send receives me" (Jn 13:20) and "... if you know me, you will know my Father" (Jn 14:7) and you know that "... whoever sees me, sees him who sent me" (Jn12: 45). Essentially what Jesus is indicating is that anyone who participates in his apostolate not only takes on the form of his ministry but also embraces the cross, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in them.⁸⁸ In effect what Jesus is teaching his disciples is that by imitating him, becoming servant, they will be exalted for what has been done (Mt 16:27), not for their deeds but rather for what God has done in them. This glory or exaltation that followers of Jesus experience is the same glory that Christ shares with the Father.

This is not the glory of a reputation that exalts us in the eyes of men but a glory that Jesus has from the Father, by virtue of the fact that he reveals both the condescension and the power of the Father, because he knows no other aim in life than to obey the Father's will and accomplish the design for which the Father sent him. That is why Jesus begins to manifest his glory when he begins his ministry (Jn. 2:11). That is why he recognizes and proclaims the special time of his glorification as ... the beginning of his

⁸⁷ Congar, *Power and Poverty*, submits that in the pagan world these terms had no religious significance but a follower of Christ would understand that this imparts a relationship such that one now completely belongs to the other, 24- 25.

⁸⁸ Jurgen Moltmann *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis:Fortress Press,1993),124.

passion, which clearly cannot be separated from the resurrection which followed it . . . This is the supreme moment of his obedience to the Father. . .⁸⁹

St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians recognizes that the obedience of Jesus is not just submitting to the will of the Father but is an act of self-emptying, or *kenosis*.⁹⁰ It is this kenotic act which reversed the disobedience of the first Adam and reestablished the fellowship that formerly existed between God and humankind.⁹¹ Whereas the first Adam desired to enjoy a form of God, Jesus, the second Adam, did not cling to the divine form as humans cling to a prize but took on himself the form of a slave. Paul indicates that even in this act, Jesus did not demand it, nor did he seize it or lay covetous claim to it; he was pleased to obtain it from God by humble crucifying service.⁹²

Paul was so moved by Jesus' humbling service that he took to himself the character of

⁸⁹ Congar, *Power and Poverty*, 23.

⁹⁰Philippians 2:5-11. Although a great deal of academic activity generated by this early Christian hymn has centred around the nature of God and Jesus' divinity, it is clear from the context of this letter that the self-emptying of Christ Jesus was an act of obedient sacrifice in which the freedom from power of sin and death is put aside for the bondage of human life. While this Pauline reference taken in isolation does not clarify whether Christ was a pre-existent Heavenly Man or what was meant by "*in the form of God*", it is the foundation for the kenotic motif that is a salient feature of Christianity, a characteristic that illumines the meaning of the life of faith and obedience of the Christian believer. Donald G. Dawe, *The Form of a Servant: A Critical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 18-19.

⁹¹ Ray S. Anderson *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL.: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 114. Anderson's use of the kenotic motif takes a different course from that which preoccupied the "old theologians" as Barth referred to those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Whereas these theologians proposed that this self-emptying meant that God set aside his deity, Anderson, as Barth did before him, rejected this notion and proposed that God omniscience and omnipotence allows God to be servant without ceasing to be God. The very mark of God's freedom is to be servant. According to Anderson the kenotic act is the central ontological reality of the existence of Jesus. It does not represent a functional or moral act but an ontological reality that exists as the core of divine being itself, revealed to us in terms of the inner relation of the Son and the Father as a differentiated order of equality.

⁹²Congar, *Power and Poverty*, 28.

doulos, slave, in which God manifested himself and gave himself to us.⁹³ For Jesus' sake Paul, following his Master, made himself the servant of all: "For it is not ourselves that we are preaching but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake." (2 Cor. 4:5). But Paul did not stop there, he believed that every minister of the Gospel, every Christian, who has been freed from the slavery of sin is called to be a *doulos*, a servant of God, of Jesus Christ, and of one another (Rom 6:22).

Paul's desire to be *doulos* was not unique. James, Peter, and Jude all refer to themselves in the same manner as Paul. James and Jude claim to be servants of God, and Peter, the servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. According to Congar, these disciples of Jesus understood the difference between the hireling and the good shepherd, since "the servant who is a servant for the sake of Jesus gives, gives even himself. . . . because they lie in the realm of agape, of self-giving love."⁹⁴

In summary, what Jesus has taught us is that being '*diakonos*' is fundamental to what it means to be his disciple. Paul understood this when he defined himself as servant and slave of Jesus Christ, a title which expresses a relationship which implies that we do not come in our own name or in our own particular authority but rather in the name of the one who sends us. As Christians we have been sent by Jesus, our Lord and Master. We are called to imitate him who came to serve and not to be served. When this concept is applied to any of the sacred ecclesiastical offices, bishop, priest or deacon, our whole understanding of authority and the role of these offices are radically transformed. No longer are those who command and those who

⁹³ Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Gal 1:1; Titus 1:1.

⁹⁴ Congar, *Power and Poverty*, 35.

obey are seen from the perspective of power relationships but rather of complementary functions. Instead of exercising authority over another, a Christian understands his or her role within the Body-Temple of Christ as a gift from God given not for personal glory but rather as a means of building up of the Body of Christ on earth.

The exercise of authority in general is only one of the forms of what we each have to do through others and for others to further our common destiny. St. Paul expressly says that ordained ministers organize the ministry of the saints, that is of Christians (Eph. 4:12). They organize it, but they also invigorate and animate it and drive it forward. They are the drivers and the governors of the Body in that condition of responsibility and universal service . . . There are also permanent orders, which organize the Christian ministry in the sense of *diakonia*, that is, the whole Church is seen as service of the word or of worship.⁹⁵

In other words, this biblical perspective enunciated by Congar would suggest that permanent deacons whose ministry is named after "service," act as a sign or symbol of the common call to service. It is for this reason that the Church maintains that this sacred office which represents the servanthood of Christ '*sacramentalizes service.*'

The Sacred Office of Deacon

This biblical perspective of *servant* and *diakonos* is certainly evident in the manner in which the official documents of the Church describe the sacred office of deacon. Instead of

⁹⁵Congar, *Power and Poverty*, 86-87. Although this concept of ministry and service is well articulated by numerous theologians and various Church documents it has not always been expressed in this way. In fact, it is sad to say, that there has been more often a division between the clergy and the faithful, with the latter simply being considered clients of the former, as opposed to sharers in the ministry of Christ.

relying on a technical term whose meaning has varied in ecclesiastical history, the Second Vatican Council chose to return to the notion of *diakonia* present in the early Church. This is particularly evident when the Second Vatican Council chose to consider the sacred office of deacon by the manner in which he is configured to Christ. When they concluded that as the Bishop represents Christ the Shepherd,⁹⁶ the presbyter Christ the Eternal High Priest,⁹⁷ and the deacon Christ the Servant,⁹⁸ the Church was clearly signalling her understanding of the ministry of *diakonia*. The ministry of service is a ministry that according to Cardinal Mahony is integral to the mission of the Church. Mahony said, that although the whole Church is called to the service of charity,

it is in the deacon that the whole Church's service in charity is sacramentalized. It is in the deacon's ministry, that the servanthood of Christ's Church is rendered, visible, tangible, audible - especially for the poor, weak, the wounded, the last, the littlest, and the least.⁹⁹

This sacramentalized notion of service has prompted the understanding of the deacon as a sacramental sign of the servant character in the life of the kingdom,¹⁰⁰ he is the minister of

⁹⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 385.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 384.

⁹⁸ *Ad Pascendum*, 433-440.

⁹⁹ Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, "Address to National Catholic Diaconate Council - June, 2000, Maraga, California," *Deacon Digest* 17 (September/October 2000): 23-27. Please note Cardinal Mahony's reference to charity encompasses the broad meaning of service as implied by the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and other references. This topic will be developed in greater detail in chapter 3 which addresses the Church's understanding of the deacon's service ministry.

¹⁰⁰ Hannaford, *Deacon: Servant of Christ*, 39-46. A sacrament is an efficacious sign or symbol, expressed in words and actions, which is accessible to our human nature. In this regard, sacraments are effective, symbolic actions which not only point to God's life but actually convey it to the members of the church. In other words, a sacrament is a sign and / or symbol that make something that is invisible,

the mysteries of Jesus Christ,¹⁰¹ who represents the face of Christ to the world¹⁰² and through sacred ordination is constituted as a living icon of Christ.¹⁰³ In other words, the deacon, fulfills his role as a divine messenger charged with the transmission of the good news by representing Christ the Servant in the world.

The ordination rite for the permanent deacon further illustrates this notion of servant when the bishop prays to God the Father that the deacon, “. . . may in his life imitate your Son, who came not to be served but to serve. . . .” Here the bishop is drawing on the servant image of Christ as illustrated in John’s Gospel from which the ministry of ‘*diakonia*’ springs.¹⁰⁴ Jesus’ directive and example to wash one another’s feet (Jn 13:14-15) not only provides the foundational basis for this unique form of priesthood, the diaconate, it also shapes the identity of the deacon.¹⁰⁵ As the presbyters were commissioned at the Lord’s Supper, so are the deacons.¹⁰⁶ Whereas the presbyters were instructed to do as Jesus did with the bread and wine

intangible, into something concrete.

¹⁰¹ *Ad Pascendum*, 433-4

¹⁰² William W. Emilsen, “The Face of Christ. The Ministry of Deacons,” *Expository Times*, 110, (1998/99): 217.

¹⁰³ Congregation for Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*, Washington: (United States Catholic Conference Publications, 1998), 191. Herein after known as “Directory.”

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Jn 13:1-15

¹⁰⁵ For a full discussion of how the sacred office of the Permanent Deacon shares in the priesthood of Christ see James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, 40-45. Horvath, “Theology of a New Diaconate,” 250 - 255.

¹⁰⁶ *Catechism*, no.1562 to 1571.

the deacon is commissioned by Jesus to be servant of all.¹⁰⁷ This special ministry of servant is signified by the deacon wearing his stole over his left shoulder in the same manner that Jesus would have carried the towel in order to wipe the feet of his disciples.

Tibor Horvath, in reference to John's gospel and this understanding of servanthood of the deacon, demonstrates the connection of this sacred office with the Eternal High Priesthood of Christ. Horvath explains that the deacon represents the horizontal arm of the cross, reconciling and renovating humanity within the external or material dimension while the presbyter is the vertical arm of the Eternal High Priesthood whose purpose is to reconcile and renovate humanity with the internal or spiritual dimension.¹⁰⁸ These two aspects of Christ's Priesthood, according to Horvath, are united in the episcopate, to which Christ conferred the completeness of his mission.¹⁰⁹

Both the priest and deacon participate in the same sacrament of Holy Orders, which "has the function of building up the Church herself, forming the community."¹¹⁰ The priest accomplishes this by unifying and forming the community in the gospel through his leadership and preaching. The deacon does so by striving to create the possibility of community at the human level for a particular group of people in his environment where poverty, ignorance,

¹⁰⁷William F. Schmitz, "The Sacramental Efficacy of Diaconal Ordination," *Deacon Digest* 7 (July/August, 1989): 17. See also Jn 13:14.

¹⁰⁸ Horvath, "Theology of a New Diaconate" 248-276.

¹⁰⁹ Tibor Horvath, "Theology of a New Diaconate," 248-276. Horvath in many respects was building on the theology advanced by Edward P. Echlin, "*The Deacon in the Church, Past and Future*," 128-29. Here Echlin argued that the deacon by sharing in the priesthood grounds the Eternal High Priesthood of Christ in the midst of the human family.

¹¹⁰ Karl Rahner "*Theological Investigations*" vol. X, *The Teaching on the Diaconate by the Second Vatican Council*. trans. David Bourke. (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 222-240. Cf. 230.

disease, crime or simple age have carried them to the margins of society. In Rahner's words, his task is that of "integrating the individual both into a humanized secular society and at the same time in particular into the community of the church."¹¹¹

This view of the deacon's identity, closely relates to that of the mission of the servant in the Old Testament reviewed earlier. The servant is chosen by God, endowed with Yahweh's spirit, to bring God's justice and compassion to all nations, and "to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prisons, and those who live in darkness . . ." (v.7) The deacon, is also chosen by God, and receives the Spirit of the Lord at his ordination.¹¹² Although the deacon is empowered to fulfil the three-fold ministry of word, liturgy, and charity, the ministry of service is the core of his vocation.¹¹³ This emphasis is important since it is the deacon who is commissioned to bring the presence of the servant Christ to areas both geographically and personally outside the official structures of the Church.

The deacon's role is also to provide leadership in the church, and to draw forth from the community people with gifts to help fulfill the servant role of Christ within society, so the compassion and justice of God may be experienced by all. The deacon fulfills this role, first of all, through his example of service in the community. Secondly, the deacon leads the mission

¹¹¹ Ibid., 225.

¹¹²The Church considers any religious vocation, especially those who request to be ordained, as responding to a call from God. The Church confirms this call through the ordination rite in which the ordaining bishop invokes the Holy Spirit in the prayer of consecration See *Pontificale Romanum, - De Ordinatione Episcopi, Presbyterorum et Diaconorum*, (Editio typica, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1972) 125. Herein after known as *Pontificale Romanum, - De Ordinatione Episcopi, Presbyterorum et Diaconorum*.

¹¹³Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, "Cardinal Mahony's Address to the NDCD," *Deacon Digest* 12 (July/August, 1990):12. Service ministry extends beyond the narrow view limiting it to acts of care, concern and love..

of Christ through teaching, preaching, and by enabling the people of God to discover and use their own gifts.¹¹⁴ Although the deacon has a significant role in the sacraments, the deacon's experiences prior to and after ordination enables him to act as a bridge between the secular and the sacred. As sacred ministers living out their vocation in the world deacons are able to be human messengers of the Gospel to everyday life; as liturgical ministers they are able to communicate the values of Christ to the minds and hearts of their brothers and sisters since they have met the Lord in the world where his influence is so sorely needed.¹¹⁵

As a visible sign of the servant Christ the deacon reminds the community of their own 'diakonia'. In this capacity, as the servant in Second Isaiah, the deacon's relationship with the community cannot simply be described in either a corporate or individual terms, but rather that the deacon who represents the community, is also an individual who exhibits "... the characteristics of the community of which he is an extension"¹¹⁶

All members of the church are entrusted with a ministry of 'diakonia' or service, a universal ministry, with an individual and social dimension affecting both those entrusted with it and those to whom it is directed. This universal Christian *diakonia*, binding in the same way upon clergy and laity alike, is a Christian duty which no one individual can transfer to the rest. In this universal *diakonia* each has a responsibility toward all, and each Christian has a

¹¹⁴ Kenneth A. Angell, "Burlington Formation Program," *Deacon Digest* 12 (March/April, 1998):10.

¹¹⁵ Doots Dufour, "The Diaconate - Bridge between Church and World," *Deacon Digest* 12 (July/August, 1995): 12.

¹¹⁶ Donald E. Gowan, "*Theology of the Prophetic Books, The Death & Resurrection of Israel*" (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1998),160.

responsibility not only toward his fellow Christians but essentially toward every human being as well.

Though the whole Church is called to the service of charity, it is in the deacon that the whole Church's service in charity is sacramentalized. *Lumen Gentium* teaches that deacons are not only participants in the sacramentality of the Church but an integral part of it, which the Council defined as the social and historical sign and instrument of God's redemptive Word and Grace.¹¹⁷ It is this image of the Church to which the Permanent Deacon is called to serve and a vision where the permanent deacon must find his identity and role.¹¹⁸ It is in the union of faith with life deacons become, as it were, sacraments.¹¹⁹

The deacon -not the disembodied generalization of the diaconate, but the actual person - becomes the ritual medium whereby Christ is active and effective in a specific way in the lives of believers and in the life of the broader human community.¹²⁰

It is in the deacon's ministry that the servanthood of Christ's church is rendered visible.¹²¹ This is a role that is not only critical for the church but also for the identity of the deacon, since history has shown that where the diaconal ministry becomes too closely linked to liturgical and

¹¹⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, 350.

¹¹⁸ Swiler, *Diaconal Life and Ministry*, 22-25.

¹¹⁹ Huneger, *Diaconal Spirituality*, 21.

¹²⁰ Shugrue, *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, 14.

¹²¹ The Church envisions the sacred office of deacon as the visible sign of the *diakonia* of the whole Church. See Chapters four and six for a discussion of this issue, in particular the summary on pages 155-156.

parochial functions the distinct and irreducible ministry of '*diakonia*' is lost.¹²²

Although the liturgical function of the deacon may appear to be secondary, his presence at the Sunday Eucharist expresses and celebrates the life of service which is not only his but which is the universal *diakonia* of the church. A perfect expression of this occurs during the Sunday Eucharist when the deacon receives the gifts of the community, "which human hands have made," and prepares them, handing them on to the priest, whose words will make them the sacramental Body of Christ. Similarly in his ministry the deacon brings to light the human gifts of the community – hidden through fear, ignorance, injustice, or neglect – and offers them to the Church, who again through the words of her presbyters and the deacon's effective proclamation of the gospel forms and transforms the people whose gifts they are, incorporating them into the living Body of Christ which is his Church.

Conclusion

The Old and New Testaments provide a biblical perspective that is drawn upon in the contemporary Church's understanding of servant ministry. This deliberation has taught us that the titles of *'ebed* and *diakonos*, if applied to an ecclesiastical office, would suggest that the office holder is in the service of another, marked by a special relationship with the Master, and

¹²²The historical literature and official Church teaching reveals that the diaconate flourished when the deacons were perceived as a sacramental sign of the presence of Jesus but as they became increasingly bound to the altar and were more active in a liturgical ministry than of direct service to those in need, the diaconate began to decline and eventually lost its reason for existence in the Church in the West and soon became just a necessary stepping stone for those preparing for ordination to the priesthood. See the *Catechism*, no.1571. *Ad Pascendum*, 435 and particularly Horvath, "Theology of a New Diaconate," 248-276.

is called to be a divine messenger and agent of justice and equity to all.

This study has also revealed that the public ministry and teaching of Jesus provide a prototype for *diakonia*. However, this call to be servant is not limited to a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but rather is the basis of living out our baptismal vocation. This is clearly evident when Paul and other New Testament writers employ the term in the general sense; while the reference to *diakonos* is a central and recurring one in their writings, it is not limited to a specific office but is a description of how the New Testament community lived out the *diakonos* of Jesus.

This general biblical application and the development of a sacramental theology over two millennia have influenced the manner in which the Church reinstated the ancient sacred office of deacon. In the chapters that follow it is my intention to disclose how history has interpreted the identity of the deacon and how this, along with the biblical influences, has led the Church to its present sacramental understanding of the permanent diaconate.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERMANENT DIACONATE:

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

When Pope Paul VI in 1967 reinstated the right of Episcopal conferences to restore the permanent diaconate within their respective boundaries, he not only rejuvenated an ancient and sacred office that had occupied a special and distinctive place in the Christian community but he also resurrected many of the unresolved issues that led to its decline. This observation is important to understanding of the diaconate today since many of the factors that led to its decline continue to exert an influence on the emerging contemporary theology. It is for this reason that this chapter will review the historical development of the diaconate and review its restoration in Canada to unearth the dynamics that continue to shape its development and encourage controversy. In doing this I will limit my considerations to two dioceses, Toronto and Kingston. While each Canadian dioceses will have their own unique story these two were selected since Toronto represents one of the first dioceses to set up the permanent diaconate in Canada and Kingston illustrates the experience of those dioceses that established the sacred office later. Since this part of my dissertation is primarily considering the diaconate from a descriptive perspective I will limit my discussion to observations as opposed to any definitive conclusions.

The Historical Diaconate - A Brief Survey

Although it may appear to be anachronistic to look at the apostolic church for the clearly structured office as it developed in the later centuries, the idea is certainly supported in both scripture and the non-canonical writings of the late first century.¹²³ Certainly by the turn of the century in Syria and Asia Minor the triadic ministry of bishop, presbyters and deacons is clearly manifested in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna. Their writings reveal that the deacon's functions consist of the following three roles: Liturgical (service at the altar may have included the right to celebrate the Eucharist when delegated by the bishop.)¹²⁴ Word (proclaiming the gospel and preaching) and through Charity (or service) to those in need.

The golden age of the diaconate as a distinct order is the patristic period from 100 to 600 C.E., from Ignatius of Antioch to Gregory the Great. The bishop, as the normal pastor and priest of the local church in each city, had come to rely on the assistance of deacons in exercising his various liturgical, administrative, and pastoral functions. In this period, especially the pre-Nicene era, the permanent deacon was considered an essential and integral office of the church. However, during this same period dioceses were being divided up into parishes (in the modern

¹²³ The first definite reference to deacons, as part of the hierarchy of sacred orders occurs as early as 53 C.E. in Paul's opening address to the Philippians: "*all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi with their episcopoi (bishops-presbyters) and deacons.*" (Phil 1:1) Some fifty years later in Asia Minor 1 Timothy suggests that although the usage of bishop and presbyter is uncertain, its directions for deacons are crystal clear. The title also occurs in relation to local ministry in the *Didache* and the writings of Clement of Rome in that city about 100C.E., where he tells us that the apostles established bishops and deacons in the various churches. (I Clement 42) However recent scholarship cautions modern readers that the reference to *diakonia* in scripture refers to a relationship more than a position. And in many cases the reference does not necessarily pertain to a specific office, such as the diaconate. Where it is employed in association with the sacred office of deacon it refers to the relationship that exists between the deacon and the bishop/ presbyter more than it does to function and role. For a summary of this notion see John N. Collins *Deacon and the Church: Making Connections Between Old and New*, 94-95

¹²⁴ Echlin, S.J. *The Deacon in the Church, Past and Future*, 21-25.

sense) and the presbyter was called on to assist the bishop in exercising his sacerdotal function. The presbyter, who had been more of an advisor¹²⁵ than a minister in the contemporary sense, was transformed into a mini-bishop, taking on both sacerdotal and diaconal functions. As they exercised many of the episcopal functions, such as Eucharistic presidency, the presbyters saw no reason why the deacons were not subject to them, and did not assist them as they assisted the bishops.¹²⁶

Although the expanding role of the presbyter certainly contained the seeds for the dwindling role of the diaconate, it alone cannot be blamed for its demise. In part, the causes of the decline and disappearance of the permanent diaconate are associated with the confusion of identity between deacon and presbyter, as they both assumed more and more liturgical functions. However the neglect of word and charity in favour of worship led to the distinctive and sacramental character of the permanent diaconate being obscured. With the loss of their distinctive identity coupled with the fact that since the Council of Arles in 314 C.E. deacons were forbidden to preside at the Eucharist,¹²⁷ presbyters began to question the power and authority deacons enjoyed.¹²⁸ This sentiment gradually took hold and by the end of the fifth

¹²⁵ Presbyters emerged first as a sort of parish council, often powerless as many parish councils claim to be today. For a full discussion on this see Ray R. Noll, "Deacons in the Early Church," *Deacon Digest*, 10 (May/June 1993): 28.

¹²⁶ Fourth century legislation, such as the Council at Nicaea which placed presbyters over deacons, was the beginning of their decline. However, it must be noted that Athanasius, while still a deacon, took an active part in this council.

¹²⁷ Echlin "*The Deacon in the Church*," 22, 54-55. Echlin explains that Ignatius of Antioch likely delegated his deacons to preside at the Eucharist. An example that was possibly quite common until the Council of Arles legislated against deacons acting in a presidential manner at the Eucharist.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 68. A possible reason for this tension may be due to the fact that deacons, the 'bishop's man,' were often named as the successor to the bishop they served, including the Bishop of Rome (e.g. Gregory the Great, 590 C.E.).

century deacons were performing only minor duties and were now considered only an introductory stage in Holy Orders, a step on the way to ordination as a priest.¹²⁹ The permanent character of the diaconate had simply become a transitional stage to the priesthood.

At the time of the Reformation and Council of Trent the diaconate that confronted the church leadership was temporary, subordinate and mainly ceremonial. The reformers in their desire to return to scripture and the primitive Church rediscovered the value of the diaconal function and took steps to restore the office.

In their epoch the reformers encountered a diaconate reduced merely to a fixed ceremonial institution without any rapport with the practical necessities of life in the community. Therefore their intent to restore the diaconate was primarily concerned with these practical necessities, that is, with the responsibility of the Christian community toward its suffering members.¹³⁰

In reconsidering this office the early reformers understood *diakonia* as a ministry that could be exercised in one of two ways: as assistant ministers of the bishops, whom it does not distinguish from the presbyters; and secondly, as deacons of the poor.¹³¹ Despite this recognition the medieval system continued to understand 'ministry' as a matter of preaching and sacraments rather than as *diakonia* within the world of Protestantism.

¹²⁹ See James M. Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. In this text Barnett states that in the Pre-Nicene Church the diaconate was conceived as a permanent vocation. Deacons could become presbyters but usually did not. The clerical offices were not yet regarded as grades through which one moved from inferior to the superior. However, Barnett points out after the emergence of the monepiscopate in the second century some development of these grades took place.

¹³⁰ *Le Diacre Dans Les Eglises Protestantes*, quoted in Edward P. Echlin, "The Deacon in the Church: Past and Future," 93-4.

¹³¹ Richard T. Nolan, ed. *The Diaconate Now* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 26-7.

Although the Council of Trent recognized the value for the need of '*diaconal ministry*' to look after the sick, aged and indigent they were content to make only minor adjustments to the role and function of an office that they continued to maintain was only an introductory step to the priesthood. According to Trent there was no need for a permanent diaconate since every priest and bishop is considered a perpetual deacon who fulfils the diaconal ministry through his sacred office. This resistance on the part of the Council of Trent to reviving the permanent character of the diaconate has been attributed to two major factors. First, the Church was preoccupied with Jerome's opinion that any reinstatement of the ancient office as understood in scripture would disrupt the existing power structure within the medieval hierarchy; secondly, any changes made to the present state of *Sacerdotalism* would appear that Church was responding to the criticism made by the reformers in regards to the priesthood and the Mass.¹³²

Perhaps the most troubling decision made by Trent was to associate the diaconate with the other minor orders under the title, '*ministri*'. This was disturbing since deacons were now being identified with ministries that initially developed to assist them with their many liturgical functions. In effect, this change in status was essentially signalling that the deacon no longer had a distinct role within the liturgy but was there simply to assist the bishop or presbyter who was presiding at the Eucharist. Although many at the Council of Trent did not accept this diminished capacity (see below) the resolution encouraged this misunderstanding, so much so, that it became common practice prior to the Second Vatican Council to have stand-ins for the deacon at high liturgical services.¹³³ For example, a fellow priest or even a seminarian might take on this

¹³²For a full discussion of these reasons see Echlin, 99-101.

