

## The Deacon's Ordination: Reflection on the Ministry



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## Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*

"In his person, the deacon makes it clear that the liturgy must have *concrete consequences* in the world with all its needs, and that work in the world that is done in the spirit of charity has a spiritual dimension" (p. 270)

## Introduction: Points from Ordination

- Ordination is an act of the **WHOLE** Church
- Unique Relationship of Bishop with his deacons
- "Worthiness"
- Epiclesis: Spirit in Action and sacramental grace
- Obedience
- Focus on Gospel
- Eucharist: The Church Created Anew

## Effects of Ordination



1. Entrance into the clerical state
2. Incorporation into the *ordo* of deacons
3. Incardination into local (diocesan) church

To understand the diaconate today, where it might be headed, must first understand the vision behind the renewal



## Why is this important?



- Growing need for deacons and others to understand their roots
  - Needs of contemporary Church
  - Complex matrix of ministries
- Living out the potential of the vision

## Here are some things to ponder:



- Diaconate has developed differently around the world
- Europe (Western and Eastern) were working on renewed diaconate for more than a century BEFORE Vatican II
- Only a handful of US bishops at the Council supported the notion

## Plotting the Course Points



- Theology and the Diaconate
  - Why “ordained” ministers at all?
  - What does “ordination” mean?
  - LG 18
- The Foundations of the Diaconate
  - History: Who were deacons and what did they do?
  - Essence vs. Function OR Essence AND Function?
  - Insights from history for the contemporary diaconate
- Current and Future Diaconate
  - Continuity, Imagination, Creativity

## Theology and the Diaconate



## Three Points

- Review of "Theology" and "Faith"
- The Role of Church and Ministry
- A Quick Review of the Meaning of Ordination

## Roots of Theology: Faith Seeking. . . .



- What Is Theology?
- *St. Anselm: "Faith Seeking Understanding"*
- *(Orobator, SJ) But it's also: "Faith seeking hope, seeking community, seeking love"*

## What is faith?

- "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)
- Religious faith (unlike purely human faith in doctors, etc.) is concerned with ultimate reality, ultimate questions.
- Catholic tradition distinguished: the act of faith ("*fides qua*"), and the content of faith ("*fides quae*").

## The Act of Faith "Fides Qua"



- "Credo" = "I believe"
- "cor" + "do" = "I give my heart."
- "Metanoia" = a complete change of heart
- Personal, yet communal dimensions

## The Content of Faith "Fides Quae"



- God and God's People (Hebrew scripture)
  - The Nature of God: *mysterium tremendens et fascinans*
  - God is "other", unknowable
  - Transcendent, yet immanent

## Some other attributes



- More than mere acceptance and trust: must lead to action
- More than "personal"; more than "teachings" must avoid both extremes ("faith without works is dead" (James 2:17))

## Catholic tradition: Mediation



- Knowledge of God is more than simply personal revelation
- What is "mediation" vs "immediate"?
- People, events, nature: the "sacramental principle"

## Put yourself at the beginning...



- Followers of Christ had ONE great mission:
- What was it?
- (hint: Matthew 28:16-20)

## Put yourself at the beginning...



1. DIVINE AUTHORITY/POWER
2. MAKE DISCIPLES (COMMUNITY)
3. BAPTIZE THOSE DISCIPLES
4. TEACH THOSE DISCIPLES
5. CHRIST'S CONSTANT PRESENCE

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

## How to live the Mission: St. Paul

- I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called. . . making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- Ephesians 4: 1-13

## Living the Mission. . .

- There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.



## Each in his or her own way...

- But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . . The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers:



## For what purpose?

- To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.



## Vatican II and the Nature of the Church and Ministry

- After 2000 years, nothing has changed with our mission
- As CHURCH
- As MINISTERS of that Church



## *Lumen gentium*

- 1. Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature to bring the light of Christ to all, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church.

### *Lumen Gentium and The Great Commission*

- Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission.

### And the Church's ministers:

- 18. For the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God, Christ the Lord instituted in His Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body. For those ministers, who are endowed with sacred power, serve their brethren, so that all who are of the People of God, and therefore enjoy a true Christian dignity, working toward a common goal freely and in an orderly way, may arrive at salvation.

### So, a theology of the diaconate begins:

- With a God who is Love
- Our own discipleship: someone made us disciples, baptized us, taught us, and helped us realize that God is ever with us (EMMANUEL)
- Consider your ordination: how did you/will you be vested at the beginning of Mass?