¹³³Collins, *Deacons and the Church: Making Connections between Old and New*, 3

function during a special Mass, such as at an ordination, if there were no transitional deacons available. In the 1950's these deacons were commonly known as "wooden deacons." The analogy was to a mannequin on display in a department store which was not real but which provided a means of communicating the message the store wished to promote. While the intent was to promote the solemnity of the Mass, the custom imparted the notion that the deacon was nothing more than a ceremonial office, a liturgical ornament. Needless to say, this resolution did not end debate on the identity of the diaconate. It was not resolved until Pius XII and, later, Vatican II settled the issue by affirming that the diaconate forms part of the apostolic ministry conferred through holy orders.¹³⁴

Despite this reluctance to revive the permanent diaconate, the Council of Trent did submit a number of proposals for consideration. Although they were not approved their content was similar to that of the modern legislation governing permanent deacons. They declared that the service of the deacon was so important that the Church should never be without it. The diaconate was a distinct office and it stood nearest the priesthood. It set out specific liturgical functions and stressed the ministry of service to all those in distress. The most intriguing part of the legislation dealt with the possibility of conferring orders on married men who had led blameless lives. The possibility of married clerics, even those of the minor orders below the deacon, was never realized, however, possibly since it was believed that it might appear to those of the Reformed faith that the Roman Catholic Church was yielding ground on the question of

¹³⁴*Catechism*, no.1536. The Catechism refers to Holy Orders as the sacrament of apostolic ministry that is divided into three degrees: *episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate*.

clerical celibacy. Thus everything remained as it was before.¹³⁵

In Canada, as in other nations, the ordination of deacons remained the privilege of only those who would be elevated to the priesthood within the year. An example of the Canadian experience is illustrated by the practice in Montreal diocese where Cardinal Paul-Emile Leger,

*arranged to have his seminarians spend their last vacation as parish assistants, gaining pastoral experience while discharging those functions which canon law permitted deacons, such as, preaching, baptizing, and taking communion to the sick.*¹³⁶

In summary, the history of the diaconate prior to Vatican II begins as an integral part of the church, followed by decline and marginalisation. Although at the time of the Reformation there was a renewed interest in the permanent diaconate neither the Roman nor the Protestant leadership followed through in any meaningful way. As a result, from the Reformation onward, congregations were vaguely aware of deacons as vestmented figures making cameo appearances in the high liturgies of important festivals of the church year. What had begun as an important ministry in the church had now become a comfortable ecclesiastical arrangement.¹³⁷ The question of renewal in the Roman Church would largely remain dormant until the twentieth century.

¹³⁵ Nolan, *The Diaconate Now*, 63.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³⁷ Collins, *Deacons and the Church*, 4.

Restoration of the Permanent Diaconate: Key Events

The impetus for change in the Roman Church springs from the introduction of deacons into the German Lutheran experience in the middle of the nineteenth century. When the leaders of this German church followed the traditional nineteenth century interpretation of Acts 6 and defined diaconal ministry primarily as 'social service' they were laying the groundwork for a new theology of ministry.¹³⁸ As a result, less than a century later, when two German Roman Catholic priests, Otto Pies and Wilhelm Schamoni, who had been imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, championed the need for a restored permanent diaconate they were not inspired by the ancient office as discussed earlier but rather by the image of deacon that had been promoted by the German Lutherans.

The point here is that an attempt to recreate the office of deacon in the German Lutheran church on the basis of a nineteenth century understanding of *diakonia* meant in the New Testament has determined the kind of diaconal movement which had developed across the churches by the turn of the twenty-first century. This . . . event shifting the building blocks of ministerial theology. Until this shift occurred . . . [the] churches had every intention of advancing into the new age bearing an appendage to their theology of ordained ministry the deadweight of a moribund diaconate.¹³⁹

Inspired by the two German priests, Josef Honef, a magistrate and a member of "Caritas" (a Catholic welfare organization) eagerly advance their notion of diaconate and urged the church to restore a permanent diaconate open to both celibate and married men.¹⁴⁰ His enthusiasm spread

¹³⁸ Ibid., 4 -7. The vision Noble speaks emerges from the traditional understanding of Acts 6 which emphasises service to those in need.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁰ Bishop Alois Eckert, President of German Caritas between 1952 and 1959, after meeting with the diaconate circle in Germany concluded the objectives of the renewal of the diaconate according to Acts 6, 1-7 fitted in completely with his understanding of Caritas. See Margret Morche, "On the Renewal of the

and by 1953 the issue of a renewed diaconate had become international. With advocates, such as Bishop Von Bakkum of Indonesia and later Karl Rahner the renewal of the diaconate became an important agenda item at the International Congress on Pastoral Liturgy at Assisi in 1956.¹⁴¹

This interest in the permanent diaconate led Pope Pius XII in October of 1957 to speak favourably of restoring this ancient sacred office, although concluding that “the time is not yet ripe”.¹⁴² Despite the pope’s reluctance to move forward with the renewal of the diaconate the movement for restoration was gathering momentum and more and more bishops were not only advocating the need for the revival of this office but also for the possibility of a married diaconate.¹⁴³ Although the rehabilitation of this sacred office was controversial there were some supporters who held that the renewal of the diaconate would help alleviate the shortage of priests in various parts of the world. Deacons, it was reasoned, would be able to perform many of the functions of priests and would help create and sustain a sense of Christian community among people who rarely saw a priest.¹⁴⁴

When the Second Vatican Council considered the restoration of the permanent diaconate it held that this notion was valid and might even be compelling in particular situations.

Permanent Diaconate”, *Diaconia Yearbook*, XXXI, (1996/1997) excerpts reprinted *Diaconi Christi* on line <http://www.kirchen.de/drs/idz/library/index.html>, retrieved 3 December 2003.

¹⁴¹Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church: Past and Future*, 108-109.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 109-10. Echlin identifies this growing momentum among bishops and cites Archbishop d’Souza of Holland in 1959 proposing that all Christian countries should have a married diaconate. Also see Nolan, *The Diaconate Now* in his discussion on married men as ordained deacons and his reference to Cardinal Schamoni, 70-72. Apparently the discipline of celibacy in the Latin West was among the principal reason cited by those who disagreed with the restoration; they believed that the church would be opening a Pandora’s box. Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church: Past and Future*, 110.

¹⁴⁴Nolan, *The Diaconate Now*, 66.

Nevertheless, they insisted that it was not a satisfactory rationale if it is taken to imply that the diaconate is merely an expedient, a temporary solution to a problem for which there could be no particular need or reason if there were enough priests to go around. On the contrary, the Council argued that the central fact about the diaconate is that it is an integral part of the threefold hierarchy of Orders, with its own intrinsic reason and right to exist. The bishops felt so strongly about this that they incorporated their position on the permanent diaconate within the “*Constitution on the Church*.” However, when the church fathers came to clarify their understanding of the role and identity of the permanent diaconate, the German Lutheran interpretation of diaconal ministry which stressed social service played a vital part..

Deacons . . . receive the imposition of hands not unto the priesthood, but unto ministry of service.” For, strengthened by sacramental grace they are dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the bishop and his body of priests, in the service of the liturgy, of the Gospel and works of charity. It pertains to the office of deacon, in so far as it may be assigned to him by a competent authority, to administer Baptism solemnly, to be custodian and distributor of the Eucharist, in the name of the church to assist and bless marriages, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and the prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, and to officiate at funerals and burial services. Dedicated to works of charity and functions of administration, deacons should recall the admonition of St. Polycarp: “let them be merciful, and zealous, and let them walk according to the truth of the Lord, who became the servant of all.”¹⁴⁵

The document on the ‘Church’ went on to recognize that at this time the laws and customs of the Latin Church rendered it difficult to fulfil these functions, which are so extremely necessary for the life of the Church, that it may well be advisable to restore the diaconate as a proper and permanent rank in the hierarchy. “But it pertains to the local competent episcopal conferences

¹⁴⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, 387.

... with the approval of the supreme Pontiff, to decide whether and where it is opportune that such deacons be appointed. ”¹⁴⁶

Although *Lumen Gentium* recognized the permanent diaconate as a legitimate office within the church, local conferences of bishops were not able to restore the diaconate until Pope Paul VI issued his motu proprio, “*Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*,” on January 27, 1967 which contained the specific directives for implementing the restoration of the diaconate. In addition to the authority to reinstate the permanent diaconate this letter also accomplished two important goals. First, this decree created two new kinds of deacons: young men at least twenty-five years of age, who have completed a special three year training program and who will be bound by the traditional celibacy requirements; married men, at least thirty-five years of age, who have also received the requisite training, who may be married before but not after ordination. Secondly, it outlined eleven specific functions of the deacon. They can be summarized as follows: to assist the bishop and presbyters in liturgy; to administer baptism solemnly; to be custodian of the Eucharist and to dispense it, carry Viaticum to the dying, and to give the Eucharistic blessing; to preside at marriages; to administer sacramentals and to preside at funerals and burial services; to proclaim the gospels liturgically and to preach at worship of the people when no priest is available; to direct Bible services when no priest is present; to do charitable, administrative and welfare work; to guide scattered Christian communities; to promote and support the lay apostolate. Unfortunately, as with the principal statement on the diaconate arising out of the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 387. The Church left it up to local conferences of bishops to restore the diaconate since many countries, such as Africa and parts of Asia were opposed to this change. With ample vocations to the priesthood and religious life they saw no reason to reintroduce a permanent diaconate. See Nolan, *The Diaconate Now*, 68- 72.

Second Vatican Council's, '*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*', this letter did little to advance a theology of the diaconate.

Although the '*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*' followed by Paul VI's *motu proprio* spelled out the role and identity of the permanent deacon a number of issues arose as the various conferences of bishops acted to restore the permanent diaconate in an age that also called for more participation on the part of laity. It would appear that the theology that developed over a millennium associated with the transitional and ceremonial office of the deacon continued to exert its influence. In addition, the recreation of this ancient office appeared to conflict with the renewed role of the laity in the life of the church. In order to clarify the role and identity of the deacon and its relationship with both the other members of the hierarchy and the laity Pope Paul VI issued his Apostolic Letter, "*Ad Pascendum*" on August 15, 1972. This letter set out specific norms for the Order of Deacon, such as, deacons are clerics with a specific ministry, admission requirements, and the obligation to pray the Liturgy of the Hours in accordance with the norms of canon law. In addition to these specific norms, this apostolic letter makes the following points: first, there is in the Church a variety of ministries among which the diaconate has had a clearly outstanding position; secondly, in antiquity the deacon is described as "the bishop's ear, mouth, heart and soul."; thirdly, in the earliest centuries the deacon is linked with service to the sick, the poor, orphans, the devout and the widowed; fourthly, in ancient times the deacon brought the Eucharist to the sick, conferred baptisms and preached; and finally, the diaconate has been restored as a driving force for the Church's service or *diakonia* and as a sign of the Lord Christ himself, 'who came not to be served but to serve.'

At the same time *Ad Pascendum*, (1972) was issued the Vatican also issued, '*Ministeria Quaedam*' which reformed the Latin Church's discipline of Tonsure, Minor Orders and Subdiaconate. The new structure declares that Bishop, Priests and Deacons are ordained ministers and clerics. The other minor orders are reduced to only the orders of '*Readers*' and '*Acolytes*'. However, ministry is declared to be synonymous with being Christian and official ministries such as '*Readers*' and '*Acolytes*' may be committed to lay Christians in extraordinary circumstances.

In the 1977 study by the Archdiocese of Toronto on the Permanent Diaconate the Committee observed that these two recent papal documents inaugurated a theology for the restored diaconate.¹⁴⁷ Concerning the first document, *Ad Pascendum*, the 'Action Group for the Senate of Priest' found that the theological foundation for the function and identity of the deacon was laid when this apostolic letter described the deacon as the bishop's man; spoke of the deacon as the intermediary between the bishop and priest on the one hand and the laity on the other; and, at the same time, envisaged the deacon as the sign and catalyst of the *diakonia* of the entire Church. Concerning, the second letter of Pope Paul VI, '*Ministeria Quaedam*', the Committee recognized that despite the fact that the letter does not explicitly deal with the diaconate it indirectly affects the theology of this office in an important way. By acknowledging the ministry (even official ones) of the laity, the document steers clear of a subtle form of clericalism, that is, the idea that the only real ministries in the Church are those of the ordained, whether bishop, priest or deacon. These two letters, in conjunction with the Second Vatican Council's '*Dogmatic*

¹⁴⁷ "Report of the Priest Senate Action Group on Permanent Diaconate," by Rev. R. Corriveau, Chairman (Archdiocese of Toronto, April 1977) (Typewritten), 18-19.

Constitution on the Church' , served as the basis of the Church's understanding of the permanent diaconate until the Congregations for Catholic Education and the Clergy issued their joint declarations in February 1998. To this document we will return later.

In response to Pope Paul VI's "*Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*," several countries moved to restore the permanent diaconate with the first permanent deacons being ordained in Germany in 1968. Growth since then has been rapid. In a press conference on March 10, 1998 Cardinal Pio Langhi, head of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education reported that there are some 22,390 permanent deacons serving in the church today with most of them ministering in the United States, Canada, Germany, Brazil, Chile and Belgium.¹⁴⁸

The Canadian Experience

Archdiocese of Toronto

In Canada, the Canadian Conference of Bishops approved the establishment of the Order of Deacon in 1969. Shortly after this inaugural date Archbishop Pocock requested that the Chairman of the Priests Senate, Father Briant Cullinane establish a committee to study the need for the permanent diaconate and how their preparation for ministry would be accomplished. The committee members were Mr. Ed. Brisebois, Mr and Mrs. Fred Halloran, Mr. And Mrs Joseph Pitts, Fathers John Hochban, Noel Cooper and John O'Mara. After a thorough study of these two issues the committee unanimously recommended that the permanent diaconate should be

¹⁴⁸ "Vatican Congregations for Clergy and Education: The Permanent Diaconat." *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 27 August 1998, 3.

restored in the Archdiocese of Toronto and that St. Augustine Seminary should be utilized for their training. The Senate of Priest approved their recommendation in June of 1970. However, the minority opinion asked that the Canadian Conference of Bishops consider ordaining laymen noted for their faith and moral values and already established in their field of work to the priesthood rather than the diaconate. They believed that as priest, they would be vastly more valuable than as deacons.

In December 1971, Fathers Paul Giroux and John O'Mara attended a meeting of Permanent Diaconate Programs at the University of Chicago. Eleven existing programs in the United States were reviewed along with those proposed in an additional thirty dioceses.

In January 1972, Reverend Fathers John O'Mara and Paul Giroux presented to Archbishop Pocock their findings and recommendations that a Permanent Diaconate Program for the Archdiocese be initiated in accordance with the Senate action of June 1970. After receiving permission from the Archbishop to proceed the committee, with the help of Father Ed Roach of the Clergy Office in Ottawa, planned the implementation and curriculum. They decided that a two-year study program, leading to ordination to the diaconate, would be established. It would accommodate up to twenty-five candidates¹⁴⁹ from within the Archdiocese a year. It was to be mainly a reading course with ten live-in weekends of prayer, lectures and study at St. Augustine Seminary each year. The subjects to be studied included the key areas of Theology, Old and New Testaments studies, Liturgy, Homiletics and Sociology. The training personnel included the following: Fathers A. Ambrozic [now Archbishop and Cardinal of Toronto], C.

¹⁴⁹ "Report of the Priest Senate Action Group on Permanent Diaconate," by R. Corriveau, Chairman (Archdiocese of Toronto April 1977), reported that the Archbishop limited enrollment to twenty-five men for practical considerations, such as, staffing, accommodations.

Amico, J. Plevnik, R. Corriveau, T. Thottumkal, A. Mikloshazy.

In May and June of 1972 recruiting was initiated through publications sent to each parish. After reviewing and screening applicants twenty-eight candidates (many of whom had studied for the priesthood several years earlier)¹⁵⁰ started their formation in September 1972. In addition to the twenty-eight from the archdiocese five other candidates for other dioceses joined with them.

After the program was initiated in the Archdiocese in cooperation with St. Augustine Seminary, a committee was established that would be responsible for an ongoing evaluation of the curriculum, as well as supervising the studies, the candidates and making recommendations in regards to ordination. The committee members were Fathers John O'Mara, John Moss, Paul Giroux, and Mrs. Colin Chase, Dan Murphy, Patrick Matthews and Wilfred Carter.

In 1973 the Permanent Diaconate Committee appointed mentors to assist the Deacon candidates with their studies and other difficulties. One mentor would serve six or seven candidates. In June of 1974 twenty-six men were ordained at St. Michael's Cathedral in Toronto.

The second training program that started in 1974 shifted the focus of the studies to the service ministry of the deacon rather than its theological aspects. In addition to the live-in weekend each month, candidates were required to meet one night a week in smaller groups for discussion, study and prayer, under the direction of an ordained deacon. In the final phase of their training candidates were required to spend at least six months in an active ministry of their

¹⁵⁰ Information on the academic or prior information on the candidates was obtained from the following report: Report by the Rector of the Seminary on Diaconate Formation by Rev. Fr. H. O'Neill, (Archdiocese of Toronto, April 1977).

choice so that ordination may be a celebration of an already existing ministry.

In 1975 the Archdiocese of Toronto formally organized a Council of Deacons. Its first officers were elected in June 1976. This Council together with the Diaconate committee examined ways in which to adjust the program in order to accommodate Archbishop Pocock's recommendation that all candidates for the diaconate be fully trained to preach, even though this would not be considered their prime service as deacons in the Church. In response to the opinion offered by several of the Seminary faculty involved in the academic formation the following was decided: first, to expand the program to three years in order to accommodate the extra theological content and yet maintain the service focus of the diaconal program; secondly, to accept only candidates who had two years of university or its academic equivalent. These recommendations were enacted in 1977. In 1987 in response for additional pastoral and theological preparation the program was extended to five years.

In 1999 the Archdiocese of Toronto Annual Statement discloses that there are more than one hundred and fifty deacons serving in active ministries. According to this report deacons are serving in the liturgical life of various communities, in administrative and pastoral roles of hospitals, nursing homes, cursillo groups, St. Vincent de Paul Society, pro-life programs, prisons, parishes and special groups, such as the deaf community, as well as among several different ethnic groups.

Archdiocese of Kingston

The restoration of the diaconate in the Kingston Archdiocese was first studied by the

Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Senate of priests (now called Council of Priests) at the invitation of the newly appointed Archbishop, Francis J. Spence in 1982. Through these bodies and a diocesan wide referendum Archbishop Spence concluded that there was a need for the diaconate in the Kingston Diocese, and that deacons would be welcome. In 1991 the Archbishop and the Council of Priests approved the restoration of the Permanent Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Kingston.

A Permanent Diaconate Committee was established under the direction of Msgr. D.P. Clement, Rector of St. Mary's Cathedral. The other members of the committee were: Sr. Joan Kalchenbrenner RHSJ (later replaced by Sr. Theresa Shannon RHSJ); Mrs. Mona Splinter of the Diocesan Pastoral Council; Mr. Albert Dunn, Archbishop's Executive Secretary; Rev. Paul Hamilton, Chancellor; and Rev. Ken Stitt, Director of Pastoral Care, Hotel Dieu, Kingston. After a lengthy period of study and consultation and checking with other dioceses, a five-year period of formation was established. In many respects the model was based on the Program developed in Toronto.

In September of 1991 seven candidates were received into the first program of study in the Archdiocese of Kingston. In 1993 two of these candidates, who had begun their studies in 1987 in another diocese, were ordained by Archbishop Spence. In 1995 the five remaining candidates were ordained as permanent deacons. At present the Archdiocese of Kingston has seventeen permanent deacons; thirteen of them are incardinated for Kingston while the other four relocated to this diocese; one of the deacons is listed as retired, but continues to serve in an auxiliary ministry within a parish, two of the deacons are involved with the deaf community, another as chaplain for Corrections Canada, and the other thirteen are assigned to parishes.

Issues and Concerns Surrounding the Restoration of the Permanent Diaconate

The restoration of the permanent diaconate was quickly adopted by many Episcopal conferences, yet within their respective jurisdictions the individual dioceses have not always been as quick to implement this restored office. In the Canadian conference this is true. The debate since its inception has been over an expanded role for the laity (non-ordained) versus more clericalism. This dispute is really about the new theology Vatican II and subsequent documents produced, a theology which emphasized that all the baptized are the people of God and that through baptism they share in the ministry of Jesus as priest, prophet and king. According to this thinking the apparent hierarchy of orders would be flattened and call for a common priesthood in which ministry will be exercised "on no other basis than people's ability to do what is needed."¹⁵¹ Scholars who promote this concept acknowledge that there is still a need for leadership within the diocese and parishes but this would be in the role of facilitator and not governance.¹⁵² In part, the foundation of this participatory theology is derived from the canon law prohibition of private masses in favour of the Eucharist being celebrated in the presence of "at least one of the faithful" (Canon 906). Those pundits who promote this common priesthood suggest that since the central element of Christianity, the Eucharist, is dependent on the gathering of the people of God then it follows that all ministries flow out of this common

¹⁵¹Bernard Cooke: *Sacraments and Sacramentality* (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1983) 226.

¹⁵²There are a number of scholars who support this idea today, in particular, Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*; and his earlier work, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Thomas O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face: a New and Expanded Theology of Ministry*, trans. John Bowden. (New York: Crossroad, 1985).

priesthood.¹⁵³ An example of this was recently demonstrated in the Eucharistic Celebration in Ottawa where a Dominican Priest, Diarmud O'Murchu, invited the people present to exercise their priestly role by participating in the Eucharistic prayer in the same manner a concelebrating priest would.¹⁵⁴

The Canadian experience is representative of this debate. The Diocese of Timmins, for example, has opted to blend the diaconate with lay ministry through a training program that is identical for both ordained and non-ordained but with obvious different goals and responsibilities. This northern Ontario experiment has led to certain tensions between the lay and ordained ministers but, to date, there appear to be no revisions to the proposed training. In Western Canada, according to Archbishop Emeritus, Francis J. Spence of the Archdiocese of Kingston and past president of the Canadian Conference of Bishops, the emphasis was initially placed on the promotion of lay ministry rather than restoring the diaconate. However, Archbishop Spence indicates that after several years the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council decided to revisit the need for permanent deacons.¹⁵⁵ A similar approach to the use of laity in ministry had been practised in the Diocese of London. When the London diocese reconsidered the permanent diaconate there was an intense resistance by the predominant female lay pastoral

¹⁵³ Francis Schussler Fiorenza & John P. Galvin ed., *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Vol. II, Order by David N. Power (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 300-301.

¹⁵⁴ CNT Staff, "The Spirituality of Religion" *Catholic New Times*, 20 November 2000, 17.

¹⁵⁵ Permanent Diaconate Association, *Proceedings of Biannual Meeting*, (Archdiocese of Kingston, 25 November 2000).

association for the diocese who appeared to be concerned with both job security and the idea of more male clericalism.¹⁵⁶

In Kingston and Toronto dioceses (and many others) it was decided to proceed with the sacramental office of deacon but with an emphasis on Pope Paul VI's exhortation that deacons are: "to promote and sustain the apostolic activities of laymen."¹⁵⁷

This variation in approach to living out the Church's mission in Canada has been an ongoing debate since the inception of the diaconate. There have been many articles, seminars and studies done on this issue. When the Archdiocese of Toronto undertook a comprehensive review of their diaconate program the designated committee, made up of priests and deacons, attempted to reach a consensus not only on the role of the permanent deacon in relation to that of the Christian lay person, but also to the religious, the priest and the bishop. Their conclusion drew on Karl Rahner's thesis that the identity of the deacon emerges from the sacramental grace or 'charisma' associated with the sacred office; the deacon is a sign to the Christian community of Christ the servant.¹⁵⁸ Their report states that although all Christians (Bishop, Priests, Laity) have a responsibility of service it is the deacon who

carries the additional responsibility for the mission of the Church as a whole to areas of enduring and critical need. He is sent to show Christ's love to those whom poverty, ignorance, disease, crime or simple age have carried to the margins of society. He provides both a focus and a practical means by which the

¹⁵⁶ Bishop Richard Greco, Auxiliary for the London Diocese, interview by author, September 1999.

¹⁵⁷ Paul VI *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* issued motu proprio, 18 June, 1967, Paragraph 22: xi (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Bishops, 1968), 5.

¹⁵⁸ Karl Rahner "Theological Investigations" vol. X, *The Teaching on the Diaconate by the Second Vatican Council*, 225.

whole Church's responsibility can more effectively be carried out.¹⁵⁹

In the same vein, Colin Chase, the former Director of the Toronto Diaconate Program, in his research into the identity of the permanent deacon, submitted that the deacon does not relieve either the priest or the laity from their vocation but rather as an official, sacramentally ordained minister the deacon provides both a focus and a practical means by which the whole Church's responsibility for *diakonia* can be more effectively carried out.

Just as the priest, as the bishop's representative, is preeminently the preacher and leader within the local Christian community, so the deacon, again as the bishop's man in the environment to which he is sent, the deacon is the one who "animates the local church with regard to a particular need. . . and focuses their evangelical concern. Frequently, he will not himself be active in responding to the need he discerns, but he will make the Christian community aware of the need and will act as a catalyst in moving the appropriate people to action."¹⁶⁰

An Emerging Theology for the Restored Permanent Diaconate

In 1998 the Vatican, responding to the need to develop the theological basis for the diaconate and establish standardized norms for the governance, training and life of permanent deacons, issued two declarations: "*Basic Norms for the Formation of the Permanent Deacons*" and a "*Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*". In brief, these documents reaffirmed the place of the diaconate in the sacrament of holy orders and his ministry at the altar, while addressing the importance of a mature spirituality, the identity of the deacon, and his

¹⁵⁹ *Report of the Priest Senate Action Group on Permanent Diaconate*, by R. Corriveau, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Colin Chase, "*The Identity of the Deacon*" (Archdiocese of Toronto, April 1975) 1 (Typewritten).

unique ability to foster evangelization in the context of his daily job and his witness as a married deacon to marital fidelity and parenthood.

In many respects the theology arising out of these Vatican guidelines reinforced the earlier observations that the Toronto study had produced, especially in reference to the insistence that it is the deacon's role of service and as a visible sign of the Church's *diakonia* that truly defines the distinctive nature of the diaconate. Perhaps recalling the contributing factors for the decline of the permanent diaconate, the new Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons specifies

that it is important that deacons fully exercise their ministry " in the areas of preaching, liturgy and charity "to the extent that circumstances permit. They should not be relegated to marginal duties, be made merely to act as substitutes or discharge duties normally entrusted to non-ordained members of the faithful. Only in this way will the true identity of permanent deacons as ministers of Christ become apparent. ¹⁶¹

The Directory also addresses the identity of the deacon in relation to bishop, priests, religious and laity. It clarifies that the deacon as the 'minister of charity' does not relieve either the priest or laity of their vocation to Christian *diakonia* but rather provides a focus and a practical means by which the whole Church's responsibility can be more effectively carried out.

Concluding Observations

In conclusion, the permanent diaconate was an integral part of the ministry of the early church. As the 'bishop's man' a deacon enjoyed real and effective power as he fulfilled his

¹⁶¹ *Directory*, 191.

three-fold ministry of liturgy, word and charity; a description that the Second Vatican Council would use to define this sacred office when recommending its renewal. However, when these early deacons began to stress functions associated with the emerging presbyterate at the expense of their servant role the diaconate soon lost its permanent character. Although the church understood the importance of the permanent diaconate it was reluctant to reinstate this sacred office until the Second Vatican Council approved its restoration.

The renewal of the diaconate in the Roman church was directly influenced by the German Lutheran experience which maintained that the role of service was the basis of diaconal theology and pastoral practice. On the surface the church appears to stress equally the threefold ministry of the deacon: word, liturgy, and service. In practice and in its teaching, it clearly emphasizes service as the principal role of the deacon.

Indeed, it is this which also ranks highest in the aspirations of deacons themselves, as one observes in contributions to publications like the monthly 'Deacon Digest' of the United States.¹⁶²

Although the restoration of the permanent diaconate was left up to local episcopal conferences to implement, the documents ratifying and promulgating the renewal of the office provided a template that would ensure some uniformity. This was accomplished by the council fathers who set out the permanent diaconate's role and function as well as the relationship the deacon has with the bishop and presbyter. However, legislation can only provide guidelines,

¹⁶² Collins, *Deacons and the Church*, 10-11. Collins argues that the emphasis on service in the Roman Catholic Church illustrated through academic publications, such as, *Diaconia Christi* published by the influential International Centre for the Diaconate based in Germany, and various scholars in Europe and North America, such as Rolf Busemann, Herve Legrand, Theodore W. Kraus, and Walter Kaspar (now Cardinal Prefect of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity).

it cannot change perceptions based on centuries of experience nor can it meet contemporary demands that seek a more developed role for the laity as opposed to more clericalism. Nevertheless, within the various church documents culminating with the 1998 declarations from Rome along with the studies undertaken by dioceses, in particular by the Archdiocese of Toronto, there is recognition that the sacramental character is an important ingredient that shapes not only the identity of this office but also how it relates to the other grades of holy orders (bishop, presbyters) and the laity. This emphasis on the sacramental character of the diaconate and other related issues will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHURCH'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE PERMANENT DIACONATE

Chapter Three revealed that some of the reasons the Council Fathers considered for the renewal of the Permanent Diaconate were driven by very different interests. Some foresaw the imminent shortage of priest, for others celibacy was the over riding factor while others the idea of diaconate circles and social service ministry was prominent. In this chapter I intend to describe the church's official understanding of the identity, role and function of the permanent deacon by considering the manner in which he shares in this sacred office, his relationship with the bishop and priests, and how this particular ministry is expressed in liturgy, in service and through the proclamation of the Gospel. Although this goal will be accomplished by reviewing the pertinent conciliar documents, it will also rely on the ritual words of the bishop during ordination since they contain a public declaration as to what the Church believes about this sacred office. However, before proceeding with this study it is necessary to take a brief detour in order to consider the permanent diaconate in light of the notion of sacraments and sacramentality which emerged from the Second Vatican Council.

The Permanent Diaconate - Sacramental Considerations

The Second Vatican Council, in particular its *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, opened up a new chapter in the history of sacramental theology and laid the foundation that stands right at the heart of the whole Church's renewal program. When the Council urged the pastors of the

Church to lead the people to full and active participation in the rites of the Church it did so with the expectation that by making the rites more intelligible and more inspiring any suggestion of mechanism or magic in their performance would be eliminated.¹⁶³

Although this break from the mechanistic approach to sacraments began to appear in the works of some northern European theologians as early as the 1930s, it was the work of Eduard Schillebeeckx which prompted the Church to break with scholastic methodology.¹⁶⁴ His 1960 publication, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, which drew on biblical and patristic theology, proposed that a sacramental relationship exists between Christ and the Church and this relationship is foundational to any theology of the sacraments.

The key word in Schillebeeckx's description of this proposed sacramental relationship is the word encounter, a notion that his research disclosed as the fundamental basis of all religions. However, Schillebeeckx explains that while these human encounters with God are reported throughout history, in particular in the story of the people of Israel, our understanding of how humans encounter God radically changed with the incarnation. It changed because Jesus as a human incarnates the redeeming love of God in human form. His actions are more than just

¹⁶³The scholastic theology which was canonized by the Council of Trent viewed sacraments not as a saving action of Christ but in terms of the more impersonal, almost mechanical concept of causality. The Second Vatican Council moved away from this emphases on causality to identifying sacraments as living signs of our faith and of Christ's redeeming love. In other words, Sacraments are ordained for the sanctification of humankind, for the building up of the body of Christ, for the worship of God; as signs they also have a place of instruction. They do indeed confer grace, but the celebration disposes the faithful most efficaciously for a fruitful reception, for the worship of God, and the exercise of charity. See John A. O'Brien, *Catching up with the Church* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), 86.

¹⁶⁴Thomas Bokkenkotter, *Dynamic Catholicism: A Historical Catechism* (New York, Double Day Books, 1992) 183. Schillebeeckx' influence is evident in both the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium* and the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Sacrosanctum Concilium) Vatican II Dec. 4, 1963. in "*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*" ed., Austin Flannery, O.P. 1-279. Northport, NY:Costello Publishing Co., 1981. Herein after known as *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

exceptional deeds; they are the manifestation of God's love for humanity and in themselves possess a divine saving power which brings about salvation. ¹⁶⁵ In effect, this meant for Jesus' contemporaries, that to be approached by the man Jesus was essentially "an invitation to a personal encounter with the life-giving God, . . ." ¹⁶⁶ In this manner, Jesus may rightly be called the primordial sacrament - the visible manifestation or revelation of the divine grace of redemption.

According to Schillebeeckx this encounter with Christ did not end with his disciples but continues to be present through the Church, his body, and in particular through the historical, visible and tangible sacraments, which are the embodiment of his heavenly actions. Consequently, through the Church's sacraments the saving activity of Jesus, which was visible during his earthly life, is now sacramentalized, rendered visible through the official actions of his body, the Church. In other words, the actions of the glorified Christ in heaven now become visible in and through his body, the Church, thus making the Church the living sacrament of Christ. ¹⁶⁷

This understanding that the invisible God is revealed in Christ, and that Christ continues to act in and through his Church, led the Church to conclude that Christ also acts in and through

¹⁶⁵Eduard Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963), 14.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁶⁷O'Brien, *Catching up with the Church*, 107. It is important to note here that treating Christ as the Primordial Sacrament of God and the Church as the primary sacrament of Christ, it does not nullify the traditional understanding of the seven sacraments but rather through this broader and more general sense exalts the entire sacramental system since it emphasizes both the presence and the activity of Christ and the Church in each of the sacraments.

those who are ordained.¹⁶⁸ Those who have been entrusted to continue Christ's ministry on earth through the sacrament of holy orders become sacramental signs of Christ.¹⁶⁹ In respect to the deacon, he is configured to Christ who made himself the 'deacon' or servant of all.¹⁷⁰ In sacramental symbolism, then, this means that the deacon makes real for the Church, not only the presence of Jesus, but the Jesus who came to serve and not to be served.¹⁷¹

In summary, Christ who is the sacrament of God continues his revelation of God's saving love through his Church and those who minister in her name. While this topic could be discussed at greater length, I believe that this brief description adequately summarizes an important element that has shaped the Church's thinking in regards to the identity of the permanent deacon. Although this model is only one of many competing sacramental theologies within the Church today,¹⁷² it has influenced conciliar documents, and provided the basis of a theology that

¹⁶⁸*Catechism*, no. 1549. It is important to note here that the reference to the ordained is not intended to ignore the responsibility of the laity. According to the Church Christ is made visible through the actions of all the people of God, hierarchy and laity, who are commissioned according to the competence received through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and holy orders. For a full discussion on this see Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 153-195.

¹⁶⁹*Catechism*, no. 1088, 1548, 1554 & 1569.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, no. 1569. See also Mk 10:45; Lk 22:27; St. Polycarp, *Epistula Philippenses* 52: Sch.10, 210 cited in *The Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church: A Compendium of Texts Referred to in the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994). It is also important to note at this point that my non-treatment of the bishop and priest's important role is not to be interpreted as a sign that I believe that their part is insignificant. The bishop, and priest, like the deacon, is a sacrament of the Church of Jesus and God. While this chapter does touch on these two offices in relation to the deacon, the focus of this work and its associated constraints do not permit me to deal with their unique sacramentality.

¹⁷¹*Lumen Gentium*, no. 21, 22 and 29. See also Patrick McCaslin, Michael G. Lawler *Sacrament of Service: A Vision of the Permanent Diaconate Today* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 73.

¹⁷²After the Council of Trent sacramental theology shared a common base, Aristotle's philosophy dealing with matter and form as components of real being. Today there is no common base. For example, Rahner and Schillebeeckx represent existentialism, personalism and phenomenology; Segundo and Boff, liberationist theologians, rely on Marxist philosophy, while others, such as Bernard Lees, are influenced by Whiteheadian process theology. However, Roman Catholic sacramental theology essentially agrees that sacraments confer a 'character' on the recipient, or establishes a relationship between the

promotes permanent deacons as sacred ministers who are configured to Christ, who made himself the 'deacon' or servant of all.¹⁷³ It is prominent in the writings of various Church officials, in formal statements by John Paul II, and most importantly in the 1998 *Directory for the Life and Formation of Permanent Deacons*. Many of these documents and references will be referred to in the following discussion that outlines the Church's understanding of the identity of the permanent deacon.

The Permanent Diaconate - Ecclesial and Theological Considerations

In October 1964 the Fathers ratified the principle of the renewal of the diaconate. However, in November when it drafted the relevant paragraphs to be included in *Lumen Gentium* and later in *Ad Pascendum* the word 'restored' or 'restoration' was favoured over renewal. As a result paragraph 29 of *Lumen Gentium* read "... it will be possible in the future to restore the

individual and the Church, the sacrament of Christ. This character is similar to the 'seal' a Roman soldier was marked with in order to distinguish him from non-military personnel and also the person's rank or grade in relationship to the Emperor and one another. Sacraments such as baptism, confirmation and orders also empowers the individual, or commissions one according to the grace received. In baptism the person is incorporated into the mystical Body of Christ, made children of the Father through the Spirit of Sonship, empowering the recipient to make visible the mystery of the passover, death to sin and life unto God in Christ Jesus (Easter). In confirmation, membership in the Body of Christ is completed with the bestowal of the Spirit (maturing in faith). As adult members they are empowered to make visible the mystery of Pentecost. Holy orders configures the recipient to Christ the Head of the Body commissioning the recipient to perform visible ecclesial acts (word and sacrament), so that the mysteries of Easter and Pentecost are made visible in our midst. All the People of God (Clerics & Laity) are nourished through the sacramental life of the Church. Each are empowered according to their competence to perform visible ecclesial acts so that the mysteries of Easter and Pentecost are made known. Those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders are empowered to administer sacraments (through sacramental signs bestow grace on others) and through their preaching of the word, help others to hear the word of God within them. See Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 153-195.

¹⁷³*Catechism*, 1570

diaconate as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy.”¹⁷⁴ By the Council choosing restoration over renewal, it clearly sent a signal as to the direction the council fathers wanted to go. To speak of renewal was to suggest that the church’s aim was simply to adapt an ancient but moribund ordained ministry to meet modern situations rather than restoring the original sacred office to its rightful place within the church community.

This choice of words was prompted by the theological reflections on the diaconate, in particular by Karl Rahner and Yves Congar. Their observations provided a new dimension to the spiritual and pragmatic concerns that had been raised pertaining to the diaconate after the Second World War. In effect, what these authors clarified for the church was that the diaconate was not a development of the lay apostolate - as favoured by many - but rather a special form of ordained office, “so extremely necessary for the life of the Church.”¹⁷⁵

The fundamental theology that grew out of this basic recognition was outlined in the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. This important document states that the diaconate belongs to the hierarchical sacramental ministry of the Church, not unto the priesthood but unto ministry,¹⁷⁶ which is bestowed through the laying on of hands and prayer and which reaches its fulfilment in the episcopacy. This declaration goes back to the theology of the first centuries after

¹⁷⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, 387; See also *Ad Pascendum*, 436. The term restoring or restoration of the diaconate was chosen deliberately by the council fathers to indicate their decision to restore an ancient office as opposed to renewing a moribund office. However, the term renewal was most frequently used by scholars and church leaders, perhaps revealing part of the internal debate. Evidence of this is found within the Church documents, such as *Ad Pascendum*, when reference is made to the general discussion before the documents were promulgated.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 387. This clarification was important since the movement emanating from German, especially the ‘deacon-circles’ favoured a non-ordained ministry with ecclesiastical recognition.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 387.

Christ. It transcends the narrow understanding of medieval theology, which limited holy orders to the priesthood, since only they had the power of consecration.¹⁷⁷ By returning to the ordination liturgy of the early Church and the associated theology of the council fathers, the Church was able to demonstrate and to clarify the relationship of the diaconate, the priesthood and the episcopacy to the one sacramental ministry of the Church. This clarification brought with it a significant reversal of thinking. Up until the second Vatican Council the different levels of ordination were thought of as an ascending career path as opposed to a relationship they have with one another and Christ. In this pre-Vatican II model of ordination, the office of deacon was considered a pre-requisite before the priesthood and as such hierarchically subordinate to the priests. The continued practice of ordaining transitional deacons following the council's restoration of the ancient sacred office and the declaration in *Lumen Gentium* 29 which declares that deacons are "at a lower level of the hierarchy,"¹⁷⁸ has continued this misconception. However, when this statement is placed in its proper context, fullness of holy orders is found with the episcopacy, not the priesthood, and in a closer examination of this particular paragraph it becomes clear that what is meant is not subordination but a lesser participation of the deacon in the ministry of the bishop. In the preceding paragraph this is completely evident, as it states:

Christ whom the Father has hallowed and sent into the world (Jn 10:36), has, through his apostles, made their successors, the bishops namely, sharers in his consecration and mission; and these in turn, duly entrusted in varying degrees various members of the Church with the office of ministry. This divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry is

¹⁷⁷This was a breakthrough for the episcopacy as well, since this medieval theology held that neither a bishop or a deacon's installation could be included in this definition of holy orders based on the power of consecration.

¹⁷⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, 387.

exercised in different degrees by those who even in ancient times have been called bishops, priests and deacons.¹⁷⁹

In other words, the bishop receives the fullness of the sacrament of ordination while deacons and priests are entrusted with a share in this sacrament in various degrees. Although there remains a hierarchical tension because of the formal structure that the Church has maintained, the idea of sacramental participation in the one ministry of Christ suggests that neither priest or deacon should be considered subordinate but rather working colleagues who represent the bishop in exercising his burden of office. Bishop Kasper in a paper he delivered to a conference on the diaconate in 1997 explained that the theology behind the sacrament of Holy Orders as outlined in "*Lumen Gentium*" springs from the understanding that it is Jesus who is the actual dispenser of sacramental ordination which therefore means that

through ordination, those ordained receive a lasting sign (indelible character) of the sacrament, through which, in a special way, they become one with Christ, the one High Priest, Shepherd and Bishop. As a result of ordination, those ordained are detached from the absolute authority of the bishop; by virtue of their direct link to Christ created by the sacrament of ordination, those ordained gain a certain independence and self responsibility, which the bishop has to respect. The bishop, the priest and the deacon therefore, each in their own way, have a part to play in the one mission of Jesus Christ and are thus dependent upon brotherly and comradely co-operation. Priests and deacons are not simply subordinates of the bishop, but should be addressed and treated by him as brothers and friends. . . . To support him, the bishop has, so to say, two arms, which at

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 384. See also Karl Rahner *Theological Investigations* vol. X, "The Teaching on the Diaconate by the Second Vatican Council." trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury Press, 1977) 229-231. Here Rahner, commenting on the theology behind the Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, explains that it carefully avoids saying the episcopate is a higher degree, above that of the priesthood. On the contrary, it regards the episcopate as constituting the plenitude of an order that is, though hierarchically structured, integrally one, and that exists in the Church in virtue of a divine institution. According to Rahner, the restored office of the diaconate exists on its own right with an authentic and special mode of participation in this one integral order in the Church.

times have different tasks, but which must work in co-operation with each other.¹⁸⁰

The above clarifies, then, that those who share in sacramental ordination literally participate in a sacrament that is directed to the order of the Church, “that all according to their proper role may cooperate in this common undertaking with one heart.”¹⁸¹ In this way deacons are not subordinate to the priests or the bishop but are considered colleagues exercising the one ministry of Jesus Christ. However, *Lumen Gentium* is careful to point out that deacons as one of the two arms of the episcopate, co-workers with the priests, represent a specific expression of this one ministry.

deacons, who receive the imposition of hands “not unto the priesthood, but unto ministry . . . are dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the bishop and his body of priests, in the service of liturgy, of the Gospel and of works of charity.”¹⁸²

This latter statement further clarifies that deacons are neither ‘mini-priests’ nor are they a liturgical backup for a shortage of priests.¹⁸³ They are an independent ministry in their own right,

¹⁸⁰ Walter Kasper, *The Deacon Offers an Ecclesiological View of the Present Day Challenges in the Church and Society*, Paper given at International Diaconate Conference, Brixen, Italy, October 1997. 4-5. The concept of the Council and Bishop Kasper, although certainly breaking with the Council of Trent, resurrects the theology of the early church. For example, Paul mentions the deacons as working directly with bishops (Phil. 1:1) Ignatius of Antioch described deacons as his colleagues as did several other early Church fathers, see footnote 120, Chapter Three,

¹⁸¹ Kasper, along with Congar, Küng, Schillebeeckx, stresses the leadership role of the bishop and priests, a perspective which most readily integrates with the notion a sacrament is directed to the order of the church, a concept that was expressed by the Second Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium*, no. 30. This notion of leadership is revisited at the end of this part of the chapter.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 387.

¹⁸³ Cardinal Nieves, Archbishop of San Juan de Puerto Rico, in his address to the deacons assembled in Rome for the Jubilee Celebration (19 February 2000) rejected this notion of mini or substitute priests. He refers to deacons as a herald: *the angel of Evangelismos*. Deacons who have been described as an arm of the episcopate are not an artificial one, but rather a living arm in whose vein flows the blood of

ordained for the 'performance of service' representing the *diakonia* of Christ, who came to serve and not to be served. However, the Church by specifying that diaconal ministry is service did not intend to limit it to social and charity work. The council fathers stipulated that deacons through the imposition of hands are closely bound to the altar, with the duty to proclaim the Gospel.¹⁸⁴ Through the sacramental grace received in ordination their ministry becomes more fruitful.¹⁸⁵ Paul VI clarified this when he drew on the ancient writings of Ignatius of Antioch and others in teaching that deacons "... are the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ ... deacons not for food and drink, but servants of the Church of God."¹⁸⁶

While the above discussion demonstrates that the principal role and function of the permanent deacon is not a form of social work or simply limited to serving at the table, the council fathers were not rejecting the role of 'service' as being a vital component of diaconal ministry. Rather, they defined it in broader terms. Service is not restricted to people who are economically disadvantaged, but reaches out to all who are spiritually, emotionally and intellectually poor. That is why preaching, catechesis or teaching the uninformed is a service,

Christ the Servant. See Roberto O. Gonzales Nieves *The Permanent Diaconate: Its Identity, Functions, and Prospects. Address to the Permanent Deacons of the World, Rome 19 February 2000*. Vatican archives - on line <http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/cc.../jub-deacons-20000219-nieves-en.htm> 3.

¹⁸⁴*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 173. See also *The Code of Canon Law*, English. trans.(London: Collins Liturgical Publication, 1983), no.1008.

¹⁸⁵*Decree of the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad gentes divinitus)* Vatican II December 7, 1965, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*' ed., Austin Flannery, O.P. 813-862. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1981) 814. Herein after known as *Ad Gentes Divinitus*.

¹⁸⁶ *Ad Pascendum*, 434. Paul VI clearly understood the essence of the permanent diaconate. The diaconate, according to Paul VI, is not just a sacrament of service, but the sacrament of Christ, of which service is but one part - the others are love, holiness, living the image of Christ. For a further discussion on this see Douglas M. LeClair, *The Deacon as an Icon of Christ* (Phoenix, Ariz.: Catholic Sun Publishing, 2001), 11-14.

as well as bringing the Eucharist from the altar to the sick or just visiting those who are lonely.

In the final analysis it is a work of love and charity, to seek out people in their loneliness, to bring them together and thus build Christian communities. Accordingly . . . all three aspects of service in the Church - suffering, liturgy, as well as *diakonia* in the narrower sense - should be attributed to the deacon.¹⁸⁷

This broader definition of 'service' is the source of the leadership that is acknowledged with the diaconate. While the two principal documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes Divinitus* both expressly state that the deacon's responsibility is to actively engage himself in works expressive of love in the form of social and charitable activities it also acknowledges that the deacon shares in the church's official function of providing official guidance and leadership.¹⁸⁸ In other words, deacons share in the leadership of the Church since they are part of the basic function of the Church ministry which represents the service of Christ. In this way the deacon as an ordained minister enhances the leadership function of the church by representing Jesus the servant, who came to serve (Mk 10:45), humbling himself and assuming the condition of a slave (Phil 2:6).

In summary, then, the council fathers chose to restore the ancient sacred office of deacon rather than renew a moribund office that had simply become a transitional step to the priesthood. Restoring the sacred office as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy indicated that the permanent deacon through ordination shared in the ministry of the bishop, not in a subordinate role but rather as one of the two arms of the episcopate, a co-worker with the priests,

¹⁸⁷Kasper, *Theology and Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 7.

¹⁸⁸Rahner, *The Teaching on the Diaconate by the Second Vatican Council*, 225-226.

representing a specific expression of this one ministry. Whereas the priest shares in the fullness of the priesthood of Christ as constituted in the episcopacy, the deacon participates in the *diakonia* of Christ which is also fully expressed in the mission of the bishop.¹⁸⁹ In this respect, deacons are neither mini-priests nor a lay person with a special social service ministry within the Church. Instead, deacons represent the *diakonia* of Christ called to express this role of service through ministry at the altar, through the proclamation of the Gospel and through service to people who are economically, spiritually, emotionally and intellectually poor. It is through this comprehensive ministry of service that the deacon participates in the leadership of the Church.

The Three-fold Ministry of the Deacon

As discussed earlier in this chapter the Second Vatican Council rejected the German-style renewed diaconate of social service in favour of a restoration that opened up broad ministerial areas for deacons which it identified as the service of the liturgy, of the Gospel and of works of charity.¹⁹⁰ It is also important to note that this threefold ministry does not refer to separate pastoral responsibilities but rather a synthesis of ministries in the person of the deacon. As Nieves has argued:

¹⁸⁹ Alone, neither the diaconate nor the presbyterate is the fullness of the priesthood found in the episcopacy. The presbyters and the deacons are different, not on the ground that one is called for service and other is not, but on the ground of the proper dimension of the service to which they are called: one to the presbyteral, who serves through his special sacramental ministry, and the other to the diaconal service,. See Horvath, *Theology of a New Diaconate*, 523.

¹⁹⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 387. For a discussion on the German-style social service diaconate see John N. Collins, *Making Better Use of Deacons*, <http://www.ocw.webcentral.com.au/John.%20Collins.htm> retrieved 1 December 2003. Collins argues in this article, as well as in his text *Deacons and the Church* that despite the overwhelming support by the bishops at the Second Vatican Council for a broad based pastoral ministry the diaconate has simply been reduced to a narrower single social service function.

these three offices are concentric. What I mean is that they turn around the pivot of Christ the Servant in the person of the deacon. You cannot draw a circle without first fixing the centre where you will lay your compasses. A circle is defined by its centre, just as the three-fold diaconal ministry is defined by Christ the Servant.¹⁹¹

This broad pastoral vision with 'Christ the Servant' as the pivot not only defines this sacred office but governs any interpretation of this threefold ministry and the manner in which it is expressed in the ministry of the deacon. This notion is conveyed in various church documents beginning with the *Constitution on the Church* up to the most recent pronouncements, such as the *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* issued in 1998. While these documents are important, any discussion of the church's understanding of this threefold ministry would be negligent if it did not include a consideration of the ordination rite, the old *lex orandi, lex credendi* principle. The Rite, accordingly, provides a public declaration of the identity and role of the permanent deacon; it is the mission statement that defines diaconal ministry.

Ordained for Service of the Bishop

The first significant point to note is that the deacon is ordained by the bishop alone whereas a priest is ordained by a bishop with other priests joining in. The reason for this is that a deacon is ordained for service of the bishop while a priest shares in the priesthood of the episcopate. I wish to argue that this difference in the ritual is not meant to create a division

¹⁹¹Nieves, *The Permanent Diaconate: Its Identity, Functions, and Prospects*, 4.

between priests and deacons but rather to distinguish the different yet complementary roles they play.

According to Tibor Horvath while both presbyter and deacon share in the sacramental-personal presence of the risen Christ, the Eternal High Priest which is fully expressed in the episcopacy, these two offices differ in the manner in which they exercise the *diakonia* of Christ, the proper mission of the bishop.¹⁹² In other words, Horvath argues, it is the *diakonia* of Christ which is fully expressed in the office of the bishop that both the presbyter and deacon have a share. The deacon is the active sacramental personal presence of Christ, the Eternal High Priest, reconciling and renovating humanity with God and in God in the external or material dimension of the world (horizontal), while the presbyter represents the Eternal High Priesthood of Christ reconciling and renovating humanity with God and in God in the internal or spiritual dimension of the world (vertical).¹⁹³ In addition to this participation in the *diakonia* of Christ, the hierarchical structure is not linear but rather has a tripartite form. This Trinitarian-like composition suggests that the diaconate is not subordinate but a partner in fulfilling the apostolic ministry imparted to the church by Christ. This equality is evident, first of all, when the church fathers proposed that ordained ministry is not made up of just the episcopate and the presbyterate but also the permanent diaconate, “a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy.”¹⁹⁴ Secondly,

¹⁹² Horvath, *Theology of a New Diaconate*, 510-20. Horvath argues in his paper for the Canadian bishops that the proper mission of the bishop is ‘*diakonia*’ and without this mission, the bishops would not share in the complete mission of Christ.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 515.