### Meaning of Ordination?



- Shifted over the centuries
- Particularly dramatic shift in 12<sup>th</sup> Century
- "From the functional to the ontological"
- Important for us deacons to know about this shift. WHY?
- ((Hint: we weren't around much in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century!))

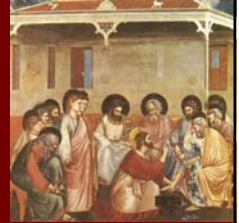


## US Bishops *National Directory, #39*

- “By ordination, the deacon, who sacramentalizes the Church’s service, is to exercise the Church’s *diakonia*. Therefore, the diaconal ministries, distinguished above, are not to be separated; the deacon is ordained for them all, and no one should be ordained who is not prepared to undertake each in some way.”

## From the Vatican’s *Directory*:

“In every case it is important that deacons fully exercise their ministry: in preaching, in liturgy and in charity to the extent that circumstances permit. They should not be relegated to marginal duties, be made merely to act as substitutes, nor discharge duties normally entrusted to non-ordained members of the faithful” (*Directory*), 40.



## Foundations of the Diaconate



## *Scriptural Themes: The Radical Meaning of Diakonia*

- At least 47 scriptural instances tying care of those most in need to the covenant
- “Suffering Servant”





### Scriptural Themes: The Radical Meaning of Diakonia

- Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:27)
- *Kenosis* and *Theosis*
- Matthew 25



### Scriptural Themes: The Radical Meaning of Diakonia

- Acts 6?
- Paul and “deacons”



### Closer Look: *Kenosis* and *Theosis*



### “Faith and Reason” (1998)



- The prime commitment of theology is seen to be the understanding of God’s *kenosis*, a grand and mysterious truth for the human mind, which finds it inconceivable that suffering and death can express a love which gives itself and seeks nothing in return.

## "Deus Caritas Est" (2006)

- Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.
- I wish to speak of the love that God lavishes upon us and which we in turn must share with others



## Philippians 2:5-8 (Kenosis)

Who, being in the form of God,  
Did not count equality with God  
Something to be grasped.  
But he emptied himself,  
Taking the form of a slave,  
Becoming as human beings are;  
And being in every way like a human being,  
He was humbler yet,  
Even to accepting death, death on a cross.

## Philippians 2:9-11 (Theosis)

Therefore God also highly exalted him  
And gave him the name  
That is above every name,  
So that at the name of Jesus  
Every knee should bend,  
In heaven and on earth and under the earth  
And every tongue should confess  
That Jesus Christ is Lord,  
To the glory of God the Father.

## Kenosis: Essence of Divinity

- Who is God in light of the kenosis? Kenosis is not a process of de-divination but rather as an attribute of God's love disclosed in the compassionate existence of Jesus. . . . God is absolute letting-be, self giving, self-spending. Kenosis is understood as the way God relates to the world; creation is a work of love, of self-giving.
- Lucien Richard, OMI
- *Christ: The Self-Emptying of God* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1997)

## *Kenosis: Essence of Divinity*

- Hans Urs von Balthasar
- *Love Alone* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969)
- It is precisely in the *kenosis* of Christ (and nowhere else) that the inner majesty of God's love appears, of God who 'is love' (1 John 4:8) and a 'trinity.'

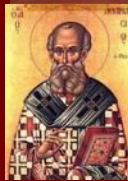
## *Kenosis: Essence of Divinity*

- J. B. Metz
- *Poverty of Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1968, 1998)
- God 'became human' and took on our flesh. We say this all too casually. . . .
- Satan wants to make Jesus strong, for what the devil really fears is the powerlessness of God in the humanity that Jesus has assumed.
- Satan fears the Trojan horse of an open human heart. . . .

## *But . . . WHY? Theosis*

- Out of divine Love, God wants us to be one with God
- Theosis – movement toward communion with the divine – is the reason for kenosis
- 2 Peter 1:4: Through Christ, we "become partakers of the divine nature."
- "Divinization"

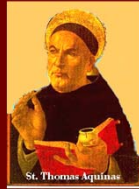
## "Divinization"? Sounds Dangerous!



- St. Ephrem, deacon and doctor of the Church: "The Deity imprinted itself on humanity, so that humanity might also be cut into the seal of the Deity"
- St. Athanasius of Alexandria, deacon and bishop: "God became human so we might become God."