¹⁹⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, 387. When the bishops declared that the diaconate be restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy they were redefining the sacrament of orders that focussed on the priesthood and recognized the diaconate only as a stepping stone toward this sacred office.

it is observable in the decision by the Second Vatican Council, when the council fathers chose to recognize that the restored office of the diaconate grows out of the ancient office of deacon who enjoyed a special relationship with the bishop.¹⁹⁵ As Ernest J. Fiedler concluded in his study of the relationship between these three sacred offices:

Thus, the “hierarchy” in question does not so much run in a descending line—from bishop to priest to deacon— as it is triangular, with priest and deacons in a parallel, complementary relationship to the bishop.¹⁹⁶

On the surface, this description would appear to suggest that the deacon is responsible directly to the bishop and not to the presbyterate. However, when the council fathers provided the priests with functions formerly the sole responsibility of the bishop this tripartite relationship needed to be clarified. This clarification was accomplished by Paul VI when he issued his *motu proprio* authorizing the restoration of the diaconate in which he outlined how the deacon will exercise the functions assigned to him by the Constitution on the Church:

All these functions must be carried out in perfect communion with the bishop and with his presbytery, that is to say, under the authority of the bishop and of the priests who are in charge of the care of souls in that place.¹⁹⁷

In other words deacons are subject to the direction of pastors in the same way they are responsible to the bishop in the care of souls. Again this is not a subordinate role but rather a

¹⁹⁵ *Ad Pascendum*, 434

¹⁹⁶ Ernest J. Fiedler “The Permanent Diaconate,” *Theology Today* 36 (1979), 5.

¹⁹⁷ Paul VI, *General Norms for Restoring the Permanent Diaconate in the Latin Church (Sacrum, Diaconatus Ordinem)*, issued *motu proprio*, 18 June, 1967. (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Bishops, 1968). It is interesting to note that when the Code of Canon Law was amended in 1983 Canon 521 replaced the 1917 edict which allowed deacons to be appointed ‘pastors,’ restricting it now to priests alone. However, Canon Law does allow for the appointment of deacons as Administrators of parishes, responsible for the care of souls within their jurisdiction, but under the direction of the bishop.

recognition that it is the presbyterate who assists the bishop with fulfilling his magisterial role as opposed to his servant role. A deacon who is assigned to a parish is then responsible to the pastor but it is important to note that the deacon is there by an episcopal appointment that can only be altered by the bishop. In this way the deacon remains accountable to the bishop and yet under the direction of the pastor who represents the bishop in the care of the souls within a particular parish.

Finally, the role of the restored permanent deacon, who had been the “eyes and ears” of the bishop and often his chief advisor, needed to be clarified in light of the existing church practice which employed a council of priests as the principal advisors for the diocesan bishop. When canon law formally recognized this current practice it was simply reflecting what had become a reality over the centuries after the decline of this ancient sacred office.¹⁹⁸ Although it was a modification that formally altered a function frequently associated with the ancient office of deacon it did not drastically change the role the deacon fulfills on behalf of the bishop. While it is clear that the principal advisor to the bishop is now the council of priests, the deacon can still be identified as the “eyes and ears” of the bishop since the deacon’s ministry of service is an extension of the bishop’s solicitude for the growth and well being of the entire flock. In order to fulfill this role the relationship between the bishop and his deacons must be structured in such a way as to allow regular dialogue about the needs observed in the course of diaconal ministry and about the diocese’s response.¹⁹⁹ This importance of this advisory function was acknowledged

¹⁹⁸*Code of Canon Law*. Canon 495 and 502 stipulates that the council of priests are responsible for advising the bishop. And as the name suggests “council of priests” restricts membership to presbyters.

¹⁹⁹Shugrue, *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, 45.

by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in their 1988 report concerning the service ministry of deacons.

The college of deacons, under the bishop's direction, might well serve as an official voice for the conscience of the diocesan Church, reflecting a sensitivity to the Gospel's requirement for love of neighbour that motivates so many believers to expend themselves The deacon's individual witness might fittingly include such corporate responsibility to offer particular counsel to the bishop in his supervision of the diocesan Church's ministries of love and justice.²⁰⁰

Before moving to a consideration of diaconal identity through an examination of each of the three specific ministries associated with this sacred office, it is important to provide a brief summary of this part, which in many respects supports the observations made earlier in this chapter. The first important item, then, is the recognition that the three-fold ministry of the deacon does not refer to separate pastoral functions but rather a synthesis of ministries that is defined by Christ, who is the centre of diaconal ministry. Secondly, the ordination rite affirms that the deacon does not hold a subordinate role in the hierarchy but rather shares with the presbyterate in the one mission of the bishop, the *diakonia* of Christ. In addition, it further discloses that through ordination the deacon enters into a special relationship with the bishop, reminiscent of the relationship that existed in the early church. Although the church documents indicate that the deacon continues to be the eyes and ears of the bishop, it is no longer as a principal adviser but rather as an extension of the bishop's solicitude for the growth and well

²⁰⁰Ibid., 46. Note that while the National Conference (U.S.A.) of Catholic Bishops identify the existence or perhaps the need for corporate diocesan bodies such as the "College of Deacons," this formal structure is not common throughout the United States or Canada. Nevertheless, dioceses generally do have some form of diaconate committee or board but unfortunately the composition of these boards - largely made up of religious, lay and priest, - suggests that they are there to provide leadership and direction to the diaconate community, not to be an advisory body to the diocesan bishop.

being of the entire flock. While the deacon holds an equal but complimentary role with the priest, where the deacon has received an episcopal appointment to a parish he becomes subject to the direction of the pastor who represents the bishop in the care of souls within that particular parish.

Service of the Gospel or Word (munus docendi)

The deacon fulfills this ministry of the Word by proclaiming the Holy Gospel during the Eucharistic liturgy, and instructing the faithful through preaching, catecheses and example. The responsibility to proclaim the Holy Gospel belongs to the deacon assisting at the Eucharist. Only if there is no deacon present may a priest read the Gospel.²⁰¹ This special prerogative highlights the manner in which the diaconate participates in the episcopacy.²⁰² As the priest shares in the office of the bishop through the sanctification of the gifts offered at the Eucharistic celebration, it is the deacon who shares in the bishops' calling to proclaim the gospel in a world waiting for the vivifying word.²⁰³

Although the proclamation of the Gospel through reading, preaching and catecheses are three principal ways this ministry is exercised, it is the deacon's example that holds the key for understanding the role of this specific service. This importance is revealed, first of all, in the

²⁰¹*New Introductions to the Sacramentary and Lectionary* (Ottawa: Publication Services Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983) 21, 67-68.

²⁰²This connection, while evident in the ordination ritual that calls for both bishops and deacons to be heralds of the Gospel, it is even more apparent in the ordination rite of a bishop. When the Holy Spirit is invoked during the Episcopal Prayer of Consecration two deacons, standing like sentinels on each side of the priest about to be ordained a bishop, hold over the ordinand's head an open book of the Gospels.

²⁰³Nieves *The Permanent Diaconate: Its Identity, Functions, and Prospects*. 5

ordination rite when the Church identifies the Ministry of the Word or Service of the Gospel as the first aspect of diaconal ministry over the ministry of Liturgy which is traditionally listed as the first of the threefold ministries.²⁰⁴

Secondly, when the deacon receives the book of Gospels with the instruction to become its herald, going from gospel to life and life to gospel,²⁰⁵ the Church is signalling that for diaconal ministry to be effective the Gospel must be en fleshed. It must be proclaimed in concrete actions - not just spoken. In effect this means that deacons

should strive to transmit the word in their professional lives. Either explicitly or merely by their active presence in places where public opinion is formed and ethical norms are applied.²⁰⁶

It is this enfleshment that blends the threefold diaconal ministry into one. The deacon who internalizes the Gospel not only brings harmony to his ministry of word, liturgy and charity but also makes it possible for the deacon to fulfill his part in the sacrament of holy orders, by bringing the good news to the world.

²⁰⁴ After the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the prayer of consecration, the ordinands wearing their stole and dalmatic kneel before the bishop who then hands each of them the Book of Gospels with these words: "Receive Christ's Gospel of which you have been the herald; turn what you read into living faith, teach what has become living faith inside you and accomplish what you have taught" *Pontificale Romanum, - De Ordinatione Episcopi, Presbyterorum et Diaconorum* (Editio typica, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1972), 125.

²⁰⁵ This admonition to live the gospel was taken to heart by St. Francis of Assisi, who some scholars believe was an ordained deacon. He instructed his companions that if they must preach to do so through personal example. This is clearly demonstrated in St. Francis of Assisi, *The Rule of 1221 in St. Francis of Assisi Omnibus of Sources*, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983) 44. See also *The Rule for Secular Franciscans as Approved by Paul VI* as part of the symposium "The Rule of St. Francis" at the annual day of reflection for the Holy Rosary Fraternity, Belleville, Ontario, 23 February 1985. Handout, 1.

²⁰⁶ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1998), 92. Herein after known as "Directory."

In summary, the placement of the Gospel at the beginning of the ordination rite along with the instruction to become heralds of the Gospel highlight the deacons special association with the bishop. However, as a herald of the Gospel, the deacon is expected to integrate the Gospel message into his life so that the good news may be transmitted beyond the Church's boundaries. By allowing the Gospel to shape his identity the deacon brings a wholeness to his threefold ministry and in this way becomes a sign which nourishes, instructs and challenges the world.

Service of the Liturgy

Service of the Liturgy or at the Altar (*munus sanctificandi*) is a ministry of sanctification. This ministry of sanctification is expressed in prayer, in the solemn administration of baptism, in the custody and distribution of the Eucharist, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the presiding at the rites of funeral and burials, in the administration of sacramentals,²⁰⁷ and through participation in the celebration of Holy Mass.²⁰⁸ This expression of diaconal ministry is both its point of departure and arrival, clearly shows that the diaconate cannot be reduced to simple social service.²⁰⁹ Service at the altar, in particular the deacon's participation in the Eucharist, is the source of the sacramental grace which nourishes his entire ministry.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, 387. See also *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 180-181.

²⁰⁸ *Directory*, 88.

²⁰⁹ *Basic Norms*, 27. *Directory*, 88.

²¹⁰ The basis for this conclusion is drawn from the fact that since the Church teaches that the liturgy is the summit to which the activity of the Church is directed and the font from which all her power flows, it then follows that it is here that the deacon receives the grace which nourishes his entire ministry.

The deacon, as a Minister of the Liturgy, assists the bishop and priests in the sanctification of the Christian community. This is most evident in his participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Since the permanent deacon is entrusted with liturgical responsibilities that differ from both the laity and the priesthood they hold the ideal position to be a bridge between the sacred and the secular.

he effectively represents on the one hand, the people of God and, specifically, helps them to unite their lives to the offering of Christ; while on the other, in the name of Christ himself, he helps the Church to participate in the fruits of the sacrifice.²¹¹

In summary, the deacon's liturgical role is integral to his identity. It is the foundation for the threefold diaconal ministry, as well as the source of grace that nourishes his entire ministry. It is the deacon's liturgical service that assist the bishop and priests with the sanctification of the Christian community. This share in the role of sanctification is clearly evident in the deacon's participation in the Sunday Eucharist. It is clearly both the point of departure and arrival.

The Deacon and the Eucharistic Celebration

While the Sunday Eucharist may be described as the source and summit of diaconal ministry, it also contains within the rubrics the Church's understanding of this sacred office.

See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. 6. See also *Directory*, 94.

²¹¹Directory, 94. The deacon's ministry of service in the world (charity) reminds the assembly that we cannot share the eucharistic bread without sharing our daily bread as well. For this understanding of the Eucharist see Walter Kasper's discussion of the Eucharist as *communio*. He submits that it is this aspect which gives the eucharist celebration its meaning. In this regard it is wrong to turn the eucharist into a race or class eucharist, either by making it the exclusive celebration of the privileged, or by making it the revolutionary celebration of the under-privileged. But Kasper adds the nature of the eucharist is equally violated if we fail to recognize the ethical presuppositions and consequences of the common celebration: the practically realized *agape* whose minimum requirement is the fulfilment of the demands of social justice. Kasper, *Theology & Church*, 191.

When these rubrics and other liturgical guidelines are considered, the first and foremost point recognized is that the ministry of the deacon is never a ministry alone, it is always exercised on behalf of and in concert with the entire Body of Christ. This notion is particularly evident in the gathering rite at the beginning of Mass, which calls the people of God together so that with their minds and hearts united they give thanks and praise for the great gifts received from God.

The deacon entrusted with the function of carrying the Book of the Gospels in the procession, placing it on the altar, is an action which prepares people to hear the Word of God that will be proclaimed in their midst. It is also a liturgical action which draws the assembly's attention to the deacon's ministry of charity. This activity, carrying the Word of God in procession to the sanctuary highlights the deacon's ministry of charity, which calls him to carry the Word of God to work, to homes, to the sick and elderly, to the hurting, to those celebrating new life, and to those who are dying. Since this liturgical action is connected with an ordained minister, it represents the manner in which the assembly is called to proclaim the Word of God in the world.²¹² This connection of ministerial unity and shared responsibility is enhanced when the deacon, at the beginning of the Eucharist, invites the assembly to join with him in the penitential acclamation by acknowledging those times when they have failed to carry the Word of God to all those who are in need.

²¹²This notion is based on the corporate understanding of holy orders that holds that bishops, priests and deacons do not receive the sacrament of orders for their betterment but for the whole community. Holy orders binds the ordinand to the community in a new way. This new relationship is a union in which the cleric and the layperson experience a mutuality of call and service. It is an interdependence which extends the sacramental reality of holy orders to all the faithful. This is particularly true of the diaconate since the deacon represents the servant Christ which all members of the Church are called to imitate. *Lumen Gentium*, 361; Shugrue. *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, 118-119; Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 201.

As we have seen in our earlier discussion the deacon who is mandated to read the Gospel must take it to heart. He need not preach, since as the sacramental expression of the servant Jesus, who has allowed the Gospel to shape his identity, he already gives witness to the *diakonia* of Christ. "It is precisely as such a sacramental good-news person that he stands before the gathered church to proclaim to it what has consumed him."²¹³

The deacon is also designated as the person to lead the petitions in the prayer of the faithful. It is especially through this part of the liturgy that the ministry of the deacon is tied to the gathered community of believers. By ministering to the people in his community, the deacon knows and understands their needs and is able to place them before God the Father. These prayers the deacon offers on behalf of the community during the liturgy are not his personal prayers, but rather the prayers that emerge from those who are in need within the community.

After proclaiming the Gospel and placing the petitions of the community before God, the deacon through his role with the preparations of the altar, the gathering of the gifts and their arrangement quietly models the ministry of service. Perhaps one of the most significant actions carried out by the deacon during this preparation time is pouring the wine and water into the chalice. Although this liturgical action appears to be simple, it contains within it a deeply meaningful gesture. First of all, the deacon, as a minister representing the servant Christ, through his prayers over the chalice reminds the assembly that they are called to share in the divinity of Christ the servant who came to share our humanity. Secondly, this mingling of wine and water reveals the manner in which the *diakonia* of Christ enables a diverse body of saints

²¹³*Sacrament of Service*, 106.

and sinners to become one in the body of Christ. In other words, the deacon's action here visibly manifests the deacon's sacramental -personal presence of Christ the Eternal High Priest who came to reconcile and renovate humankind with God and in God.

After the gifts are prepared the priest offers them up, praying one of the Eucharistic prayers. During this prayer of thanksgiving the deacon stands beside the priest, assisting him with the gifts to be offered and uniting his prayer with that of the assembly proclaiming together their faith. While the deacon's role is passive during this part of the Eucharist, his presence is important since it announces to the congregation that the covenant to

which it is called and which it remembers and celebrates here is a covenant which binds it to the service of the kingdom of God, not only in word but also in action.²¹⁴

The Eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving is followed by the Lord's prayer which leads to the deacon's invitation to the community to exchange a sign of peace. This invitation is more than a greeting, it is a sign that we are truly in covenant with the God of peace; it is a reminder to the assembly that as a representative of the Prince of Peace we are called to extend the peace of Christ beyond the boundaries of the Church, into our work place, our homes, and our community. In other words, the deacon's invitation to the community, as it was with his role in the penitential rite, is both an invitation and a challenge. "If you want to become a person of peace, watch me."²¹⁵

After the deacon, who is an 'ordinary minister of the Eucharist,' assists the priest in

²¹⁴Ibid., 108.

²¹⁵Ibid., 109.

offering the sacred species to those who approach the table of the Lord, he clears the table and purifies the sacred vessels used in the communion rite. In both the distribution and the purification the deacon fulfills his role through service. This action naturally flows into the rite of dismissal when the deacon bids the assembly, "Let us go in peace, to love and serve the Lord." Once again, this final invitation to the gathered church is very significant. His words are more than encouragement, they are a commission.

He is sending the congregation to go out and continue the work for which they have been called, to bring about the kingdom of God. . . . What he speaks to them, he speaks to himself first. He needs to fulfill the vocation to which he has been called.²¹⁶

In summary, the deacon's liturgical role in the Eucharist is quite significant. While the rubrics limit the deacon's part to a few words and a few actions, his presence, alongside the priest, provides a sacramental symbolism which proclaims that Christ came to serve and not to be served. The deacon's role of service at the table of the Lord is connected inextricably with his ministry of the Gospel and Charity. The deacon, who has allowed the Gospel message to consume him, proclaims it in the midst of the assembly. This is a proclamation that is more than words, since they reflect his living out the good-news of Christ in the world. His service in the community is made manifest when he serves the priest and congregation during the Eucharist and invites them to follow his lead, as reconciler, peacemaker and a symbol of the servant Christ. McCaslin and Lawler in their consideration of the role of the deacon in the Liturgy captures the importance of this aspect of the threefold ministry when they conclude:

²¹⁶Michael Cook, "Liturgy - Sign and Symbol of Ministry," *Deacon Digest* 10 (March/April 1993): 31.

Some priests look upon the deacon's role as so insignificant that, even with a deacon present, they assume his role into theirs. That is very unfortunate for the Church. For we need all the symbols we can find to make real for us what it means to be another Christ in the world.²¹⁷

Service of Works of Charity

Liturgy and ministry of the word are integral aspects of the threefold diaconal ministry. These two ministries are foundations from which the identity of the deacon springs; if the deacon has integrated the Gospel into his life, allowing it to consume him, then his entire ministry will be shaped by the good news of Christ; this witness to the Word of God in the deacon's ministry and proclamation in the assembly is made visible and effective in the liturgy. However, as we have seen with the preceding discussion, the diaconal ministry of word and liturgy exists primarily for the sake of the deacon's ministry of service in the world.

Liturgy and ministry of the word are essential to a healthy diaconate, but I venture to say if these aspects of ministry receive more than 20% of our time, then in my opinion, we are endangering or eroding the very foundation of the diaconate.²¹⁸

The "Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons" describes the *diakonia of charity* as a ministry of the deacon, exercised in hierarchal communion with the bishop and his priests, in order to serve all the faithful without discrimination, and in particular to care for the

²¹⁷*Sacrament of Service*, 109-110. These authors, in this very important text, place a great deal of emphasis on sacramental symbolism. They see the deacon as the 'helper' of the priest who is the leader in the community. Accordingly, the two together proclaim not only the essential nature of the Church itself called to service and leadership, but the very nature of the one who calls it, namely Jesus, the primal leader and deacon.

²¹⁸John Pistone, "The Diaconate and the 80-20 Rule," *Deacon Digest* 11 (November / December 1994): 8.

suffering and the sinful.²¹⁹ This mandate to the service of charity is heard in the prayer of ordination, when the bishop implores God the Father to fill the ordinands with all the virtues so that they may be

sincere in charity, solicitous towards the weak and the poor, humble in their service . . . [and] may they be the image of your Son who did not come to be served but to serve.²²⁰

As ministers of Christ the Servant and of the Church, the deacon's ministry of charity should bring those they encounter to an experience of God's love, moving the individual to conversion by opening their heart to the work of grace.

Deacons who are entrusted to assist the bishop with diocesan and parochial works of charity fulfil their mandate in a variety of ways, since the spiritual and material needs of people today are greatly diversified. This diversity is observed in the deacon's service of charity in Christian education; in training preachers, youth groups, and lay groups; in promoting life in all its phases, transforming the world according to the Christian order, as well as service in the administration of goods and in the Church's charitable activities.²²¹ In these, and through other ways, the deacon serves by word and example so that all the faithful may be led to place themselves at the constant service of their brothers and sisters.

While the deacon's direct service to those in need is an important expression of his ministry of Charity it is also fulfilled when the deacon is an animator and promoter of the

²¹⁹ *Directory*, 101-102.

²²⁰ *Pontificale Romanum - De ordinatione Episcopoi, presbyterum et diaconorum*, n. 207, p. 122, (Prex Ordinationis).

²²¹ *Directory*, 101-102.

Church's service in local Christian communities.²²² In other words, the deacon is also charged with the responsibility of stirring up and mobilizing the Christian community, summoning them to engage in works of charity and justice for the sake of those in need.²²³ In this capacity, the deacon's vocation extends beyond being a sacramental sign of the Church's care for the needy to a duty that requires the deacon to, first of all, make the needy visible to the Christian community and then, secondly, to challenge the faithful to respond to their plight

In summary, the deacon's ministry of charity is an expression of the gospel that has consumed him. As a minister of service, nourished through his participation in the Eucharist he is able to sanctify the world by bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to all those in need, either through his example, his direct participation or as an animator and agent drawing forth the gifts of others to assist the church with its service in the community.

In the next chapter we will consider the personal witness and experience of deacons serving their local faith communities. This will be accomplished from the data gleaned from the results of the survey questionnaire that was distributed to deacons living across Canada.

²²²*Permanent Deacons in the United States, Guidelines on Their Formation and Ministry* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1999), 35.

²²³Bryan Massingale, "A Theological Vision of Diaconate," *Deacon Digest* 13 (May / June 1996): 27.

CHAPTER FIVE

A NATIONAL STUDY OF THE PERMANENT DIACONATE IN CANADA

Summary of Diaconal Identity based on Literature

The intent of this chapter is to determine how permanent deacons serving in various Canadian dioceses understand their ministerial identity. Before moving to the results and analysis of the survey employed to determine this self understanding, it is important to begin with a review of how biblical, historical and ecclesiastical literature has understood the identity of the permanent deacon. This overview will furnish the necessary framework needed to measure the consonance and dissonance which exists between the extant literature and the lived experience.

The documents of Church concerning the diaconate propose that deacons are ordained ministers who participate in the hierarchy of the Church through a ministry that is expressed through a threefold function: word, liturgy and service. While these three aspects of diaconal ministry appear to represent three distinct functions, they are in fact one ministry unified in Christ the servant. However, when these three expressions of *diakonia* are considered individually, they reveal the Church's understanding of diaconal identity. In the first of the three-fold ministries, service of the word, the Church teaches that the permanent deacon's function to proclaim the gospel and to preach, extends beyond this liturgical and catechetical role to include a way of life that has been formed through the gospel. In other words, the

deacon's entire life is consumed by the word of God. The second of this tri-fold ministry is liturgy or service at the altar. This expression of service unites the deacon with priest and bishop in their leadership role within the Church. While the deacon plays a minor role within the Sunday Eucharist, it is the source and summit of his ministry, that enables him to fulfil both his *ministry of word and charity*. The deacon's service at the altar provides not only a medium to express his *ministry of the word*, but it also provides the *nourishment* that enables him to sanctify the world through his *ministry of charity*. In other words, the *union of word and liturgy* culminates and finds its expression through diaconal service which reveals the good news of Jesus Christ to all those in need, either through their example, their direct participation or as an animator and agent drawing forth the gifts of others to assist the church with its service in the community. While the Church considers the *ministry of charity* as a vital component of diaconal ministry, they chose not to restrict its identity to serving people who are economically or physically disadvantaged. Instead, the Church broadened this narrow definition to include all who are spiritually, emotionally and intellectually poor. In this way the entire tri-fold ministry of the diaconate becomes one of service.

In addition to this three-fold ministry the Church chose to restore the ancient sacred office of deacon, rather than renew an ecclesiastical office that had become simply a transitional step to the priesthood. In doing this, the Church embraced the lesson that history disclosed, that when function is considered over its *sacramental character*, then the office of deacon is redundant. History has taught the Church that it is the *sacramental character* that expresses the true identity of this sacred office. This sacramental ingredient not only shapes our understanding of the office but also how the deacon relates to the other grades of holy orders (bishop, presbyters) and the

laity; a relationship that is not considered subordinate but rather regarded as collegial. As *Lumen Gentium* was careful to point out deacons are one of the two arms of the episcopate, co-workers with the priests, representing a specific expression of the one ministry of Jesus Christ. Whereas the bishop and presbyter are often described by the Church as a sacred office configured to Christ the Shepherd, the diaconate is identified as being configured to Christ the servant.

Diaconal identity, in particular the notion that the sacred office of permanent diaconate is configured to Christ the servant, finds its origins in both the Old and New Testaments. First of all, it revealed that the public ministry and teaching of Jesus provide a prototype for *diakonia*. Secondly, this call to be servant is not limited to a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but rather is the basis of living out our baptismal vocation. Finally, the application of the biblical titles *'ebed* and *diakonos* to an ecclesiastical office suggests that the office holder is in the service of another, marked by a special relationship with the Master, and is called to be a divine messenger and agent of justice and equity to all. In other words, the deacon who represents Christ in a special way, also serves as a prototype for all the baptized who are called to live out the baptismal vocation of *diakonia*.

In summary, the deacon as an ordained minister is a member of the hierarchy and shares in the leadership of the Church. As a minister of word, liturgy and charity he expresses his participation in the one ministry of Jesus Christ. As a representative of Christ the servant, the deacon is called to reach out to all those who are spiritually, emotionally and intellectually poor and in this way serves as a prototype for all the baptized called to live out their baptismal vocation of *diakonia*.

As a member of the hierarchy configured to Christ the servant, the deacon continues Christ's ministry on earth through sacramental, liturgical and pastoral functions. In exercising this threefold function the deacon makes Christ, the sacrament of God's saving love, visible to the spiritually, economically, emotionally and intellectually challenged. A visible presence that is not limited to ministerial functions, since as a sacramental sign of Christ, the deacon makes Christ visible in all his activities, whether it is family life, secular occupation, leisure or ministerial vocation. In this way, the deacon continues not only the ministry of Christ on earth but also manifest his presence.