## More recently. . . .

- JPII: "The Spirit enables us to share in the Divine nature. . ." (1998 General Audience), citing Thomas Aquinas:
- "The Only-begotten Son of God, wanting us to be partakers of his divinity, assumed our human nature so that, having become man, he might make men gods."



## Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi

- West: "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity."
- East: "You have united, O Lord, your divinity with our humanity and our humanity with your divinity; Your life with our mortality and our mortality with Your life. You have assumed what is ours and you have given us what is yours for the life and salvation of our souls. To you be glory forever."

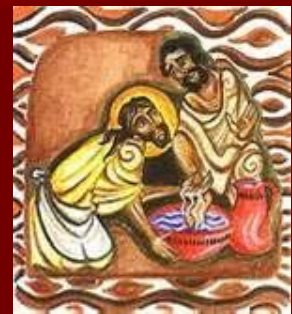
## Impact on All Disciples



- Through Baptism: "By sharing our human nature, weakened through Adam's sin, you enabled us to share in your divinity, and to receive the gift of life." (Maronite)

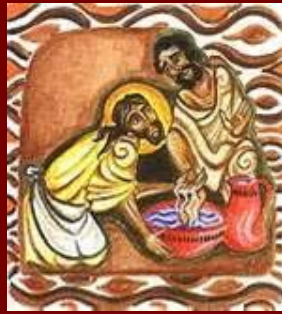
## John 13: Hypodeigma

- A reading of John 13
- Washing of feet is more than simple or menial service
- It is a sign, a foretaste of Christ's passion and death

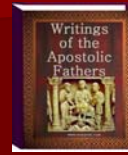


## Understanding *kenosis*

- Jesus uses this sign to illustrate the type of leadership to be exercised by the Apostles: a similar *kenotic diakonia*
- A willingness to surrender everything to care for another



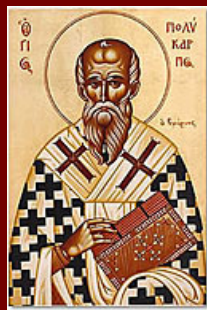
## The Patristics. . . .



- Deacon as “icon of Christ”
- Association with Bishop
- Diversity of function
- Administration, judicial, liturgical
- All of these are part of the Rite of Ordination!

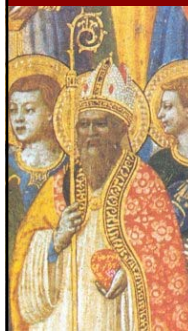
## Polycarp of Smyrna

Likewise the deacons should be blameless; not slanderers, not double-tongued, not lovers of money, temperate in all matters, compassionate, careful, living according to the truth of the Lord, who became a ‘servant of all’. . . . It is necessary. . . to be subject to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ.



## Ignatius of Antioch

- “Correspondingly, everyone must show the deacons respect. They represent Jesus Christ, just as the bishop has the role of the Father, and the presbyters are like God’s council and an apostolic band. You cannot have a Church (*ecclesia*) without these.”
- “Let the deacons (my special favorites) be entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ who was with the Father from eternity and appeared at the end of the world.”



### *Hippolytus of Rome*

- “Apostolic Tradition”
- Only surviving “Order” of the Western Church
- C. 215, attributed to Hippolytus



### *Hippolytus of Rome*

When the deacon is ordained, this is the reason why the bishop alone shall lay his hands upon him: he is not ordained to the priesthood but to serve the bishop and to carry out the bishop’s commands. He does not take part in the council of the clergy; he is to attend to his own duties and to make known to the bishop such things as are needful. He does not receive that Spirit that is possessed by the presbytery, in which the presbyters share; he receives only what is confided in him under the bishop’s authority.



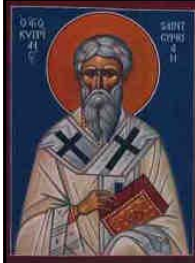
### *Cyprian*

- Bishop
- Writing from exile around 250 AD



### *Cyprian*

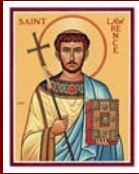
If they should be seized with any misfortune and peril of sickness, [they] should, without waiting for my presence, before any presbyter who might be present, or if a presbyter should not be found and death begins to be imminent, before even a deacon, be able to make confession of their sin, that, with the imposition of hands upon them for repentance, they should come to the Lord with the peace which the martyrs have desired, by their letters to us, to be granted to them.