Permanent Deacon's Understanding of their Identity

While the introduction to this chapter provided a summary of diaconal identity from a biblical, historical and ecclesiastical perspective, we must now examine the permanent deacons' understanding of their ministerial identity. This information was gathered through a national survey in the Fall of 2003. Surveys were sent to three hundred of the eight hundred and fifty-eight deacons serving across Canada.²²⁴ While the names were randomly selected, this method of choosing respondents was limited by two factors. The first, it was believed that since diocesan

²²⁴*Canadian Catholic Directory 2003* (Montreal, Q.C.: Novalis, 2003) The directory identifies 899 permanent deacons, with 41 of these being affiliated with either the Greek or Ukrainian Catholic Rite. It also indicates that there are 63 Roman Catholic dioceses with fifty-three of those dioceses having at least one permanent deacon. The one-third ratio was selected since this is similar to the proportion employed by the United States Conference of Bishops national study undertaken in 1995. They reported that the laws of probability suggest that the probability that p will be within a given range of P is greater for samples of 100 than for samples of 20 from the same population, and still greater for increments of 100 up to one thousand where the margin of error is minuscule. Since there are only eight hundred and fifty six deacons serving in Canada, compared to the American 9000, it was believed that three hundred would be a suitable number to contact. Although only one-third or ninety-nine deacons responded the margin of error would still be within the range of $3 + / -$ percentage points. *National Study of the Permanent Diaconate of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Washington: U.S. Conference of Bishops, 1996) 31-32 and 136.

formation programs may differ, a factor that might influence the perspective of the respondent, surveys were sent to representatives of each of the fifty-three of the sixty-three Canadian dioceses that presently have permanent deacons. Secondly, since diocesan formation programs have undergone significant development and change over the years, the results of any questionnaire would be open to misinterpretation if it failed to consider length of service.

The survey, relying on a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions, was designed to accomplish two important tasks in relation to diaconal identity. First of all, it was intended to provide a profile of the participant, their relationship with other clergy, parish organizations and laity; secondly, it was designed to disclose how deacons understand their identity and ministerial role, including their perception of how others see them. While the survey form failed to ask which diocese they were presently serving within, the return address and/or postal code indicated that all regions of Canada were represented.

Ninety-nine of the three hundred surveys sent out were completed; twenty-five were returned by the post office indicating the person had moved and left no forwarding address, and one hundred and seventy-six did not respond. All but one of the one-third that did complete the questionnaire answered all questions, with twenty respondents adding additional comments in the margin in order to clarify their choice. The one exception did not complete survey beyond question 33.

Survey Results

The results of the survey are reported as percentages. Since the appendix to this dissertation has a copy of the actual questionnaire, the summary below represents an abbreviated version of the actual document. Those questions, specifically 6, 7, 12 and 45, while they were

helpful in developing background information on the respondents they were not shown below since the data generated was not essential for the goals of this thesis project. In addition, where no respondent selected one of the possible choices for their answer, thus assigning that description a zero value, that option was not included with the following summary.

1. How long have you been a permanent deacon?

a. 1 to 3 years.	16.7%
b. 4 to 7 years	31.6%
c. 8 to 11 years	18.2%
d. 12 yrs plus	33.5%

2. In addition to a call from God, what primarily caused you to consider the diaconate?

a. I was inspired by the ministry of another deacon	12.1%
b. I was inspired by the ministry of a priest	4.5%
c. Need to deepen the service(s) I was already giving to the Church	59.1%
d. My wife and family encouraged me to become a deacon	9.1%
e. Other ²²⁵	15.2%

3. If you answered "a" briefly describe whether it was the ministry or the deacon that was the source of the inspiration.

The majority of the deacons who answered "a" suggested that it was the person not the ministry that inspired their vocation.

4. As a permanent deacon my years of ministry have been truly fruitful, rewarding and extremely satisfying.

a. Strongly Agree	65.2%
b. Agree	34.8%

²²⁵Deacons responding here indicated that they became deacons for the following reasons: a desire to share his joy with others; as a Religious Brother it was a natural step; after surviving death believed God wanted more from him; asked by priest; original plan was for presbyterate; recommended by bishop.

5. I believe that what is essential for the effective exercise of my ministry is
- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. | contractual agreement with the parish | 7.6% |
| b. | relationship with my pastor | 6.1% |
| c. | relationship with the parish | 16.7 |
| d. | relationship with Christ | 62 % |
| e. | Other | 7.6% ²²⁶ |
8. As a deacon called to fulfill the three fold function, Liturgy, Word, Charity, I find that most of my time is spent in ministries associated with:
- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|-------|
| a. | Liturgy (Service at the Altar) | 18.2% |
| b. | Word (preaching, teaching) | 10.6% |
| c. | Charity | 25.8% |
| d. | All about equal time | 42.4% |
| e. | Other | 3% |
9. As a permanent deacon assigned to a parish I have found that I was well received and supported in my ministry.
- | | | |
|----|-------------------|-------|
| f. | Strongly Agree | 51.5% |
| g. | Agree | 41% |
| h. | Disagree | 3% |
| i. | Strongly disagree | 1.5% |
| j. | Not certain | 3% |
10. Worship and fellowship are the most significant aspects of my ministry.
- | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------|
| a | Strongly Agree | 19.7% |
| b | Agree | 51.5% |
| c | Disagree | 22.8% |
| d | Strongly disagree | 1.5% |
| e | Not certain | 4.5% |

²²⁶One respondent stated even a good relationship with Christ it is difficult to serve without a good relationship with pastor.

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 11. | Charity and service are the most significant aspects of my ministry | |
| a | Strongly Agree | 51.5% |
| b | Agree | 39.4% |
| c | Disagree | 9.1% |
| 13. | My activities in my daily life contribute positively to a credible image of the Church. | |
| a | Strongly Agree | 48.5% |
| b | Agree | 48.5% |
| e | Not certain | 3% |

Using the scale below, how would you rate your relationship with the following:

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 14. | The bishop | |
| a | Feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated | 27 % |
| b | Feel like a team member, work is not known but which is appreciated | 43.2% |
| c | very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated | 14.9% |
| d | no feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated. | 14.9% |
| 15. | Diocesan / religious priests I associate with in ministry | |
| a | Feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated | 42.4% |
| b | Feel like a team member, work is not known but which is appreciated | 28.9% |
| c | Very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated | 21.2% |
| d | No feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated. | 3% |
| e | Not applicable | 4.5% |
| 16. | My pastor | |
| a | Feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated | 69.8% |
| b | Feel like a team member, work is not known but which is appreciated | 13.6% |
| c | Very little feeling of being a team member | 12.1% |
| d | No feeling of being a team member | 1.5% |
| e | Not applicable | 3% |

17.	My parish	
a	Feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated	66.7%
b	Feel like a team member, work is not known but which is appreciated	21.2%
c	Very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated	7.6%
e	Not applicable	4.5%
18.	Lay parish staff	
a	Feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated	59.1%
b	Feel like a team member, work is not known but which is appreciated	15.2%
c	Very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated	9.1%
d	No feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated	3%
e	Not applicable	13.6%
19.	My parish council	
a	Feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated	43.9%
b	Feel like a team member, work is not known but which is appreciated	15.2%
c	Very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.	3%
d	No feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.	9.1%
e	Not applicable	28.8%
20.	Sister with whom I work	
a	Feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated	21.2%
b	Feel like a team member whose work is not known personally, but which is appreciated.	6.1%
c	Very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated	3%
d	No feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.	1.5%
e	Not applicable	68.2%
<i>Using the scale below, how would you rate the vision of the diaconate by the following</i>		
21.	The bishop	
a	There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate	59.2%
b	Some understanding of its role, but nothing very specific	24.2%
c	There is some confusion about its role	13.6%
d	There is much confusion about its role	3%

22.	Diocesan priest I have met	
a	There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate	16.7%
b	Some understanding of its role, but nothing very specific	45.5%
c	There is some confusion about its role	25.8%
d	There is much confusion about its role	9%
e	I don't really know	3%
23	The pastor	
a	There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate	45.5%
b	There is somewhat of an understanding of its role, but nothing specific	33.3%
c	There is some confusion about its role	16.7%
d	There is much confusion about its role	1.5%
f	Not applicable	3%
24.	The parishioners	
a	There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate	22.8%
b	Some understanding of its role, but nothing very specific	36.4%
c	There is some confusion about its role	31.8%
d	There is much confusion about its role	4.5%
e	I don't really know	4.5%
25.	The parish council	
a	There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate	13.6%
b	Some understanding of its role, but nothing very specific	34.8%
c	There is some confusion about its role	15.2%
d	There is much confusion about its role	4.5%
e	I don't really know	7.6%
f	Not applicable	24.3%

26. Sisters with whom I work
- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| a | There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate | 18.2% |
| b | Some understanding of its role, but nothing very specific | 10.6% |
| c | There is some confusion about its role | 3% |
| f | Not applicable | 68.2% |

Using the scale below select the statement that best describes your understanding of your identity and role as a permanent deacon:

27. The functions a deacon performs in his ministry defines the identity of the sacred office.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------|-------|------------|-------|
| a Strongly Agree | 37.9% | b Agree | 42.4% | c Disagree | 12.1% |
| d Strongly disagree | 7.6% | | | | |

28 My identity (who I am) is determined more by my professional (secular occupation) situation than by the graces received in ordination.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|------|------------|-----|
| a Strongly Agree | 9.1% | b Agree | 9.1% | c Disagree | 53% |
| d Strongly disagree | 22.7% | e Not certain | 6.1% | | |

29. My identity (who I am) is determined more by my ministerial context than by the graces received in ordination.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|-------|
| a Strongly Agree | 10.6% | b Agree | 21.2% | c Disagree | 45.5% |
| d Strongly disagree | 13.6% | e Not certain | 9.1% | | |

30. A permanent deacon represents Christ of John's Gospel, who washed the feet of his disciples.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|------|
| a Strongly Agree | 69.7% | b Agree | 25.8% | c Disagree | 1.5% |
| d Strongly disagree | | e Not certain | 3% | | |

31 The essential difference between a priest and a deacon is found in the sacramental functions associated with the exercise of their ministry

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|-------|
| a Strongly Agree | 33.3% | b Agree | 30.4% | c Disagree | 30.3% |
| d Strongly disagree | 4.5% | e Not certain | 1.5% | | |

32 The essential difference between a priest and a deacon is found in the faculties granted in Holy Orders.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|-------|
| a Strongly Agree | 25.7% | b Agree | 45.5% | c Disagree | 18.2% |
| d Strongly disagree | 4.5% | e Not certain | 6.1% | | |

33 A permanent deacon may be described as a mini priest.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------|----|------------|-------|
| a Strongly Agree | 3% | b Agree | 3% | c Disagree | 15.2% |
| d Strongly disagree | 78.8% | | | | |

34. The essential difference between a priest and a deacon is found in the manner in which they are configured to Christ. (Configuration refers to how a person who has been aligned to Christ in a particular way will acquire specific Christ-like attributes, for example servant, etc)

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|------|
| a Strongly Agree | 33.8% | b Agree | 47.7% | c Disagree | 4.6% |
| d Strongly disagree | 7.7% | e Not certain | 6.2% | | |

35. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is the defining aspect of the office of deacon.

- | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------|---------|-------|------------|-------|
| a Strongly Agree | 32.2% | b Agree | 50.8% | c Disagree | 10.8% |
| e Not certain | 6.2% | | | | |

36. I believe that through ordination my specific ministry may be exercised part time but my person has been transformed into a full time sacramental presence

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|------|
| a Strongly Agree | 47.7% | b Agree | 46.2% | c Disagree | 3.1% |
| d Strongly disagree | 1.5% | e Not certain | 1.5% | | |

37. A permanent deacon shares in the eternal priesthood of Christ. (*Three added received in baptism*)

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|--|
| a Strongly Agree | 58.6% | b Agree | 32.2% | c Disagree | |
| d Strongly disagree | 1.5% | e Not certain | 7.7% | | |

38. A permanent deacon may be described as a lay person who assists the priest in the exercise of his ministry

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------|------|------------|-------|
| a Strongly Agree | 4.6% | b Agree | 7.7% | c Disagree | 18.5% |
| d Strongly disagree | 69.2% | | | | |

39. I believe that my identity as a deacon has made a difference in the way I interact with people in the **secular** areas of my life.
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------|---------------|-------|------------|------|
| a Strongly Agree | 47% | b Agree | 42.2% | c Disagree | 7.8% |
| d Strongly disagree | 1.5% | e Not certain | 1.5% | | |
40. I believe that my identity as a deacon has made a difference in the way I interact with people in the **sacred** areas of my life.
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|------|
| a Strongly Agree | 46.2% | b Agree | 44.6% | c Disagree | 6.2% |
| d Strongly disagree | 1.5% | e Not certain | 1.5% | | |
41. My role as a permanent deacon may be described as a bridge between the secular and sacred.
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|------|
| a Strongly Agree | 38.5% | b Agree | 47.7% | c Disagree | 9.2% |
| d Strongly disagree | 1.5% | e Not certain | 3.1% | | |
42. If you answered “strongly agree” briefly state how you are a bridge between sacred and secular. The following comments were offered: *I see myself as St. Paul in the Market Place; (1) I see myself as one of them; (10) I find that people feel free to talk to me over a priest; (5) I see myself as businessman who is a cleric; (5) I see myself as a sacramental sign (2) I understand myself as working in world, not living in the rectory, (5) I feel like an agent for church in a market place.*(10) NOTE: numbers represent those who responded in that manner.
43. My witness as deacon in the marketplace has been a catalyst for others (believers and non believers) to imitate the charity of Christ?
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|--|
| a Strongly Agree | 24.5% | b Agree | 63.2% | c Disagree | |
| d Strongly disagree | 1.5% | e Not certain | 10.8% | | |
44. My witness as deacon within my parish community has been a catalyst for others to imitate the charity of Christ?
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------|---------------|-------|------------|------|
| a Strongly Agree | 20 % | b Agree | 69.3% | c Disagree | 1.5% |
| d Strongly disagree | | e Not certain | 9.2% | | |

45. Eighty percent of deacons reported they understood their obligations under canon law.

46. How well informed are you about deanery meetings?

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| a | Receive regular announcements | 45.5% |
| b | Communication is irregular | 22.7% |
| c | Receive very little communication about them | 31.8% |

47. What did receiving the order of diaconate add to your life that was not in it before orders?

While deacons tended to answer this from a ministerial context, all of them implied there was a sacramental aspect added to their life. Although this was seldom stated in such obvious terms, language such as a sense of peace, reception of grace, living the gospel, a deepened commitment to one's faith, a closer relationship with Christ, suggests this aspect.

44. Of all the experiences you had as a deacon, what one was the most satisfying?

All responses dealt with ministerial experiences.

45. Of everything you have experienced in the permanent diaconate, what would you like to see improved?

Most frequently cited was for a better understanding by priest of the diaconate and acceptance by them. (79.2%) with 21.8 % connecting their improvement list to functions, such as an extension of the right to deacons to perform the sacrament of the sick or improved liturgical roles.

Interpretation of Statistical Data Generated from Questionnaire

The information gathered from the returned survey forms suggested the following profile of the deacon respondents. First of all, even though the deacons who responded to the survey represented the various levels of experience within the diaconal community, the majority of the returned questionnaires were completed by deacons who had either 4-7 years experience (31.6%) or 12 years plus (33.5%). Secondly, the majority of the deacons who responded reported that their vocation was prompted by a desire to deepen their level of ministerial service

they were already providing, with only 12%+ submitting they had been inspired by the witness of other deacons. Thirdly, these deacons indicated that they found their diaconal ministry truly fruitful, and while they were well received and supported within their respective parishes, their relationship with Christ was essential for the effective exercise of their ministry. Fourthly, while the majority of the surveys suggested that these deacons spent equal time on each of the tri-fold ministries of liturgy, word and charity (42.4%), it was the service ministry of charity that was rated the most significant aspect of their ministry (90%+) with worship and fellowship second at 70%+. Finally, the respondents believed that they contributed to a credible image of the church in their daily activities.

Although the surveys disclosed a positive relationship between deacons, their fellow clergy, both bishop and priests, parishioners, lay staff, members of the parish council and religious sisters, this was not true for their understanding of the permanent diaconate. While the results of the questionnaire show that deacons believe their bishops have a clear vision of the diaconate at 59.1% they also suggest that 24.2% have a limited understanding with 16.6 % having some confusion about their role. In regards to diocesan priests in general, deacons indicated that they believed 62.2 % possess a some understanding of their purpose. However, when this category is considered in light of pastors who work directly with deacons the number increases measurably, with 78.8 % having some understanding. Nonetheless, when those with a clear vision are separated from this number, their responses indicate that 51.5% of pastors with a deacon and 80.3 % of those without a deacon have either limited understanding (33.3 % & 45.5 %) or are confused about the deacon's role (18.2 % & 34.8 %). A result that is supported in the subjective part of the questionnaire when the majority of the respondents suggested that

the one area they would like to see improved is the understanding priests have of their identity.

When deacons reported the perception that parishioners and members of the parish council held regarding their identity the percentage increase was significant. The survey results revealed that 59.2% of the parishioners who have a deacon serving in their parish have either a clear vision of the role of the deacon or at least some understanding of his purpose, while 36.3% have some confusion about the identity of the deacon. Although the percentage of the members of the various parish councils who have either a clear vision or some understanding of diaconal identity is 48.4%, when this number is adjusted for those parishes who do not have a council, the percentage increases to 64%.

In the portion of the survey that required deacons to consider their identity from a functional, ministerial or sacramental context, it was clearly evident that deacons believed that function determined their identity (80%). There was general agreement that they were not mini-priests (94.0%) nor a special ministry for lay persons (87.7%) This strong endorsement for function was reinforced in the subjective part of the survey when deacons rated function and ministerial context as the most significant aspects of their life after ordination, with only one disclosing the importance of sacramental grace received in Holy Orders.

Despite this strong support for function as the basis of identity when they considered their identity in relation to priests they placed less weight on their various sacramental functions and faculties received in ordination (63.7% and 71.2%) than the graces received in Holy Orders (83%) and how one is configured to Christ (81.5%). This emphasis on sacramental presence

over function is further supported by the general consensus that deacons believe that after ordination they had become a full-time sacramental presence of Christ (93.9%).

In summary, deacons reported that they believe that bishops, priests and laity have some confusion about their identity and purpose. Although bishops, pastors who work directly with a deacon, and members of parish councils have a better understanding of the diaconate than diocesan priests and laity in general, there is a need for catechesis for all members of the Church in this area.

This lack of understanding and need for instruction can also be extended to deacons themselves, who clearly believe that function and ministerial context shape their identity, referring to the notion of sacramentality only when they were differentiating themselves from priests. It would appear that deacons have absorbed the concept of being a sacrament from both Church documents and local diocesan policy manuals and recruitment flyers that stress this aspect of diaconal identity, but failed to integrate sacrament and function into a unified concept that shapes who they are.²²⁷

In addition, deacons reported that they did not see themselves as mini-priests nor as a special class of lay persons. In the exercise of their ministry, they generally agreed that they

²²⁷ A random review of diocesan pages containing information on the permanent diaconate disclosed that dioceses are careful to point out that what makes the diaconate distinctive is that the deacon is ordained "as a sacramental sign of the Christ the Servant." This reference could be found on a variety of web sites, such as the Diocese of London, <http://www.stpetersseminary.ca/seminary/permanentdiaconate.htm>; Diocese of St. Catherines, <http://www.romancatholic.niagara.on.ca/vineyard/fullnews.cgi?newsid1078615617,41112> and through links from <http://www.torontodiaconate.net/> Archdiocese of Toronto, Boston, and Los Angeles and others. However, it would appear that their formation programs, while they include theology, prayer, personal spirituality (relationship with God), homiletics, sacraments, canon law and social justice issues, adequately serve to prepare the deacon candidate to perform functions, but fail to stress notion of being 'sacrament.' (All sites retrieved 22-03-04).

spent about equal time on each of the threefold ministries. However, they rated their ministry of charity as being the most significant aspect of their ministry with worship and fellowship second.

Pertinent Findings from the 1995 U.S. Bishops National Study of the Diaconate

The United States Conference of Bishops undertook a study of the permanent diaconate in 1995. While this national study which contacted deacons, their wives, supervisors and parish lay leaders had a much broader scope than the one undertaken for this thesis project, it does contain important data in relation to diaconal identity. While the American questionnaire was sent to all of the 9,000 deacons serving at the time, there were only 5,369 returned. Using a random sample method, with care to ensure minority groups were included, 3,073 of the completed forms were analysed. According to the laws of probability the margin of error for this number would be minuscule.

The national study disclosed that the average age of a deacon serving in the United States was 60, with the majority of them coming from professional or managerial backgrounds. While fifty percent of the deacons who responded to this national study indicated they had considered the priesthood earlier in life, only one-third of these respondents asserted that this earlier consideration influenced their decision to become a deacon. According to the study the majority of the deacons described their call to this vocation as the "need to deepen the service" they were already giving to the Church. Apparently this reason for entering the diaconate is consistent with the 1980 study and is also supported by the current research project.

While there were a number of conclusions regarding the diaconate, the data pertinent to diaconal identity closely paralleled the categories considered in this research project. The 1995 American study indicated that deacons largely serve within their home parish in ministries where they were both well received and considered highly effective. Although the United States bishops' report disclosed a positive relationship between deacons, their fellow clergy, both bishop and priests, parishioners, lay staff, members of the parish council and religious sisters, this was not true for their understanding of the permanent diaconate. This is an outcome that closely parallels the findings of this project. While the results of the American study show that deacons believe their bishops have a clear vision of the diaconate at 57% they also suggest that 22.7% have no specific understanding and 11.7% are confused about the deacon's purpose. In regards to diocesan priests in general, deacons indicated that they believed 60.5% possess some understanding of their role. However, when this category is considered in light of pastors who work directly with deacons the number improves significantly, with 84% having some understanding, with 59.8% having a clear understanding as compared to 17.9% of those priests not working directly with a deacon. Nonetheless, their responses also indicate that 35.9% of pastors assigned deacons have either limited understanding or are confused about the deacon's role.

When deacons reported the perception that parishioners and members of the parish council held regarding their identity the percentage increase was noticeable. The survey results revealed that 56.2% of the parishioners who have a deacon serving in their parish have either a clear vision of the role of the deacon or at least some understanding of his role, while about 40% have some confusion about the identity of the deacon. Although the percentage of the members

of the various parish councils who have either a clear vision or some understanding of diaconal identity is 57%, when this number is adjusted for those parishes who do not have a council, the percentage increases to 64.7%. There was thus a significant difference between pastors and parishioners. Once again this result was corroborated by the current study.

In the part of the bishops' national study that required deacons' supervisors, and their lay leaders to consider the role and effectiveness of the deacon there was general consensus that deacons were most effective and successful in sacramental ministries, such as baptisms, marriages and liturgies, with pastoral care of the sick and homilies a close second. While deacons' participation in religious education, work with the poor, evangelization, counselling, parish / diocesan administration, prayer groups, and marriage encounter were considered successful, they were rated between highly effective and less effective. Roles that received the lowest rating were prison ministries, promoting human and civil rights, and working with smaller base communities. The bishops report concluded that the vast majority of supervisors and lay leaders considered their deacons not only effective in their parishes but also necessary. However, both deacon supervisors and their parish lay leaders were

just about evenly divided about whether the deacons' ordination is important for the actual ministries they characterize as ably performed. . .²²⁸

The observations made by the supervisors and lay leaders of permanent deacons in regard to effectiveness in ministry was substantiated by the deacons themselves. However, the deacons also added that in addition to their effectiveness in exercising their ministries of word

²²⁸ *National Study of the Permanent Diaconate*, 5. The report disclosed that 51% of deacon supervisors and their lay leaders did not think ordination was necessary for the ministries performed by deacons in their parishes.

and liturgy, these two areas also absorbed more of their time, and even consumed more of their interest.²²⁹ Despite this preference of word and liturgy over charity, deacons generally reported that it was their ministry of charity they found most satisfying.

In summary, sacramental ministries and those related to the ministries of word and liturgy consumed both the time and interest of deacons. This result which is corroborated in this research project, would indicate that function and ministerial context play an important role in measuring diaconal identity.²³⁰

In addition, while it can be concluded from the data that most deacons do not see themselves as mini-priests, they along with their pastors and lay leaders agree that deacons have taken on traditional parish roles formerly carried out unaided by a priest.²³¹ This latter aspect was one of the concerns listed in the recommendations made by the national study. The American bishops concluded that more training and encouragement to deacon candidates should be given in social justice areas, redirecting their ministries to areas that would differentiate them from the ministerial priesthood. A determination that appears to emphasize one aspect of diaconal ministry over the other.

²²⁹ *National Study of the Permanent Diaconate*, 1-8.

²³⁰ It was unfortunate that the American study did not seek to determine the permanent deacons' understanding of their identity from a sacramental perspective. This lack of information is unfortunate since Timothy Shugrue in his report to the bishops in 1988 identified this area as an important aspect to be investigated in the future. It would seem, from the recommendations made in the report that the bishops were more preoccupied with redirecting the development of diaconal ministry away from traditional roles associated with the ministerial priesthood to one encompassing social justice areas. See Shugrue, *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, 15.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Conclusion

This research project and the American national study contain a number of similar findings. Both projects reveal that those who were ordained permanent deacons did so to deepen their level of ministerial service. Although each study disclosed that after ordination they were well received and generally supported within their respective parishes, deacons reported that an understanding of their role and identity was inadequate. The table below illustrates the perception deacons believe that bishops, priests and parishioners have concerning their identity. According to deacons, while they believe that most bishops have a clear vision of diaconal identity, (59.2% and 57%) they report a number have a limited understanding (24.2 % & 22.7 %) with a number having some confusion about their role (16.6% and 11.7%). In regards to priests, deacons indicated that a significant number of diocesan priests in general have a lack of understanding of their identity (80.3% and 80.3%). However, deacons suggested that pastors working directly with them have a better understanding of who they are (45.5% and 59.8%), with a significant decrease in those with limited understanding or having some confusion about the role of the diaconate (51.5% & 35.9%). Surprisingly, deacons claimed that parishioners and parish councils who have a deacon working within their parish possess an understanding of diaconal identity comparable to the priests. Here the statistics indicate that deacons believe that more than fifty percent of the parishioners have either a clear vision or some of understanding of the role of the diaconate (59.2% and 56.2%), with the number increasing to over sixty percent for parish councils (64% and 64.7%).