### *Fabian of Rome*

- Divided Rome into seven “deaconries” around 250 AD
- Deacons, subdeacons
- Legend of St. Lawrence (d. 258) comes from this period



### *Bishop and Deacon: Didascalia Apostolorum*

- Syria; early to mid 3<sup>rd</sup> Century
- No source more descriptive of bishop-deacon relationship

### *Bishop and Deacon: Didascalia Apostolorum*

Let the bishops and the deacons, then, be of one mind; and do you shepherd the people diligently with one accord. For you ought both to be one body, father and son; for you are in the likeness of the Lordship. And let the deacon make known all things to the bishop, even as Christ to His Father. But let him order such things as he is able by himself, receiving power from the bishop, as the Lord did from His Father. . . . But the weighty matters let the bishop judge. Yet let the deacon be the hearing of the bishop, and his mouth and his heart and his soul; for when you are both of one mind, through your agreement there will be peace in the Church.

### *Bishop and Deacon: Didascalia Apostolorum*

Let the deacon be ready to obey and to submit himself to the command of the bishop. And let him labor and toil in every place whither he is sent to minister or to speak of some matter to anyone. For it behooves each one to know his office and to be diligent in executing it. And be you [bishop and deacon] of one counsel and of one purpose, and one soul dwelling in two bodies.



*Bishop and Deacon:*  
Didascalia Apostolorum

Let your judgments be held on the second day of the week. . . . Let also the deacons and presbyters be ever present in all your judgments, to judge without acceptance of persons, as men of God, with righteousness.

*Bishop and Deacon:*  
Didascalia Apostolorum

If anyone come in from another place, bringing recommendatory letters, let the deacon be the judge of the affair, inquiring whether they be of the faithful, and of the Church, whether they be not defiled by heresy, and besides, whether the party be a married woman or a widow. And when he is satisfied in the things of the Lord, let him conduct everyone to the place proper to him.

*Bishop and Deacon:*  
Didascalia Apostolorum

Echoes Ignatius: “The bishop sits for you in the place of God Almighty. But the deacon stands in place of Christ; and do you love him. . . .”

And, to the deacons: “If then our Lord did thus, will you, O deacons, hesitate to do the like for them that are sick and infirm, you who are workmen of the truth, and bear the likeness of Christ.”

*Augustine of Hippo*



- Role of Deacon in Catechesis (Deogratias and Quodvultdeus)
- Wrote one of the earliest known treatises on catechesis (*de catechizandis rudibus*) when he responded to a request from the Carthaginian deacon Deogratias for advice and guidelines on the catechesis of new Christians

### *But things are changing. . . :*

- In 215, the deacon “is not ordained to the priesthood but in service to the bishop” (*non ad sacerdotium sed in ministerio episcopi*)
- By 475, the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiquae* changed this to “*non ad sacerdotium sed ad ministerium*”
- Roles of bishop-presbyter are evolving, with presbyter subordinate to bishop, and deacon subordinate to both. The beginnings of the *cursus honorum*.

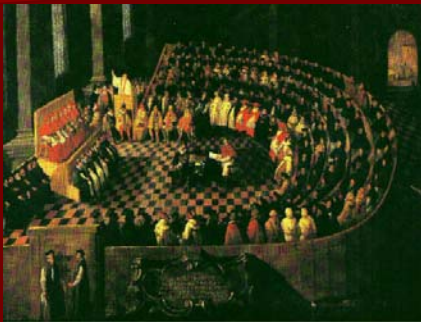


### *By 8<sup>th</sup> Century. . .*

- Roles of bishop and presbyter clearly distinguished. From Constantine, bishops as residential, civil judges
- *Cursus honorum* now well-established; paralleled Roman civil service
- Diaconate now subordinate to presbyter, and order is almost always transitional.