Comparison of the role ministerial function or context plays in diaconal identity also produced strong similarities. Both studies disclosed that deacons generally believed that function determined their identity. Although both studies indicated that deacons did not believe they were mini-priests, nevertheless, the functions performed by deacons were often those formerly associated with the parish priest.

Although the United States study failed to investigate the notion of deacon as sacrament, the results of the current project which highlight this sacramental aspect could be equally applied to the American deacon as well. While there is very little data available from the United States Bishops' study to back up this claim, I propose that the following observations provide sufficient support for this determination. First of all, the results of the statistical data are remarkably close in all categories, suggesting that if sacramental identity was measured in both studies the results would be similar. Secondly, the desire to 'deepen one's ministerial service', a finding common to both projects, suggests that deacons for the most part were carrying out diaconal functions, without the graces of ordination and formal recognition by the Church before holy orders. It would be a reasonable contention that these deacon respondents wished to 'deepen' their ministerial service not by doing more for the church, but rather by providing ministerial service 'in the name of the church,' strengthened by sacramental graces and configured to Christ in a unique way. Thirdly, a review of various American dioceses websites disclosed the importance of being a 'sacramental sign.'²³²

²³²The web page "deacon net" an international forum for deacons to discuss various issues report the importance of defining the role and identity of the deacon from a sacramental perspective rather than just by function. According to data available on this site deacons hope to avoid the same problem that the priesthood and the religious life has experienced. See United States National Assembly of Priests, 1986.http://www.deacons.net/Articles/Present_Day_Theology.htm, retrived March 23, 2004.

Table 1. Understanding of Diaconal Identity - Statistical Comparison of Current Project to United States Conference of Bishops' National Study, 1995.

Thesis Project		U.S. Bishops' National Study	
BISHOPS		BISHOPS	
clear vision	59.2%	clear vision	57%
knowledge limited	24.2%	knowledge limited	22.7%
some to much confusion	16.6%	some to much confusion	11.7%
DIOCESAN PRIESTS		DIOCESAN PRIESTS	
clear vision	16.7%	clear vision	17.9 %
knowledge limited	45.5%	knowledge limited	42.5 %
some to much confusion	34.8%	some to much confusion	37.8 %
PASTORS (with deacon)		PASTORS (with deacon)	
clear vision	45.5 %	clear vision	59.8%
knowledge limited	33.3 %	knowledge limited	24.2 %
some to much confusion	18.2 %	some to much confusion	11.7 %
PARISHIONERS (with deacon)		PARISHIONERS(with deacon)	
Clear to some understanding	59.2 %	Clear to some understanding	56.2 %
Some to much confusion	36.3 %	Some to much confusion	40.9 %
PARISH COUNCILS		PARISH COUNCILS	
Clear to some understanding	48.4 %	Clear to some understanding	57 %
Some to much confusion	19.7 %	Some to much confusion	23.5 %

Note: When percentages are adjusted to consider only those Parishes with a Parish Council the number improves significantly, from 48.4 to 64% and 57 to 64.7% respectively.

Comparison of Literature Review Findings with Survey Results

The literature review reported in the introductory chapter corroborates the presence of these two distinct aspects of diaconal identity, one based on sacrament and the other on function. The only author to link these two concepts together was Timothy J. Shugrue. In his 1986 exploration of the service ministry of the deacon he linked the functional side of the deacon's ministry with the sacramental. According to Shugrue, the deacon's ministries of charity, liturgy and the word structure his relationship to the community as sign in which all find their Christian identity brought to a clearer focus. However, Shugrue does not restrict his concept of sacramental identity to the service function of the diaconate. Instead he proposes that the deacon-as-sacrament is extended beyond the duties ascribed by the Second Vatican Council to embrace any of his encounters with persons, including living out his family life and secular occupation.

The deacon thus can be seen truly as a minister through whose incarnation of Christian sensitivity and response others can enter into a moment of sacramental encounter with the Lord Jesus.²³³

This connection of function with sacrament is very much in line with the sacramental theology that shaped various documents emanating from the Second Vatican Council, especially those that considered the nature of the Church, such as *Lumen Gentium*. It is also, according to the results of this research project, one that deacons readily employ when they compare themselves to priests and lay persons but fail to recognize sacramentality as an integral element when they describe who they are. This apparent confusion, or split personality, comes from two sources. The first is found within the formation program of the permanent diaconate. As

²³³ Shugrue, *Service Ministry of the Deacon*, 10.

mentioned earlier, diaconate programs often are careful to promote the sacramental character of the diaconate, but fail to develop the meaning of this in a practical way in their formation programs.²³⁴ The second comes from the documents of the Second Vatican Council. According to Richard P. McBrien, these documents did not represent one theme but rather a marriage of widely divergent views held by members of the council. This pluralistic approach permitted a functional understanding of the diaconate to be presented alongside the sacramental character of the office. While it was necessary for the council to identify the functions to be assigned to the restored office, the placement of diaconal duties alongside sacramental character set up the possibility of using function to define what was meant by sacramental character, as opposed to letting the notion of sacrament shape diaconal identity.²³⁵

In my view this has been the basic mistake in regard to diaconal identity. While the functions of the permanent diaconate are significant and important duties to be performed, it must be remembered that they are functions within a larger sacramental context. By isolating function from sacrament, or by elevating diaconal duties above sacramentality we are allowing the sacred office to be separated from its ‘*raison d’être*.’ It is the sacramental aspect of the

²³⁴See note on page 15 where reference made to various web sites. This notion is also substantiated in handout and home study questions deacon candidates were given in the first month of the Toronto Formation program, September 1983. Here the candidates were asked to reflect on an article written by Karl Rahner, *Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the Diaconate* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977). In this article Rahner dismissed the notion of defining the diaconate on the basis of specific cultic powers, (e.g. baptizing, conferring Christian burial, giving communion, performing sacramentals etc.) since lay persons may be delegated these functions. Nor, Rahner added, should the diaconate be defined by what functions might be delegated to this sacred office from those that rightfully belonging to the priesthood. Instead Rahner submitted the diaconate should be distinguished by its sacramental character.

²³⁵According to McBrien the Council documents managed to blend scholastic, eschatology and kerygmatic theology into one document, with proponents of each of these schools of thought able to find their position expressed and thus able to draw their own conclusions. Richard P. McBrien *Church: The Continuing Quest* (New York: Newman Press, 1970), 23.

diaconate that distinguishes it from both laity and the office of presbyterate. It is the sacramental character of the diaconate that provides the Church with a visible sign of Christ the Servant. As Mc Caslin and Lawler argue it is not the deacon's functions that are necessary for the life of the parish but rather what is embodied by his presence. Since it is the diaconate, not the priesthood, that is the Church's way of sacramentally embodying the universal call of the baptized to *diakonia*, a parish without a ministering deacon is less than fully equipped sacramentally.²³⁶

In the next chapter it is my hope to express the meaning of this sacramental character of the diaconate. I believe that this task can best be accomplished by exploring the sacramental character of the permanent diaconate from the viewpoint of spirituality and service. In this way, this dissertation will assist the ministry of deacons in two ways: first, it will help deacons to understand what it means to be configured to Christ and how this unique configuration shapes one's identity. Secondly, by clarifying the sacramental character of the diaconate in conjunction with the exercise of the deacon's threefold ministry it will enable formation programs to develop a process to help deacons integrate the meaning of being sacrament into their life. The process would begin, then, with the recognition that the deacon continues not only the ministry of Christ on earth but also manifests his presence.

²³⁶McCaslin & Lawler, *Sacrament of Service*, 124.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PERMANENT DIACONATE: A SACRAMENT OF SERVICE

Introduction - Configured to Christ the Servant

The descriptive portion of this study and the results of the survey disclosed that deacons have not been able to merge the two distinct ways of defining the nature and identity of the permanent diaconate, by function or as sacrament. This tendency was shown when they tended to define their sacred identity by function but employed graces received through holy orders as the means of distinguishing themselves from priests and laity. In the preceding chapter it was concluded that this inability to unite these two defining statements stems from two sources, formation and the ambiguity contained within church documents. In the first category, formation, it was determined that while the notion of sacramental character is stressed in recruitment literature and to some degree in their preliminary year there is a failure to develop any practical means to assist deacon candidates to integrate into their lives the meaning of being sacrament. Secondly, the Second Vatican Council which merged widely divergent views produced documents in which proponents of different theologies were able to find their opinion expressed. It was this pluralistic approach that allowed a functional identity to be presented alongside the sacramental character. The placement of diaconal duties alongside sacramental character created the possibility of using function to define what was meant by sacramental character, as opposed

to letting the notion of sacrament shape diaconal identity.

In this final chapter, it is my hope that by exploring this notion of deacon as sacrament, a visible sign of the servant Christ, I can contribute to an understanding of diaconal identity, and provide a framework from which diaconal formation programs might develop the means to assist deacon candidates with incorporating the meaning of being sacrament.

This is an important contribution since the inability to merge these two distinct ways of defining diaconal identity has prevented the church from fully achieving through an official sacred office a visible means to illustrate its desire to be identified with the servant Jesus.²³⁷ This wish to be configured to Christ the Servant emerged from a vision of Church that understood itself as first and foremost as a people of God, not separated from the world, but a people who were called to be a light to the nations, "*lumen gentium*"; a people who were conformed to Christ who came to serve not to be served. In restoring this ancient sacred office Paul VI was seeking not to establish just another form of clericalism within the Church hierarchy but rather a specific office of the Church that would serve as a 'driving force' for the whole Church's *diakonia*. As John Paul II in his address to permanent deacons stated:

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that the diaconal ministry of love and charity obliges us to be a positive influence for change in the world in which we live, that is to be a leaven - to be the soul of human society - so that society may be renewed by Christ and transformed into a family of God.²³⁸

²³⁷Paul VI, "*Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*" (January 27, 1967) This was an important identification for the Church since it signalled its desire to move away from the pre-Vatican II model that appeared to stress ecclesiological triumphalism, clericalism and legalism. Kasper, *Theology & Church*, 115-119.

²³⁸ John Paul II, "Address to Permanent Deacons," Detroit, MI. September 19, 1987 quoted in Msgr. Theodore Kraus *Diaconate: A Legacy of Vatican II*, Contact: A Publication of the Archdiocese of Toronto (November, 2002): 9

This sacramental character will be presented by considering this topic in light of the theology associated with the servant church and the body of Christ, the meaning of *diakonia* ‘servant’ as understood in the context of Jesus, who came as servant and Lord. In order to accomplish this goal, it will be necessary to explore what is meant by the notion of servant as it applies to Jesus and then as it applies to a minister who acts as Christ’s representative. This will be done by first of all reviewing the biblical understanding of *diakonia* that emerged from our earlier considerations in Chapter Two. Secondly, it will be important to consider what it means to suggest that the “. . . service of the deacon is the Church’s service sacramentalized.”²³⁹ This will be accomplished by considering relevant Church documents and pertinent theological speculations, in particular the work of Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Configured to Christ the Deacon

Our consideration of what it means to be configured to Christ the Servant begins with a summary of the findings reported in Chapter Two which explored the meaning of servant from a biblical perspective. Through a study of the first of the four servant songs it was argued that being a servant, or *‘ebed* does not just signify that one is in the service of another, but rather that one has a special relationship with the King. This person, in effect, is an ambassador acting on behalf of the king, an agent of Yahweh who is called to bring justice and equity to all nations. This Servant will lead the new exodus, and restore the Davidic Kingdom. More than anything

²³⁹ John Paul II, *Address to Permanent Deacons*, 9.

else the Servant reveals the mind of God and more than any other prophetic message the Servant Songs reach forward to the Gospels.

When Jesus announced in the synagogue at the beginning of his ministry that he had been anointed to bring the good news to the oppressed, the broken hearted and to proclaim liberty to the captives and the year of the Lord's favour (Isa. 61:1-2) he was not only identifying himself with the servant image depicted in deutero-Isaiah but also showing familiarity with the first servant song.

When Jesus begins his ministry with this defining statement he is not only providing a template for his ministry but also for those who wish to follow him. The Greek word used to depict this form of servant, '*diakonos*,' is similar to the meaning associated with the Hebrew word *ebed*, they both refer to someone who serves as an intermediary, an agent who at the behest of a superior gets something done.²⁴⁰ Accordingly, those who serve in this intermediary role are identified as agents for transmission of the divine message, as illustrated through the ministry of the apostles and other prominent Christians.

Our New Testament exploration revealed that Paul also understood that being *diakonos* is fundamental to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, when he defined himself as servant and slave of Jesus Christ. This is a title which expresses a relationship that implies that we do not come in our own name or in our particular authority but rather in the name of the one who sends us. As Christians we have been sent by Jesus, our Lord and Master. We are called to imitate him

²⁴⁰See earlier reference to the discussion of *diakonos* and its correct interpretation in Chapter Two, 35-37. See also Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* 3rd edn, 230.

who came to serve and not to be served. When this concept is applied to any of the sacred ecclesiastical offices, bishop, priest or deacon, our whole understanding of authority is radically transformed. No longer are those who command and those who obey seen from the perspective of power relationships but rather of complementary functions. Instead of exercising authority over another, a Christian understands his or her role within the Body of Christ as a gift from God given not for personal glory but rather as a means of building up of the Body of Christ on earth.

The exercise of authority in general is only one of the forms of what we each have to do through others and for others to further our common destiny. St. Paul expressly says that ordained ministers organize the ministry of the saints, that is of Christians (Eph. 4:12). They organize it, but they also invigorate and animate it and drive it forward. They are the drivers and the governors of the Body in that condition of responsibility and universal service . . . There are also permanent orders, which organize the Christian ministry in the sense of *diakonia*, that is, the whole Church seen as service of the word or of worship.²⁴¹

In other words, permanent deacons act as a sign or symbol of the common call to service. It is for this reason that the Church maintains that this sacred office which represents the servanthood of Christ 'sacramentalizes service.'

Service Sacramentalized

The notion of *service sacramentalized* springs from two of the Second Vatican Council's documents, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. These conciliar documents were an attempt

²⁴¹Congar, *Power & Poverty*, 86-87. Although this concept of ministry and service is well articulated by numerous theologians and various Church documents it has not always been expressed in this way. In fact, it is sad to say, that there has been more often a division between the clergy and the faithful, with the latter simply being considered clients of the former, as opposed to sharers in the ministry of Christ.

by the council fathers to redefine the nature and purpose of the Church in the modern world.²⁴² In the first document the Church saw itself as an instrument of Christ called to bring all of humanity to the light of Christ.²⁴³ In the second decree, *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church outlined how it would meet this new purpose. First of all it recognized its solidarity with the whole human family. Secondly, it acknowledged that if it were to be a light to the world it needed to reach out to all of humanity, not just its own members. This mandate, according to the document, included the responsibility of reading the signs of the times, being attentive to the experiences of the world, reaching out to the poor, dejected, and wounded.²⁴⁴ This is a duty that the Church explained was

... not motivated by earthy ambition but is interested in one thing only - to carry on the work of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served.”²⁴⁵

Although this latter document does not identify the deacon as having the specific role for the exercise of this responsibility, it certainly does provide a resource for those called to serve the

²⁴² These documents which affirmed the notion of Church as a universal sacrament brought to an end the alienation of the church and world precipitated by the dispute over the right of royal investiture to be on the same level as episcopal ordination. Once the church moved to understanding itself as sacrament it was able to end this estrangement, while preserving the autonomy of both spheres. Kasper, *Theology & Church*, 124. While I acknowledge this new prominent role in the world brought about by these two documents, it is important to acknowledge that the Church has failed to live up to the responsibilities that come with this new role. I say this in light of what Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000.) concluded when he said, “The Church is superior only when and insofar as it acknowledges and follows Jesus as the center of all truth. This is something it rather frequently and variously fails to do, thereby becoming markedly inferior to other bodies. But if, through the Spirit, we do acknowledge this in true discipleship, we are given the basis for a way of life that is preferable to all others.” 87.

²⁴³ *Lumen Gentium*, 350.

²⁴⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, Paragraphs 1 and 5.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 903.

Church as deacons,²⁴⁶ who at the lower level of the hierarchy have been dedicated to a ministry of service and works of charity.²⁴⁷ When the Church adopted the words of St. Polycarp, who admonished deacons to “. . . walk according to the truth of the Lord, who became servant of all,”²⁴⁸ he was not only describing the role of the deacon but linking the office of deacon with the responsibility to be a light to the world, a visible sign of Christ the deacon.

Ministry precedes theology and the very existence of Church

When the Church chose to define itself as servant and designated the office of deacon as the visible sign of its *diakonia* the Church did not do so in isolation. In order to understand the full meaning of this concept and its impact on the identity of the deacon, we need to look at the underlying ecclesiology and theology contained within this self understanding. If we begin with an assumption currently being promoted in the discipline of ecclesiology, “that ministry precedes and determines not only theological reflection but the very existence and life of the Church,”²⁴⁹ then it is necessary to begin with an examination of the ministerial experiences that led the Church to restore the permanent diaconate. One example that had a direct impact

²⁴⁶ Msgr. Theodore Kraus, *The Order of Deacon and the Church Today* Contact: A Publication of the Archdiocese of Toronto, (November, 2002). A reprint of his address to a deacon gathering, October 5, 2002. In his address to deacons Kraus maintains that *Gaudium et Spes* is essentially a manual for those called to serve the Church as deacons.

²⁴⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, par. 29.

²⁴⁸ St. Polycarp Ad Phil. 5, 2: ed. Funk, I p. 300: It is said that Christ “became the ‘diaconus’ of all.” quoted in *Lumen Gentium*, par. 29.

²⁴⁹ Ray S. Anderson *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL.: Intervarsity Press, 2001) cf. 71.

on the Council's decision was the 'worker priests' movement in France and Belgium after the Second World War. Through these dedicated priests, who joined the work force to bring Christ to the marketplace, the Church came to understand the impact that ordained ministers could have within the secular world. Although the Second Vatican Council determined that this call to serve in the marketplace was not part of the ministry of the presbyter they saw the importance of continuing this ministry in some way. As Pope John Paul II stated the Fathers duly recommended the restoration of the permanent diaconate since they wanted to continue the presence of ordained ministers in the workplace and elsewhere.²⁵⁰

A second example would be found with the ministerial experiences of the bishops and theologians who had gathered in Rome to consider the future direction of the Church. Although they represented divergent opinions, they were united in their common experiences that grew out of the violence unleashed by the Second World War, the Holocaust, the atomic bomb, and continuing armed conflicts in various parts of Asia, and Northern Ireland.²⁵¹ They had come together to discern the role of the Church in a world divided by an 'iron curtain' and shaped by cold war politics, and imbued with economic and racial disparity. These bishops in their attempt to respond to these events in an authentic way considered how to transform the Church from a maintenance and a protective model of faith to an active committed Church of the word, of sanctification, of charity and advocacy for justice. Together they sought the ways and means to

²⁵⁰ John Paul II, Address to Permanent Deacons, Detroit, MI. September 19, 1987.

²⁵¹ The reference to conflict in Northern Ireland is not to the troubles as we now know them which began in the late 1960's but to the early conflicts over neo-colonialism beginning in the 1950's where the I.R.A. and the republican movement launched an attack on the British occupying troops in the north and maintained this attack for several years. See <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/sf/red72.htm>.

liberate all those who live under the shackles of a narrow nationalism and to equip them to be conscious, active participants in a universal 'communion of saints' that is not contained in one country. The struggle and witness of these Church leaders were captured in the opening address of its second session by the newly elected Pope, Paul VI:

"We must be realists and not hide the savagery that reaches the Council from many areas. . . . In certain countries, religious liberty, like other fundamental rights of man, is being crushed by principles and methods of political, racial and anti-religious intolerance. The heart grieves that there are still so many acts of injustice against goodness. . . . While the light of the science of nature is increasing, darkness is spreading over the science of God through the destruction of intellectual and moral integrity. Progress is perfecting, in wondrous ways, every kind of instrument that man uses, but his heart is declining toward emptiness, sadness, and despair. . . . The Church today stands ready to aid the oppressed, the poor, and the suffering. Let the world realize that the Church looks on it with profound understanding and sincere admiration, with frank desire not to conquer but to serve, not to despise but to appreciate, not to condemn but to comfort and save."²⁵²

As the bishops dialogued and studied the issues before them they slowly came to a consensus and a common understanding that perceived the Church as people of God, a light to the world, conformed to Christ's consecration and mission of *diakonia*, especially to those who are poor or afflicted in any way. The bishops recognized that it is precisely in the Church's solidarity with the poor and with the kneeling Christ, who with towel, basin, and water washes feet, that the Church, is "*lumen gentium*."²⁵³ This vision of Church slowly evolved into a recommendation that would reestablish the Order of Deacons which would provide the Church

²⁵²Paul VI, "Opening Address of the Second Session of Vatican II" September 29, 1963. 1987 quoted in Msgr. Theodore Kraus *Diaconate: A Legacy of Vatican II*, Contact: A Publication of the Archdiocese of Toronto (November, 2002): 9.

²⁵³*Lumen Gentium*, 350; cf 359-69 and 389.

with a tangible sign through which this commitment of *diakonia* would be perpetuated and constituted within its sacramental life.

Karl Barth and Church as *diakonos*

Karl Barth shared in this same history as the bishops who gathered in Rome, and sought throughout his career to bring about analogous changes in the structure of Protestant theology, and Christian theology in general. By the early 1940s he had already completed what can be regarded as the real “core” of his theological system, the Doctrine of God in the *Church Dogmatics II*. Here, Barth reconceived the very being of God in revolutionary ways, drawing out the theme that the condescension of the Son of God to the world in Jesus Christ is not something alien to the divine life, but its most emphatic and definitive expression. The ethical implications of this already developed in *Church Dogmatics II/2* § § 36-39, for example, and are further developed in Barth’s *Christliche Ethik* in 1946 was more than a response to the secular notion of ethics but also a reaction to the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the atomic bomb. In this monograph, despite Barth’s focus on ethics, his vision of servant - *diakonia* shines through, as it does in many of his works, especially *Church Dogmatics*.²⁵⁴ Here Barth proposes that

²⁵⁴I make this statement as a novice student of Barthian theology. Although Barth’s doctrines are explanations and discoveries which he came upon during the course of a life time in my brief investigation into some of his writings the one recurring theme that repeats itself is the notion of the cross, linked with obedience and service, forms an integral part of his Christology. This is not to suggest that Golgotha is more important than Bethlehem but simply to indicate that the cross is a central part of his theology. (See Busch, Eberhard, *Karl Barth* (London: SCM Press, 1976), xiii & 139. Although this is particularly evident in “Jesus Christ, The Lord as Servant” *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation IV/1* ed. G.W. Bromiley & T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), 157 - 779, the centrality of the cross appears in many other works, including those authors who are commenting on his theology. This theology of the cross which Busch refers to does not suggest that Barth understood the incarnation as a series of stages culminating in the cross but rather one movement. ‘It was God who went into the far country, and it is the human creature who returns home. Both took place in the one Jesus Christ. (CD IV/2 ed. G.W. Bromiley &

humanity's response to a God of glory who humbled himself, becoming the servant of humanity, is to imitate his every deed. It consists in men and women placing themselves at the disposal of other human beings.²⁵⁵ It involves humanity's call to discipleship, to continue the ministry of Jesus, who espoused humanity's cause by becoming,

... man's neighbour for man's sake, His good Samaritan, so that He might have mercy on man as His true neighbour. What does this history say to us? It says: "Go and do like wise."²⁵⁶

Later in his *Church Dogmatics* Barth was to elaborate on this meaning of service and *diakonia*. In his discussion of the Holy Spirit and the community Barth rejects the notion that *diakonia* is a function of a specific ministry within the Church, such as the Church has done with preaching. Barth submits that the ministry of service belongs to the whole Christian community.²⁵⁷

To be a Christian, and therefore a saint in the communion of saints, is to serve in and with the Christian community. All Christians do not have to serve equally, i.e., in the

T.F. Torrance, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958. p. 21). Herein after referred to as CD IV/2. See also George Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its basic Chalcedonian Character," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* ed. John Webster (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), 127-139.

²⁵⁵ Barth, Karl, *God Here and Now* trans. Paul M. van Buren (London: Routledge Classics, 2003), 113.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 111. This discussion of servant hood is very similar to Barth's theme in *Church Dogmatics* IV/1& 2 where he reports that God became, was, and is a man. And it happened that God as this man was not a success, but had to suffer and die, condemned as a criminal on the gallows. However, this was not the end. It happened, further, that this man who was God was raised from the dead which elevated every human person in Him and all humanity by Him were exalted to the glory of God and our guilt and need is taken away by the person of this man, Jesus, and that we are called in the person of this man to the glory of God.

²⁵⁷ Barth, *CD IV/2*, 691-693.

same function. But they all have to serve, and to do so in one place with the same eminence and responsibility as others do at other places.²⁵⁸

According to Barth there is no question of delegation or substitution nor is it the privilege of one distinct group. Each member of the body of Christ is called to play his part, and to do so as if everything depended on him.²⁵⁹

This theology of service and the necessity for all to serve as Christ came to serve is consistent with the pronouncements of the Fathers at the Second Vatican Council who recognized the call to *diakonia* for all the people of God.²⁶⁰ However, the pronouncements on the “Church” by the Second Vatican Council clearly identifies the Church, the visible body of Christ on earth, like a “sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men.”²⁶¹ Although Barth would not consider the Church as a sacrament²⁶² his description of it as the body of Christ and his discussion of the “true Church” has not only

²⁵⁸Ibid., 693.

²⁵⁹Barth, CD IV/2 694. Barth’s thinking is mirrored by Catholic theologians, especially after the Second Vatican Council. For example, Bernard Cooke in his discussion of Ministry submits that the Church has now moved beyond cooperation of clergy and laity toward a true community ministry in which distinctive and complementary functions will be exercised on no other basis than people’s ability to do what is needed. Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 226.

²⁶⁰Cf *Lumen Gentium*, 387- 396 and *Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People* (Apostolicam Actuositatem), Vatican II Nov. 18, 1965. Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council 2 - The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975.) 766-798. In addition see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO.: Liguori Publication, 1994) par. 876.

²⁶¹Cf *Lumen Gentium*, 350.

²⁶²Barth’s understanding of sacraments is quite restrictive. In fact Barth in his later life favoured the notion that only the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is sacrament. See Busch, *Karl Barth*, 444.

some parallels with the Roman Catholic notion of the Church as sacrament but also provides a new way of considering the role of a person who acts in the name of the Church.

Barth contends the 'true Church' is made visible through its members, in the same manner that we can see a state in its citizens, officials, laws and institutions. But Barth adds that unlike the secular state the church cannot create or confer its reality or visibility. It is only through the revelation of God that the true Church is visible and it will only be through faith, awakened by this revelation, that it is actually seen by humanity.²⁶³ In other words, the Christian community is the Church. It is here that Christ is present and speaks and acts. It is the body of Jesus Christ, the earthly-historical form of His existence.²⁶⁴ It exists in the service of the witness which in its existence as the community it owes to the world, and cannot therefore withhold from it.²⁶⁵ In effect, what Barth described as the ministry of the community of believers coincides remarkably with the bishops' conclusions that led to the establishment of the diaconate.

Although Barth did not associate his theology of service with a special ministry of *diakonia*²⁶⁶ it is likely that his theology had an indirect impact on the members who participated in the various sessions of the Second Vatican Council. Eberhard Busch in his biography of Barth

²⁶³ CD IV/2 619.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 653.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 719.

²⁶⁶ In some respects Barth defends himself in regards to my comments when he raised the issue of lay-apostolate as being superior to all other forms of the apostolate in the Church because of the special role Mary has been given by the Church both historically and within *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church). Busch, *Karl Barth*, 483.

speaks of his direct association with catholic scholars, either through personal fellowship²⁶⁷ or as a guest theologian.²⁶⁸ This association prompted Barth on more than one occasion to remark that he believed that these theologians intended to introduce him into Roman Catholic theology rather like a Trojan Horse.²⁶⁹

Jesus as Lord and Servant / Servant and Lord

In terms of my research into the sacramental identity of the deacon I have also turned to Karl Barth for help in understanding the meaning of Jesus, who came as a servant. In Barth's treatment of Jesus's servanthood, there is a twofold dynamic, first of Jesus, the Lord as Servant and then of Jesus, the Servant as Lord. In the first couplet the Lordship is completely redefined! Jesus, the Son of God, empties himself to become human, an action which in Barth's view distinguishes God as the true God from mere other-worldliness, supernaturalness and otherness - that is to say, from all false Gods. By doing this the Son of God does not diminish his divinity nor does he cease to be divine. If we think it is impossible for the Son of God to remain God while entering into our human condition, then our concept of God is far too human. The incarnation is also an act of obedience. However, Jesus' obedience does not make

²⁶⁷Barth had a close personal relationship with Hans Urs von Balthasar. Other catholic scholars that Barth carried on dialogue with would include Henri Bouillard and Hans Kung. These catholic theologians were either advisors to the bishops and / or theologians in resident during the deliberations of the Council.

²⁶⁸Barth was originally invited by Cardinal Bea in 1963 but had to decline because of health. However, in 1966 he accepted the invitation and attended the final sessions of the Council. See Busch, *Karl Barth*, 478-84.

²⁶⁹See Busch, *Karl Barth*, cf. 362 & 421.

him either subordinate or merely a mode of appearance of the one true proper Godhead common to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²⁷⁰ It is this act of obedience, a self-humiliation, which does not diminish Jesus' Lordship or divinity, that grounds the reconciliation of the world once and for all with God. This *kenosis*²⁷¹ is what makes it possible for humanity to be reconciled with God, since humanity is unable to effect this reconciliation on its own merit; nor is it possible for the humanity of Jesus to cooperate in any way with this reconciliation since the atonement is strictly the sovereign act of God.²⁷²

Although this act of reconciliation is wholly and utterly a movement from above to below, God's grace to humanity is also wholly and utterly a movement from below to above. This movement is shown in Barth's discussion of the second couplet, Jesus Christ, the Servant as Lord. Here Barth explains that Jesus is fully human, yet his is a humanity that is unlike ours

²⁷⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation* IV/1 ed. G.W. Bromiley & T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956,) 195-96. Herein after referred to as CD IV/1.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 180. Note: The choice of the word *kenosis* is mine since Barth rejects the traditional understanding of *kenosis* which suggests an 'emptying' of deity in the incarnation. For Barth the incarnation is the fullest expression of Lordship. In the context I employ it, *kenosis* simply indicates a renunciation of Jesus being in the form of God.

²⁷² In this comment it is not my intention to emphasize one of the two natures in Christ over the other, nor is it my aim to give all the credit to the first person of the Trinity. It is simply intended to stress that the human nature that the Son of God assumed was completely human and not deficient in any way. Since, if it were deficient, for example, Jesus' human will was one of 'absolute dependence' on the divinity of Christ, than Jesus could not have possibly been complete in humanity and therefore his saving act would neither exalt his or our human nature. This elevation of humanity could only be possible if in his person Jesus was complete in both deity and humanity. However - as I have suggested - this elevation of Christ's humanity and ours occurs because it is the divinity of Christ, the Son of God, who acts in the human nature assumed. In other words, it is strictly a sovereign act of God. However, it is also important to note here that Barth's treatment of this paradox is quite brilliant. He essentially teaches that in the meeting of two natures in Christ neither are compromised since it is in the work of the one Jesus Christ that everything is at one and the same time, but distinctly, both divine and human' (CD IV/2,117). The relation of double agency, of divine and human willing, in the person of Christ is thus not only one of 'coordination in difference' (CD IV/2,116), but also one of 'mutual participation' for the sake of a common and single work (CD IV/2,117). In other words, the incarnation is the event which occurs in the identity of his truly human action with his truly divine action (CD IV/2, 99).

since from his origin his humanity was determined by God's grace. Nevertheless, Jesus' humanity is like ours, since our fullness and true humanity²⁷³ is also determined by God's grace.²⁷⁴ It is this grace that has 'exalted' Jesus of Nazareth and holds out the promise of alteration to us.²⁷⁵ When Barth speaks about exaltation he refers to

. . . that harmony with the divine will, that service of the divine act, that correspondence to the divine grace, that state of thankfulness which is the only possibility in view of the fact that this man is determined by this divine will and grace alone. . .²⁷⁶

This does not mean that the human essence of Jesus became divine. If this was the case then how could he be the Mediator between God and us?²⁷⁷ What it means is that in Jesus the divine and human were united (hypostatic union) in such a way that the Son of God "causes his own divine existence to be the existence of the man Jesus."²⁷⁸ This does not mean that there are two beings existing side by side but rather the one Son of God exists in two distinct natures or essences.²⁷⁹ In Jesus Christ human and divine essence are united, they are indivisible and inseparable.

²⁷³Barth defines true humanity as being 'true human freedom. See CD IV/2 92.

²⁷⁴CD IV/2, 89.

²⁷⁵CD IV/2, 44-50. Here Barth speaks of the incarnation where God takes humanity into unity with his own being. However, God does not unite to his divinity an existing person but that which is human in all humanity, the *humanum* of all humankind, an individually distinct unity of body and soul, human being and essence, and became the person Jesus of Nazareth. It is in this way that Jesus is the promise of the basic alteration and determination of what we all are as human beings.

²⁷⁶CD IV/2, 92.

²⁷⁷CD IV/2, 89.

²⁷⁸CD IV/2, 51.

²⁷⁹ Colm O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 142.

Barth explains that Jesus lived in a particular time in history. But in this time he lived not only with God but for God, and not only with humanity but for humanity.

Jesus Christ exists in the history, the inter-connexion, the unity of the movement from above downwards and from below upwards, the history of God humbling himself in grace and of man exalted in the reception of that grace.²⁸⁰

In other words, the grace accompanying the hypostatic union involves the exaltation of human essence. Barth explains this by dividing this grace into four units: service, sinlessness, being a participant and being a vehicle or organ for the divine. In the first, Barth explains that human essence is exalted to the service of God. In Jesus there is complete harmony with the divine will. In the second, the real exaltation takes place with the grace of sinlessness. Here, the Son of God takes on human corruption without repeating it or affirming it. This grace did not add the remarkable quality to him that he could not sin, but in his effective determination from his origin for this act in which, *participant in our sinful essence, he did not will to sin and did not sin.*²⁸¹ The third point, participant, refers to the grace addressed to the human essence of Jesus Christ who in his humanity fully and completely participated, not only in the good pleasure of the Father, but also in the presence and effective working of the Holy Spirit. Godhead surrounds this person like a garment, and fills Jesus as the train of Yahweh filled the temple in Isaiah 6:1.²⁸²

²⁸⁰Ibid., 154.

²⁸¹CD IV/2, 92-3. Barth explains that whereas human nature wills to sin, and does sin, and therefore can sin, Jesus did not will to sin because from his origin he lived as a person in true human freedom, the freedom that springs from obedience. In our corrupt human nature we do not have genuine human freedom. We do not act freely, but as those possessed when we do wrong. In this way humanity is alienated from God. With Jesus, however, he could not sin because he enjoys true human freedom, and in this way sanctifies human essence.

²⁸²CD IV/2, 94.

This is not to suggest a state or habit, but of history in the light of the inward life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is question of an event, just like the existence (every moment) of Jesus Himself.²⁸³ Finally, the grace of God to human essence in Jesus Christ is Jesus' qualification to be the organ of the action or words of the Son as the Mediator between God and humanity. The Son of God reconciles the world to God, *not in the nakedness of divine power, but as the Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth* who accomplishes this saving act in history which takes place on earth. This means that the divine power, all power on heaven and earth, is given to this human being in virtue of this person's identity with the Son of God.²⁸⁴ This grace is given to the Son of Man, who acts as the organ for God's saving work. Jesus of Nazareth has been empowered as the necessary creaturely medium for God's action since this work concerns humankind and the world.

It therefore demands a human soul and a human body, human reason and human will, human obedience and human humility, human seriousness and anger, human anxiety and trust, *human love for God and the neighbour. And it demands all this in an existence in our human and created time. The speaking and acting, the suffering and striving, the praying and helping, the succumbing and conquering have all to be in human terms. . . . And the empowering to serve Him in this way is the exaltation which comes to it in this one man. . . . But what is supremely exalted in this way is none other than the human essence common to us all, and it does not change in this exaltation.*²⁸⁵

In summary, Barth's consideration of the incarnation and Jesus who came as both Lord and Servant establishes that Jesus of Nazareth is exalted through his obedience to his Father's

²⁸³CD IV/2, 96.

²⁸⁴CD IV/2, 97.

²⁸⁵CD IV/2, 99.

will, in his obedience to his own story, in obedience to his mission of loving service in reconciliation, and healing, in his obedient solidarity with every human person, especially with those who are marginalised. He is named the Christ, “the anointed of the Father,” and we are given a model, a way of life in our world: “You call me Lord and Master. . . . I have given you an example so that you likewise may do.” (John 13:14,15).

Through this discussion of Jesus, as Lord and Servant / Servant and Lord, Barth has provided a basis from which to appreciate the significance of what it means to be a visible sign of the Church’s *diakonia*. First of all, Barth’s discussion of the Lord who comes as servant transforms our notion of ministerial authority, especially as it relates to the office of deacon. Accordingly, those who are entrusted with this restored sacred office are called to be examples of the *diakonia* of Christ so that all members of the body of Christ are given living examples of what it means to be clothed in humility as opposed to arrogance.²⁸⁶ Secondly, Barth’s treatment of Servant as Lord suggests this ministry of *diakonia* is possible since our human essence has been exalted, making us “. . . a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”²⁸⁷ In other words, Barth helps us to understand that if the restored office of the diaconate is truly to fulfill its mandate to be a visible sign of the Church’s *diakonia* it must demonstrate a leadership that is empowered by a lordship that seeks exaltation through service and leads by example.

²⁸⁶1 Peter 5:5.

²⁸⁷1 Peter 2:9.

Encounter with Christ as Sacrament

In the preceding pages I showed how Karl Barth furnished a theological foundation for understanding the Church as a community of believers called to be a sign of *diakonia* for the world. His discussion of *diakonia* of the faithful, the servanthood of Christ and the importance of grace has provided us with a template in which to construct a sacramental theology of the diaconate.

In this part it is my intention to elaborate on this theology of the community of believers by considering it from Schillebeeckx's proposal that we encounter Christ within this community of believers and in particular through its members and the sacraments of the Church. Since this encounter is particularly evident, according to Schillebeeckx, in the sacraments which are the proper human mode of encounter with God,²⁸⁸ it is important to understand how the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and orders impart a special character, transforming the recipients into channels in which Christ can act in and through their visible ecclesial acts.

This action of Christ in and through the community of believers is made possible through the grace and special character received in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and orders. This 'character' received by the recipient through these sacraments establishes a relationship between the individual and the Church, the sacrament of Christ. This character is similar to the 'seal' a Roman soldier was marked with in order to distinguish him from non-military personnel and also the person's rank or grade in relationship to the Emperor and one another. Sacraments such as baptism, confirmation and orders also empower the individual, or commission one to act

²⁸⁸Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 6.

in the name of the Church according to their respective status.

In baptism the person is incorporated into the mystical Body of Christ, made a child of the Father through the Spirit of Sonship, who empowers the recipient to make visible the mystery of the passover, death to sin and life unto God in Christ Jesus (Easter). In confirmation, membership in the Body of Christ is completed with the bestowal of the Spirit (maturing in faith). As adult members they are empowered not only to reveal the mystery of Easter but also Pentecost. In holy orders the ordinand is configured to Christ the Head of the Body empowering him to perform ecclesial acts (word and sacrament), so that the mysteries of Easter and Pentecost are made visible in our midst.

All the People of God (Clerics & Laity) are nourished through the sacramental life of the Church. However practising one's faith is not limited to participating in the sacramental life of the Church but it includes "giving a visible reality in our everyday life to our faith, our hope and our love; to our holiness itself."²⁸⁹ The faithful are enabled to do this through the grace bestowed upon them through the sacraments, where they personally encountered Christ who reveals the *saving love of God*. *This is an encounter that empowers them to perform visible ecclesial acts revealing the mysteries of Easter and Pentecost to the world. In doing this the faithful act in concert with the hierarchy of the Church, together becoming the "sign raised up among the nations."*²⁹⁰

Those who have received the sacrament of holy orders share in the headship of Christ,

²⁸⁹Ibid., 203.

²⁹⁰*Lumen Gentium*, 387

the priesthood of authority. While all three sacraments, baptism, confirmation and orders participate in the fullness of the priesthood of the Church, the first two, share in it in a lay manner, while the priesthood of authority possesses it fully, that is, in the member of the *clerus*.²⁹¹ For example, when a priest celebrates the eucharistic sacrifice it is he alone who consummates the sacrifice in the name of Christ and his Church. But the sacrifice is offered in virtue of the general priesthood of all the faithful. Yet it is precisely because the priest does not merely act in the name of the faithful but in the name of Christ himself that he does after all act in the name of the faithful; for Christ, whose place he takes in the visibility of the Church, is personally the representative of the whole People of God.²⁹²

While the fullness of the priesthood of authority is found in the episcopacy, the presbyterate who shares in the priesthood of the bishop receives a partial share. In this capacity the ordinary priests who represent the bishop at the local level administer sacraments so that through the sacramental signs grace is bestowed on others, and through their preaching of the word, help others to hear the word of God within them.²⁹³ As the presbyterate receives a partial share in the priesthood of authority so does the deacon. Since the deacon is ordained not unto

²⁹¹ Strictly speaking the bishop alone is the 'priest' and only the bishop has the fullness of this priesthood of authority. Presbyters who are customarily called priests share in this priesthood of authority by participation only. Deacons, who are ordained not unto the priesthood but unto ministry, also share in this priesthood of authority, to a lesser degree than the presbyter but a higher degree than the laity since all three hierarchical offices are entrusted with a leadership role. This notion, which was enunciated in *Lumen Gentium* 28 became the common understanding of the priesthood following the Second Vatican Council. See also *Catechism par.* 1555 and my earlier discussion in Chapter Four on the leadership role of the diaconate.

²⁹² Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 171-172.

²⁹³ CF, Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 153-195.

the priesthood but unto ministry his share in the fullness of the priesthood of authority comes from his responsibility to be a sign of the Church's *diakonia*, exercised through his three-fold ministry of word, liturgy and charity. In addition to being a bearer of grace through the sacraments, making God's word audible through his proclamation of the gospel and preaching, and revealing the compassionate love of God through his ministry of justice and charity, the deacon is called to be an icon of Christ bringing the example of Jesus to the everyday world in a way the cultic priesthood cannot.²⁹⁴ **A Consideration of the Special Character associated with the Sacred Office of Deacon**

The deacon who shares in the priesthood of authority is also 'another Christ' (*Alter Christus*). This identification as 'another Christ' as implied in our earlier discussion of the priesthood of authority is not dependent on the traditional apostolic succession²⁹⁵ but on the confidence that the visible ecclesial actions of the ordained minister points to Christ, who

²⁹⁴Douglas M. LeClair, *The Deacon as the Icon of Christ: An Assessment and Reflection of the Functional Approach Versus the Mission Approach Following the Golden Age, the Decline and the Restoration* (Phoenix, Az: Catholic Sun Publishing, 2001), 59. LeClair draws on the thoughts of the French bishops to argue his notion of the deacon as a full time sacramental sign. He submits that the French bishops looked to the men's dual sacramental pledges, one in marriage, the other in ordination, as the vital link between the material and spiritual which makes their presence in the midst of society so key. As the icon of Jesus, they bring "the example of Jesus" to the everyday world in a way the cultic priesthood simply cannot. And this is from the country that had gone through the experience of the worker-priest. In their expectations for deacons, they would settle for nothing less than a full dedication of life, incompatible with functional or part-time ministry approaches.

²⁹⁵In traditional pre-Vatican II theology it was held that the priest was 'another Christ' since through ordination he stood in a direct line of succession that extends directly to Jesus, who instituted the sacrament of holy orders. This concept limited the understanding of 'another Christ' to the priesthood, diminishing the role of the bishop and the deacon. Today, sacramental theology which claims that those who are ordained are "another Christ" is based on the fact that ordination has made them a public representative of the Church and, therefore, indirectly, a representative of the Christ.

continues to act in and through his Church revealing the saving love of God.²⁹⁶ This is made possible through the grace received through the sacrament of holy orders, a grace which imparts a special character to the ordinand who is commissioned to act in the name of Christ. In this way, the deacon, as an ordained minister is configured to Christ in such a way that he becomes a vehicle or organ for Jesus, so that the saving work of God is made known. This statement, which springs from the Roman Catholic understanding of sacramentality and sacred office, begs the question, 'How should a sacred minister look, so that humanity can see the true Christ through him?' The answer to this question is found in the manner the Church and those who minister in her name can existentially become one single testimony to Christ. This is only possible when those who minister in Christ's name, whether sacred office holders or the faithful, communicate the Christian message through their lives. In this way they become living testimonies that Christ exists in our midst.²⁹⁷ They truly become icons of Jesus.

In regard to being configured to Christ, it is important to note that this does not mean that through baptism or through the grace associated with ordination, one is suddenly endowed with Christ-like features but rather with the grace that will help the person to imitate Christ. This imitation is not to be limited simply to emulating human qualities and characteristics of Jesus but rather to identify with Christ's total and complete election and availability for his mission

²⁹⁶This observation which was discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four basically claims that the invisible God is revealed in Christ, and the Christ continues to act in and through his church, and those entrusted to continue Christ's ministry on earth through the sacrament of holy orders.

²⁹⁷Angelo Scola "Test Everything: Hold Fast to What is Good. An Interview with Hans Urs Von Balthasar" trans. Maria Sheedy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 17-18. Here Balthasar is responding to a similar question that he posed in regards to how the Church can be '*Lumen Gentium*' for the world. In his response Balthasar indicates that this question equally applies to those who hold office within the Church.

and his loving obedience to it. In short, as the mission of Jesus is the truth of his identity so is it for those called to ministry.²⁹⁸

Balthasar and Ministry

Hans Urs von Balthasar, as is well known, was and is one of the leading Roman Catholic commentators on Karl Barth, whose theology we have already encountered in his theology of ministry. Balthasar helps us in many ways to put “catholic” flesh on the bones of the Barthian position, and so envisage the possible direction in which we might travel in our own theological journey.

Balthasar explains that the apostles, who were the first to be called to ministry by Jesus, are the prototypes for discipleship in the church today.²⁹⁹ Here, in these first disciples and later by those declared saints by the church over the centuries, we are able to find concrete human examples of what it means to be configured to Christ;³⁰⁰ their lives are living examples of the gospel³⁰¹ and they are the authentic interpreters of the theo-drama to which we are called to play

²⁹⁸Mark A. McIntosh “*Christology from Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar*” (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 42.

²⁹⁹ Balthasar, Hans Urs von *The Balthasar Reader* ed., Medard Kehl, S.J. and Werner Loser S.J., Translated by. Robert J. Daly, S.J. and Fred Lawrence (New York: Crossroad Pub. 1982), 379. Although in this reference Balthasar refers specifically to the presbyterate and those in religious life his observation may be equally applied to the permanent diaconate since both presbyters and deacons share in the hierarchical structure of the church and profess similar vows to their bishop.

³⁰⁰ Balthasar believes that the lives of the saints provide a means of discovering what God must be like. He contends that it is no different from an astronomer who calculates the mass of an unseen body by analysing its gravitational effect on an object that can be seen. Mark A. McIntosh *Christology from Within*, 17.

³⁰¹*Ibid.*, 297 and 376-380.

our own part,

Their knowledge, lived out in dramatic existence, must be regarded as setting a standard of interpretation not only for life-dramas of individuals but ultimately for the 'history of freedom' of all nations and of mankind.³⁰²

However, Balthasar cautions the reader that if they wish to be true disciples of Jesus they need to avoid reducing their ministerial identity to one simply defined by function. He submits that if the function performed by the minister is to have any enduring Christian value it must be connected with that special calling one is called to live. That is, the minister is to stand shoulder to shoulder with Christ,³⁰³ living out a life that is an example for the flock. (1 Peter 5:3; 1 Tim 4:12). It is only those who have responded to the call to imitate the poor, who are obedient for the sake of God's kingdom, and who see their entrance into office under the sign of a dedication of their lives for their neighbour, will be in the existential sense successors to the apostles.³⁰⁴

Permanent deacons, unlike presbyters and religious, are called to live out their ordination within the marketplace. As ministers who have been deemed by the Church as the link between the sacred and the secular they face a dilemma: Is this combination of existence in the midst of the world and at the same time serving as sacred ministers not a wooden sword with which, because of the attempt at an impossible amalgamation, the clear witness and the effect of both Christian forms of life get lost? Balthasar in a similar discussion concerning 'religious secular

³⁰²Balthasar, Hans Urs von *Theo-Drama. Theological Dramatic Theory II: Dramatic Personae: Man in God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 14

³⁰³*Ibid.*, 164.

³⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 279.

institutes' ³⁰⁵ admits that these objections have weight, but those who are called in this manner must live out the paradox clearly and unambiguously. They must consciously take their stand at the exact point where the two demands join, where the seam must be sewn together - once and for all and anew every day. It is always a question of balancing the two equal claims: Stewardship of possessions without being interiorly attached to them, genuine love of neighbour to the point of giving one's life without diminishing one's commitments and responsibilities to the church and spouse if they are married.³⁰⁶

Balthasar in his essay on '*Responsibility of Christians for the World*' illustrates how one is able to live out his vocation in the midst of the world. Although his paper is directed to all the baptized it provides an excellent recipe for a sacred minister called to be a bridge between the secular and sacred. In his discussion on responsibility he explains that Christians are sent into the world with an image of what it means to be truly human and with this understanding they are called to organize its structures as responsibly as they can.³⁰⁷ In living their faith in the midst of the world Christians observe the human world through God's eyes enduring both the openness

³⁰⁵Balthasar, following the lead of the Second Vatican Council, refers to those in religious life in two distinct ways: those who are clerics and belong to a religious congregation and may live in a monastic community, are simply 'religious orders or institutes. An example of this would be the Augustinian Friars, a Monastic Order, located near Toronto. The second form, 'religious secular institutes' or orders consist of non clerics associated with a religious congregation who have professed to live out the 'evangelical counsels' (poverty, chastity and obedience) in their lives. There are many examples of this form of religious order. For example, the "Christian Brothers" who lived out their ministry in the world primarily as teachers responsible for establishing schools throughout Canada; another example would include the "Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul" who through their ministry of charity served the community by establishing health care facilities and homes for orphans and widows. For an explanation of the differences see *Decree on the Up-To-Date Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis)*, Vatican II Oct. 28, 1965. Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council 2 - The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975), 616.

³⁰⁶Ibid., 302.

³⁰⁷Ibid., 370.

and contradictions of humanity, not forcing them onto a dogmatic procrustean bed but bringing everything under the unity of God's plan. However, in observing the world through God's eyes Christians recognize that all things have status and value only in so far as it serves the purposes of humanity, and it is harmful when it betrays human beings into the hands of the impersonal, reducing them to slavery and to the status of a thing.³⁰⁸

Those Christians, especially those called to live out their sacred ministry in the world, stand in solidarity with their neighbour, working toward a common goal that seeks to humanize the world. But because of their special knowledge of God's involvement and love for the world,

. . . they have a wider horizon which embraces the problematic and tragic, without eliminating it, and from which there falls on the world the only light that is truly illuminating and helpful. They must bear witness to this light not just abstractly - by professions of faith - but concretely in their professional and human involvement. Under certain circumstances this witness can take the form of protest, and does so when the encompassing and compliance-demanding secular schemes clearly decide to go against God's involvement for the sake of the world.³⁰⁹

In this manner, a deacon can truly represent the vertical arm of the cross which reaches out and draws people into God's infinite love.³¹⁰ In this way, the deacon when he participates in the Sunday liturgy serves not only as a sign of God's saving work in the world but also as the church's representative beckoning the faithful to go out into the world "to love and serve the Lord."³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 369.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 371.

³¹⁰ Horvath, *Theology of a New Diaconate*, 248-276 ; 515 - 538.

³¹¹ These words are proclaimed by the deacon at the end of the Mass. *New Introductions to the Sacramentary and Lectionary*, 34.

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter it has been shown that the council fathers sought a way to end the Church's alienation with the world.³¹² Their experiences of a world war, the holocaust, the spread of armed conflicts, economic and racial disparity compelled them to seek a new way to relate to the world. No longer could the Church simply be an institution of maintenance and protective models of faith. The Church must become an active committed place of the word, sanctification, charity and advocate of justice. In this way the Church could be a light for the world.

This vision led the fathers to describe the Church as servant or *diakonos*. Inspired by the worker priests in France and the diaconal circles in Germany the church chose to restore the diaconate as a proper office of the hierarchy, not just to renew the transitional office that had simply become a stepping stone to the priesthood. By restoring this sacred office, the church anticipated that the permanent diaconate would become the means of reentering the world in a concrete way. Those ordained to this restored sacred office would become ministers of the word, sanctification (liturgy), and charity. As advocates of justice reaching out to all who are economically, physically, mentally and spiritually deprived the Church would have an active and committed role within the world. As ordained ministers consumed by the word of God, nourished at the Table of the Lord they would bring Christ to the world, they would become the bridge between the sacred and secular.