### *Council of Trent (1545-1563)*



### *The Council of Trent*

- All orders point to Eucharist
- Desire to “restore the diaconate in its ancient functions”
- Not sure if this was call for permanent diaconate or longer transitional diaconate
- No implementation

### *1917 Code of Canon Law*

- No ordination to minor or major orders without intention to proceed to priesthood
- What specific functions are assigned to deacons are all *extraordinary*

### *Last “permanent deacons” before Vatican II:*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ■ Giacomo Antonelli   | ■ Teodolfo Mertel  |
| ■ 1806-1876   | ■ 1806-1899  |
| ■ Statesman and Diplomat                                      | ■ Canon Lawyer   |
| ■ Named Cardinal in 1847                                      | ■ Named Cardinal in 1858   |
| ■ Secretary of State for Pius IX; opposed Italian unification | ■ In charge of Roman Rota  |
|   | ■ His Secretary: Pietro Gasparri, who was principal author of 1917 Code of Canon Law |

### *Summary*

- “Golden Age” of diaconate (till 325 AD: diversity of function, association with bishop)
- Post-Constantinian world: Structures of church evolve and standardize in relationship to Empire
- Diaconate becomes transitional to a highly developed priesthood.
- Identity Shift: From deacon-as-deacon to deacon-as-future-priest.
- Ordination links one more closely to the altar

### *The Second Vatican Council*



## Most Basic Question: WHY?

- Why was the diaconate renewed by Vatican II and Paul VI?
- Why was there a Vatican II in the first place?



## "Vatican II: That's when the Catholic Church. . . ."



- Executive Officer, USS Billfish (SSN 676): "I remember Vatican II: that's when the Catholic Church sold out to. . . ."



## A Little History: 1776 - 1899



- Revolutions: individualism & separation of church/state
  - Political (American and French)
  - Economic (Industrial)



## A Little History: 1776 – 1899

- Emigration/Immigration
- Loss of Papal States
- Rise of Nationalism
- Vatican I: First attempt to relate Church to Modern World



### A Little History: From 1900 - 1959



### JPII on WWII

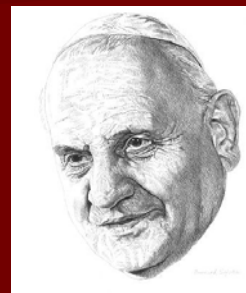


- "World War II: An abyss of violence, destruction and death unlike anything previously known." (2004 World Day of Peace)

### Vatican II: Response to WWII



### "The First 100 Days"



- John XXIII: elected October 1958
- Turned 77 in November
- Announced agenda for his papacy on January 25, 1959
- Purpose of the Council: *aggiornamento*
- Purpose of Religion: "To make the human sojourn on earth less sad."

## Vatican II: The Council of the Church

- First, had to deal with the worldwide pastoral challenges facing the church
- Second, the first truly worldwide Council of a Church fully aware of itself as a "world church"

## Vatican II: The Council of the Church

- "AD INTRA"
  - Looked into the inner nature and life of the Church
- "AD EXTRA"
  - Looked outward at the way in which the Church relates to the Modern World

## The Deacon and the Council



## Reform & Renewal

- Five critical areas:
  - Role of Bishops & their Relationship to the Pope (complements Vatican I)
  - Role of the Laity
  - Definition of Church Membership
  - Relationship of Catholic church to other Christian churches
  - Relationship of Church's mission to the life of the world

## Role of Bishops

- Complemented & completed work of Vatican I
- Three basic questions: What is a Bishop? What is the unique role of the Bishop of Rome? How do they relate?
- Bishop is called by God. The ***sacramental identity of the bishop!***
- Bishop is head of the local church, in communion with the Pope. [LG 26]
- Bishop is a vicar of Christ [LG 27]

## Prior to Vatican II: "Find the Bishop!"



## Role of Bishops

***Renewal of the Diaconate is tied directly to this renewal of the Episcopate***

***Bishop's Role of Teaching (Word), Sanctifying (Sacrament) and Ruling (Servant-Leadership) described as diakonia***

## But who suggested diaconate?

- Myth: "From the Third World"
- Myth: Top-down → "bishops re-imposed an additional hierarchical structure on the people"; anachronism
- How did the bishops even know about the diaconate, other than as "transitional"?



## How did the question emerge?



- Germany, 1840: diaconate as part of overall ecclesial reform: link to bishop & worship
- *Caritas* in Germany, 1897: required in every German diocese
- *Caritas* journal began to explore the possibility of an ordained diaconate

## Diaconate: Link between worship and social action

- G. von Mann (1934): Charity is essential element of church; need for some official recognition of those who act in Church's name.
- H. Shütz (1936): advantage of deacons is official *mission*: the bishop sends. Also, with rise of Nazism, only an *official* presence will survive; deacons are to link *leiturgia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia*.