But the Church did not intend to restrict the ministry of the Church's *diakonia* to one

³¹²Kasper, *Theology & Church*, 124. This notion flows from Kasper's commentary on the church as the universal sacrament of salvation.

designated group. When the church identified itself as the Church of *diakonia* it was calling all the baptized to share in this responsibility. As a result the Church envisioned the permanent diaconate as a visible sign of the *diakonia* of the whole Church in the marketplace and in the midst of the assembly gathered for the Eucharist. In this way the permanent deacon serves as a sign post, an animator and model for others to follow.

This designation of diaconate as a visible sign of church's *diakonia* is the critical aspect of his identity. In other words, the deacon is not just a functionary but is also a sacrament.³¹³

This identification as sacrament is where the difficulty arises. How does one merge the specific functions assigned to the sacred office with the responsibility of being a light for the world? Here the work of Karl Barth, Eduard Schillebeeckx and Hans urs Von Balthasar is helpful. Barth's incarnational theology, especially his discussion on the meeting of two natures, provides the basis for understanding the sacramental theology inspired by the work of Eduard Schillebeeckx that proposes ordination configures the ordinand in such a way that he becomes a vehicle or organ, so that the saving work of God is made known. On the part of the permanent deacon, as with all sacraments, a sacramental ceremony needs to be followed by a life in accord with the ceremony to be fruitful. What this means is the deacon is called to carry out faithfully the work of diaconal ministry described in the words the bishop prays over the ordinand.

³¹³The use of the word 'sacrament' is not understood as 'primal' only Christ is the primal sacrament of God. Nor should sacrament be understood here in the way the church developed it since the twelfth century. I am using the term in the same way the Second Vatican Council employed it when they returned to the patristic understanding of sacrament (*sacramentum*) or 'mysterion.' "The Relation to the Constitution on the Church expressly brings out this connection. It says that *mysterion* does not mean something unknowable or abstruse. In the sense in which it is used in Scripture, it means that transcendent, salvific divine reality which reveals itself in a visible way. If we start from this understanding of 'mysterium', it may be said that it reveals itself - even if shadows remain - in the concrete visible *ecclesia catholica*. Kasper, *Theology & Church*, 118.

Lord, send forth upon them the Holy Spirit, that they may be strengthened by the gift of your seven-fold grace to carry out faithfully the work of ministry. May they excel in every virtue: in love that is sincere, in concern for the sick and the poor, in unassuming authority, in self-discipline and in holiness of life. May their conduct exemplify your commandments and lead your people to imitate their purity of life. May they remain strong and steadfast in Christ, giving to the world the witness of a pure conscience. May they in this life imitate your Son who came, not to be served, but to serve.³¹⁴

Balthasar adds to the notion of what makes a sacrament fruitful and Barth's idea of total identification with Christ, when he claims that one fulfils his unique calling by standing with Christ, living out a life that is an example for all. According to Balthasar this living out of one's special calling is not achieved simply through functions performed, since for any Christian ministry to be effective and to have any enduring value it must be connected with the calling one is called to live. In the case of the permanent diaconate, it must be connected with Christ the Servant.

Balthasar suggests that this total configuration to Christ is possible only when those who minister in Christ's name communicate the Christian message through their lives, becoming living testimonies that Christ is in our midst. In effect, Balthasar is urging all those who serve in the name of the Church to be consumed by the word of God, to be conscious that as ministers ordained to be a visible sign of the Church's *diakonia* their total lives becomes visible ecclesial acts.

It is my hope that permanent deacons, formation directors and others involved in planning and determining diaconal training programs continue with the emphasis on the spiritual

³¹⁴Words of Ordination as quoted in McCaslin & Lawler, *Sacrament of Service*, 72.

dimension. While spiritual formation helps one to conform to Christ, it is also necessary to expand the delivery of incarnational theology to deacons so that by their intellectual assent they will be moved to internalize what it means to be configured to Christ the Servant. In this way deacons will become conscious of their “*ministerial character*,”³¹⁵ and in doing so truly become a “living icon of Christ the servant within the Church,”³¹⁶ as opposed to being simply functionaries.

³¹⁵*Directory*, 138. The *Directory* encourages formation programs to focus on developing this understanding of diaconal ministry. Paragraph 75 states: “The primary locus of ongoing formation for deacons is the ministry itself. The deacon matures in its exercise and by focussing his own call to holiness on the fulfilment of his social and ecclesial duties, in particular, of his ministerial functions and responsibilities. The formation of deacons should, therefore, concentrate in a special way on awareness of their ministerial character.”

³¹⁶*Basic Norms for the Formation of Deacons*, 28

APPENDIX ONE
PERMANENT DEACON SURVEY

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED! WE VALUE YOUR OPINION

This survey is intended to measure Permanent Deacon's self understanding of their ministerial office within the Roman Catholic Church.

The completion of this survey questionnaire is purely voluntary. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The answers you provide are strictly private and confidential.

The only foreseen discomfort or inconvenience associated with the completion of this survey is the time (30 minutes) that a participant is willing to give in completing this document.

Instructions:

- There is no need to put your name on this survey form
- All responses will be kept strictly confidential
- Please answer all questions in terms of your experience as a Permanent Deacon
- Please indicate your answer circling or filling in the blank, as indicated.
- Read the description of each situation and consider it in light of your own ministry. Perhaps none of these answers accurately fit your experience, nevertheless, choose the one which best describes your personal encounters or understanding. In making this selection be careful not to base it on what you think you *should* say or what sounds right to other people, but rather select the one response that represents your personal experience.
- There are no right or wrong answers.

This questionnaire was compiled by Deacon Bill Gervais for use in his research study done as part of his doctoral ministry programme. Questions or comments may be directed to his Faculty Supervisor, Dr. Kenneth Morgan, at (905) 525-9140 ext. 24095 or email morgankr@mcmaster.ca

Questionnaire
As part of a study into the identity of the Permanent Deacon
Doctor of Ministry Programme
McMaster Divinity College,
Hamilton, Ontario

Take as much time as you need to answer each of the questions. On average, the survey takes about 30 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers.

Read the description of each situation and consider it in light of your own ministry. Perhaps none of these answers accurately fit your experience, nevertheless, choose the one which best describes your personal encounters or understanding. In making this selection be careful, not to base it on what you think you *should* say or what sounds right to other people, but rather select the one response that represents your experience.

1. How long have you been a permanent deacon?
 - a. 1 to 3 years
 - b. 4 to 7 years
 - c. 8 to 11 yrs
 - d. 12 years plus

2. In addition to a personal call from God, what primarily caused you to consider the diaconate?
 - a. I was inspired by the ministry of another deacon
 - b. I was inspired by the ministry of a priest
 - c. I felt a need to deepen the service(s) I was already giving to the Church
 - d. My wife and family encouraged me to become a deacon
 - e. Other _____

3. If you answered "a" briefly describe whether it was the ministry or the deacon that was the source of the inspiration. _____

4. As a permanent deacon my years of ministry have been truly fruitful, rewarding and extremely satisfying.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
5. I believe that what is essential for the effective exercise of my ministry is
- the contractual agreement I have with the parish or institution
 - the relationship I have with my pastor (or pastoral team leader)
 - the relationship I have with the parish community
 - the relationship I have with Christ
 - Other _____
6. As a permanent deacon how many hours on average, per week, do you spend in formal ministry?
- 1- 8 hours a week
 - 9 - 16 hours a week
 - 17- 30 hours a week
 - 31 hours plus
7. What is your understanding of incardination (Canonical act whereby a cleric is attached to a diocese)? Please prioritize what comes to mind with # 1 being your first idea of incardination.
- _____ Being attached to a diocese
- _____ Being a servant of the Church
- _____ Being an extension of the bishop
- _____ Focussing one's service in one place
- _____ Being assured of employment
- _____ Being assured of sustenance in ministry
- _____ Being identified with a diocese
- _____ Having an obligation to inform the bishop of one's actions
- _____ Other

8. As a deacon called to fulfill the three fold function, Liturgy, Word, Charity, I find that most of my time is spent in ministries associated with:
- Liturgy (Service at the Altar, Marriages, baptisms, etc..)
 - Word (preaching, teaching)
 - Charity (Visiting sick, shut-ins, sacramental preparation, and other forms)
 - All about equal time
 - Other _____
9. As a permanent deacon assigned to a parish I have found that I was well received and supported in my ministry.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
10. Worship and fellowship are the most significant aspects of my ministry.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
11. Charity and service are the most significant aspects of my ministry
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain

12. I believe that as a permanent deacon my call to serve the Church includes:
- a. my family,
 - b. my job
 - c. my parish (or other pastoral setting)
 - d. all of the above
 - e. Other _____
13. My activities in my daily life contribute positively to a credible image of the Church.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. Not certain

Using the scale below, how would you rate your relationship with the following:

14. The bishop
- a. I feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated
 - b. I feel like a team member whose work is not known personally, but which is appreciated.
 - c. There is very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated
 - d. There is no feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.
 - e. Not applicable
15. Diocesan/ religious priests I associate with in ministry
- a. I feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated
 - b. I feel like a team member whose work is not known personally, but which is appreciated.
 - c. There is very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated
 - d. There is no feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.
 - e. Not applicable

16. My pastor
- a. I feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated
 - b. I feel like a team member whose work is not known personally, but which is appreciated.
 - c. There is very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated
 - d. There is no feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.
 - e. Not applicable
17. My parish
- a. I feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated
 - b. I feel like a team member whose work is not known personally, but which is appreciated.
 - c. There is very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated
 - d. There is no feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.
 - e. Not applicable
18. Lay parish staff
- a. I feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated
 - b. I feel like a team member whose work is not known personally, but which is appreciated.
 - c. There is very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated
 - d. There is no feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.
 - e. Not applicable
19. My parish council
- a. I feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated
 - b. I feel like a team member whose work is not known personally, but which is appreciated.
 - c. There is very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated
 - d. There is no feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.
 - e. Not applicable

20. Sister with whom I work
- a. I feel like a team member whose work is personally appreciated
 - b. I feel like a team member whose work is not known personally, but which is appreciated.
 - c. There is very little feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated
 - d. There is no feeling of being a team member whose work is appreciated.
 - e. Not applicable

Using the scale below, how would you rate the vision of the permanent diaconate by the following:

21. The bishop
- a. There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate
 - b. There is somewhat of an understanding of its role, but nothing very specific
 - c. There is some confusion about its role
 - d. There is much confusion about its role
 - e. I don't really know
 - f. Not applicable
22. Diocesan priests I have met
- a. There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate
 - b. There is somewhat of an understanding of its role, but nothing very specific
 - c. There is some confusion about its role
 - d. There is much confusion about its role
 - e. I don't really know
 - f. Not applicable
23. The pastor
- a. There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate
 - b. There is somewhat of an understanding of its role, but nothing very specific
 - c. There is some confusion about its role
 - d. There is much confusion about its role
 - e. I don't really know
 - f. Not applicable

24. The parishioners
- a. There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate
 - b. There is somewhat of an understanding of its role, but nothing very specific
 - c. There is some confusion about its role
 - d. There is much confusion about its role
 - e. I don't really know
 - f. Not applicable
25. The parish council
- a. There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate
 - b. There is somewhat of an understanding of its role, but nothing very specific
 - c. There is some confusion about its role
 - d. There is much confusion about its role
 - e. I don't really know
 - f. Not applicable
26. Sisters with whom I work
- a. There is a clear vision of the role of the diaconate
 - b. There is somewhat of an understanding of its role, but nothing very specific
 - c. There is some confusion about its role
 - d. There is much confusion about its role
 - e. I don't really know
 - f. Not applicable

Using the scale below select the statement that best describes your understanding of your identity and role as a permanent deacon:

27. The functions a deacon performs in his ministry defines the identity of the sacred office.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. Not certain

28. My identity (who I am) is determined more by my professional (secular occupation) situation than by the graces received in ordination.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
29. My identity (who I am) is determined more by my ministerial context than by the graces received in ordination.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
30. A permanent deacon represents Christ of John's Gospel, who washed the feet of his disciples.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
31. The essential difference between a priest and a deacon is found in the sacramental functions associated with the exercise of their ministry.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain

32. The essential difference between a priest and a deacon is found in the faculties granted in Holy Orders.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
33. A permanent deacon may be described as a mini priest.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
34. The essential difference between a priest and a deacon is found in the manner in which they are configured to Christ. (Configuration refers to how a person who has been aligned to Christ in a particular way will acquire specific Christ-like attributes, for example servant, etc)
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
35. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is the defining aspect of the office of deacon.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain

36. I believe that through ordination my specific ministry may be exercised part time but my person has been transformed into a full time sacramental presence.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
37. A permanent deacon shares in the eternal priesthood of Christ.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
38. A permanent deacon may be described as a lay person who assists the priest in the exercise of his ministry.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
39. I believe that my identity as a deacon has made a difference in the way I interact with people in the secular areas of my life.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain

40. I believe that my identity as a deacon makes a difference in the way I interact with people I meet in the sacred areas of my life.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
41. My role as a permanent deacon may be described as a bridge between the secular and sacred.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
42. If you answered “strongly agree” briefly state how you are a bridge between sacred and secular.
-
43. My witness as deacon in the market place has been a catalyst for others (believers and non believers) to imitate the charity of Christ?
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain
44. My witness as deacon within my parish community has been a catalyst for others to imitate the charity of Christ?
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not certain

45. Do you understand your obligation and rights as a cleric in accordance with the provisions of the 1983 Code of canon Law?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
46. How well informed are you about deanery meetings?
- a. I receive regular announcements
 - b. Communication about them is irregular
 - c. I receive very little communication about them

47. What did receiving the order of diaconate add to your life that was not in it before orders?

48. *Of all the experiences you had as a deacon, what one was the most satisfying?*

49. *Of everything you have experienced in the permanent diaconate, what would you like to see improved?*

APPENDIX TWO

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIACONATE

In our earlier discussion concerning the decline of the diaconate, it was proposed that the principal reason for the decline of this sacred office occurred when deacons stressed liturgical functions associated with the emerging presbyterate at the expense of their role of service. This critical factor in the decline of the diaconate, however, was also accompanied and reinforced by other historical factors that led to profound changes in the life of the Church, including in particular the development of monastic life and the ecclesiastical changes brought about by Constantine's conversion. These also had a negative impact on the diaconate.

Monastic Life (Religious Orders)

In the fourth century, at a time when the office of deacon still held considerable prestige, the monastic life of the Church changed. The movement that began in the second century with a few Christians seeking to live more fully the life of the Spirit in the desert mushroomed in the fourth century when many sought the desert as a place of refuge from the distractions and temptations of human society. While their goals were similar, their motives were different. The hermits, such as Paul and Anthony,³¹⁷ sought seclusion and poverty in response to Jesus' words:

³¹⁷The first hermits of the desert are not known. While Paul (229 - 342) and Anthony (250- 356) are often credited with being the first fathers of the desert, this recognition was prompted by both Jerome and Athanasius who wrote about them, each claiming that his protagonist was the founder of Egyptian monasticism. Justo L. Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1984), 138-139.

“If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (Mt 19:21).³¹⁸ Those who chose to flee into the desert in the fourth century were primarily abandoning the world in response to changes brought about by the end of the persecutions,³¹⁹ these Christians believed that the security and comfortable living produced by Constantine’s policies of peace and toleration of Christianity, were in fact

... the greatest enemies of the church, and that these enemies proved stronger during periods of relative peace. Now, when the peace of the church seemed to be assured, many of these people saw that very assurance as a snare of Satan.³²⁰

The great number of people fleeing to the desert and other places of seclusion led some ascetics, such as Pachomius in 318 C.E. to form communities, thus establishing the foundations of modern monasticism. However, the spread of the monastic ideal was not prompted by these

³¹⁸Historically we know that Christianity became outlawed in the late first century. While being a Christian was illegal, there was no government action to find Christians. Instead they were merely punished if reported to the authorities and convicted. Until the late second century Christianity was generally a lower-class phenomenon that was mainly restricted to the Greek speaking population in the east. By the early third century it began to spread more widely among the Latin speaking population in the west, and the public execution of Christians became more common. Some third century emperors (Severus Alexander, Philip and Gallienus) seem to have been somewhat well-disposed to the new religion, but others, in particular Trajan Decius and Valerian, were violently hostile to the new faith. Their personal motives for this attitude are not known. However, what is known is that the Roman Emperor Decius passed a decree in the latter part of 249 C.E., compelling all citizens under his authority to make a sacrifice and pour a libation to some pagan god and eat the meat of a sacrificial victim, things practicing Christians would never do. This threat of persecution created two classes of Christians. Those who were Christians in name only and those willing to die for their faith. While some fled to the desert to avoid persecution, others, such as Paul, had fled earlier because they believed a worldliness brought about by the increase in numbers had compromised their faith. As it was for Francis of Assisi centuries later, when the Egyptian Paul heard the words of Jesus from Matthew’s gospel he took them literally and left everything to follow Jesus. About fifteen years later Anthony joined Paul in the desert and the seeds of monasticism was sowed. After Constantine’s conversion (313 C.E.), Pachomius in 318 C.E. founded the cenobitical (communal) type of monasticism in Tabennisi in the south of Egypt. Christopher S. Mackay, *Gallienus* on line http://www.ualberta.ca/~csmackay/CLASS_379/Gallienus.html retrieved 23 June 2004; Charles G. Neuner “Monasticism” in *Collier’s Encyclopaedia*, 1971ed. Barnett, *The Diaconate: Full & Equal Order*, 92.)

³¹⁹Edict of Milan, 313 C.E. was issued by the co-Emperors, Constantine and Licinius adopting a policy of toleration for Christianity and other religions.

³²⁰Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 136.

early anchorites but rather by those bishops and scholars who saw the value of the monastic witness for the daily life of the church. Jerome, Basil of Caesarea and Augustine of Hippo were all inspired by and promoted the monastic ideal. But the most remarkable example was Martin of Tours who after his conversion devoted himself to the monastic life. In time Martin became known for his sanctity and when the bishopric of Tours in 397 C.E. became vacant the people of the region demanded that he be elected bishop. Although some of the bishops at Martin's election opposed his nomination, the former soldier, a hermit dressed in rags, accepted the appointment. While Martin was not the first ascetic to be appointed bishop, his insistence of *living in a monastic cell next to the cathedral and following a life style associated with monastic life*, led many to the conviction that a true bishop should approach the monastic ideal as much as possible. His example set the tone for centuries to come.

Thus, the monastic movement, which at first was in great measure a protest against the worldliness and the pomp of bishops, eventually left its imprint on the idea of the episcopate. . . . In that process, . . . monasticism itself was changed, for whereas those who first joined the movement fled to the desert in quest of their own salvation as years went by *monasticism would become - particularly in the West - an instrument for the charitable and missionary work of the church.* ³²¹

In summary, there were those in the early church who sought to follow the gospel life by *renouncing all they possessed and retreated to a life of seclusion and prayer. Their ascetic life style impressed a number of people, and when fear of persecution ended with Constantine's conversion to Christianity many sought this form of life as an escape from the negative influences of the world which they claimed would corrupt the Christian ideal. In time, bishops and scholars were impressed with the witness these individuals and later the monastic*

³²¹Ibid., 150.

communities provided, and when Martin of Tours insistent on following the monastic way of life while bishop he established a model of the ideal episcopacy. His influence and those of his predecessors not only led to the legitimacy of the monastic way of life but also to the foundation from which religious congregations would spring, becoming the instrument for the church's *charitable and missionary work*.

The Church after Constantine

While the religious congregations which grew out of the monasticism that begun in the early church became the principal instrument for the church's charitable work, they were not the reason for the disappearance of the diaconate. Although the religious congregations assumed a responsibility that had been identified with the sacred office of deacon, the seeds of the diaconate's demise were much more complex.

First of all, the numbers of deacons present in the early church suggest that they were never intended to be the principal instruments of the church's charitable work. Historically the numbers of deacons within a diocese were limited to seven out of respect for the apostolic precedent of Acts 6.³²² For example, the Bishop of Rome, Fabian (d. 250) divided his diocese into seven diaconal regions in order to ensure that the well being of the entire flock was met.³²³ In this capacity the deacon was both an advisor and an animator, but not necessarily the one who delivered the service.

³²²LeClair, *The Deacon as Icon of Christ*, 49.

³²³*Ibid.*, 49.

Secondly, the great influx of people into the Church following Constantine's conversion required a change in the manner sacraments were administered. No longer could the bishop be the sole dispenser of the sacraments, bolstered by deacons and presbyters acting on his behalf by administering baptisms. Since the number of deacons available to assist the bishop with these duties was limited, the bishop turned to his presbyters, who were more numerous in numbers,³²⁴ and delegated them the authority to exercise many of his sacramental responsibilities, especially the Eucharist. In other words, presbyters were chosen as "a matter of practicality . . . a matter of expediency, not of a problem with the [diaconal] office."³²⁵

While the limited numbers of deacons was an important consideration for the selection of the presbyters, it was not the sole reason for turning to them. Constantine's conversion not only increased the numbers of Christians, it also transformed the organization of the Church. Prior to the fourth century every person had a part and each functioned for the benefit of the whole. Now the organization of the Church would be adapted to fit the Roman model. The horizontal concept of ministry evident in the early church was replaced by the vertical and hierarchical. According to some pundits "the decline of the diaconate springs more from the development of the idea of *cursus honorum* than from any other single factor."³²⁶ Although the practice of an orderly progression through the lesser orders to the higher did not become the

³²⁴Presbyters were essentially a council of elders who governed the community with the bishop, and like their synagogue prototypes were given places of honour at the liturgy. Barnett, *The Diaconate: Full & Equal Order*, 37.

³²⁵*Ibid.*, 49. History also teaches us that some bishops did delegate their deacons to preside at the Eucharist. This practice was overturned at the Council of Arles in 314 C.E. and formally canonized at the Council of Niceae, 325 C.E..

³²⁶Barnett, *The Diaconate: Full & Equal Order*, 92.

norm until the end of the first millennium, its basis was established in the fourth century.³²⁷ A practice that would ultimately lead to understanding the diaconate as one of the steps toward priesthood (presbyterate) and not as a distinct ministry that rightfully shares in the ministry of the bishop.

This idea of *cursus honorum* which moved the church away from a horizontal structure in which everyone had a function to a vertical and hierarchical model created a vacuum. In the post-Nicene Church the responsibility for carrying out the church's charitable and missionary tasks was now the responsibility of the clergy, with the laity's participation restricted to a secondary role.³²⁸ Since the religious congregations which grew out of the monastic movement of the fourth century had the blessing and support of the church, they were employed to fill the void created by prohibiting the laity from having a primary role within the church's charitable and missionary works. As a result religious congregations, especially religious women, became the primary deliverer of services to the poor, the orphans, sick and poorly educated. While the ministries of these religious men and women provided for centuries tangible examples of the Church's *diakonia*, the council fathers concluded that this was not sufficient. If it were truly to be seen as a light to the nations, a people conformed to Christ the servant, then it needed a specific office to represent the whole Church's *diakonia*, a sacred office that would serve as a symbol of *diakonia* not just in the marketplace but also within the liturgy.

³²⁷There are numerous examples of deacons being ordained to the episcopacy without first being ordained a presbyter, up to and including the ordination of Gregory the Great as Bishop of Rome in 590 C.E. At the same time you have evidence, such as the letters of Pope Innocent I (c. and 402) Hesychius, bishop of Salonae (c. 418), that no one should be ordained to a higher office without spending some time in each of the lesser offices. Barnett, *The Diaconate: Full & Equal Order*, 106.

³²⁸ Boudinhon, A. "Laity" in *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 1910 ed.

In summary, the reasons for the decline of the diaconate are complex. Our review of the historical literature reveals that the limited numbers of deacons available within an individual diocese was the primary factor for the bishop selecting presbyters over deacons to help him carry out his sacramental functions. The small number of deacons available for service within a diocese also indicates that while the ministry of charity was one of their principal tasks, it could only be fulfilled in the role of an animator and not as the one who delivered the service. In other words, deacons in the early church were never considered the primary instrument for the church's charitable and missionary work. In effect, religious congregations that grew out of the monastic movement did not displace the permanent diaconate but rather met a need that surfaced as the church moved from a horizontal to a vertical structure. While the religious men and women provided tangible examples of *diakonia* in the marketplace, the Church still believed that within the hierarchy of the Church they had to designate a particular office to represent the servant Christ. In this way the Church would be able to provide a concrete and visible sign of *diakonia* in both the secular and sacred parts of human society.

In conclusion, the monastic movement provided the church with religious congregations that would exercise the ministry of *diakonia* through their various charitable and missionary works. The reasons for the disappearance of the ancient office of deacon are many and complex. However, this brief investigation has revealed that the limited numbers of deacons available for service within a diocese and the transition from a horizontal to a vertical and hierarchical church played an important role in its fall from its position of importance and prestige.

This study into the impact the development of monastic life and the ecclesiastical changes brought about by Constantine's conversion has supplemented and in some respects completed

our earlier discussion which concluded that one of the primary reasons for the decline of this sacred office was caused by deacons stressing liturgical functions at the expense of their role of service. This part has also reinforced the need for a visible sign of the Church's *diakonia*. While the negative aspects of *cursus honorum* continue to plague the Church, it also discloses the importance of the Church witnessing in a concrete and symbolic manner the *diakonia* of Christ.

What emerges is the sense that even in the ancient Church, there was theological and practical unclarity concerning the proper role of the deacon in the Church's ministry. It was in this situation, perhaps, that the liturgical functions of the deacon came to be stressed, as if by default, particularly in view of the rise of monastic life and of the hierarchical church. What this historical development shows, furthermore, is something akin to what this thesis has sought to demonstrate concerning the diaconate in the contemporary Canadian context. To put it in the simplest possible terms, without a clearly worked out theological understanding of the ministerial office of the deacon, confusion concerning his practical role is inevitable. What is merely convenient to the institution or to a particular community will almost always intrude by default. Our thesis, however, is that the theological idea of service as sacramentalized in the diaconate offers a clear conception of the meaning of the diaconate, and thus a way beyond both that historical and contemporary gap in theological understanding which has had so detrimental an impact upon this sacred office, and, by implication, upon the sacrament of order in general.

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