## Adolf Hitler: 1933-1945



## 1933 – 1945: Dachau becomes incubator of ecclesial renewal



Only the beginning. . . .



Only the beginning. . . .



## Dachau Concentration Camp

- Clergy & Religious of all faiths: "no special treatment"
- *Der Priesterblock*
- Incubator for renewal: "How must the Church change so that this does not happen again?"



## Priests at Dachau

- Total Priests Incarcerated at Dachau: 2720
- Priests released: 314
- Priests who died in camp: 1034
- Priests transferred to other camps: 132
- Priests who survived the war: 1240 (less than half)







## Following the War. . . .



- Survivors begin to write and plan
- Otto Pies, Wilhelm Schamoni
- Hannes Kramer and the "Diaconate Circles"
- Karl Rahner
- International Catechetical Week, Assisi, 1956
- Pius XII (1947, 1957)

## So, as Council began. . .

- Charitable service, sacramentally linked to word and worship, is essential element in life of the church.
- This dimension, while it must be exercised by all, should be part of the permanent sacramental life of the church.
- This development urgently needed as part of overall renewal of the church.

## The Deacon at the Council

- Rahner/Vorgrimler: *Diakonia in Christo*
- 8972 proposals received during *antepreparatoria*; 101 concerned the diaconate
- Of the 101, 90 proposals *pro* (representing 186 bishops), 11 *contra* (representing 21 bishops)

## Two German *Periti*



## Who Had the Vision?



- Many supporters were from Europe (especially Spain, Germany, France, the Netherlands and countries of Eastern Europe)
- Others were bishops from Latin America, Africa, and Asia (especially Micronesia, Indonesia, India and Pakistan).

## The Deacon at the Council

- 16 proposals (71 bishops) on functions of deacons. Speak of deacons of "mature age" (40); age of deacons will be a topic of discussion during the later debate.
- Specific functions:
  - "experienced catechist"
  - parish administration
  - administration of church goods and property
  - official preaching and teaching
  - presiding at Extreme Unction and other sacramental ministries
- Deacon is a recognized leader in the community, not a person new or inexperienced in ministry.

## Deacons and the Documents

- Dogmatic Constitution on the Church #29
- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #35
- Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation #25
- Decree on Missionary Activity #16
- Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches #17



## The Deacon at the Council

- Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium), #29
- First Draft: no mention of deacons at all!
- The key to understanding the diaconate is to understand the key role of Chapter III and the nature & role of bishops: deacons & priests are assistants to the bishops. [Paragraphs 18-27: bishops; 28: presbyters; 29: deacons]

## The Deacon at the Council

- Three developments
  - the “Suenens Compromise”: not an absolute universal
  - only “mature” married men could be ordained; but 40 was considered too old, and lowered to 35
  - growing appreciation of the theological nature of the diaconate as opposed to a purely functional approach (again, due largely to Suenens)



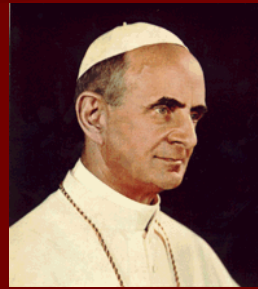
## The Deacon at the Council

- Final Votes (#29 had 5 votes)
  - office of deacon: 2055 to 94
  - Restoration as permanent order: 1903 to 242
  - Pope to approve: 1523 to 702
  - “mature married men”: 1598 to 629
  - “younger non-celibate men”: 1364 NO to 839 YES

## The Deacon at the Council

- Very little consensus of what they were restoring: no one knew what a deacon was or what he was supposed to do!
- Ancient order, but transformed for renewed Church
- Relationship to celibacy; BUT, what about the relationship of Matrimony to Holy Orders?
- Not restored because of a shortage of priests, but a shortage of deacons (a new way of ordained ministry)

## Deacons in a Diaconal Church



We stress that the teaching of the Council is channeled in one direction: the SERVICE of human kind, of every condition, in every weakness and need. The Church has declared herself a servant of humanity at the very time when her teaching role and her pastoral government have, by reason of this Council, assumed greater splendor and vigor. However, the idea of SERVICE has been central.

## Paul VI/John Paul II



- "The permanent diaconate. . . A driving force for the Church's service. . ." (Paul VI, *Ad pascendum*)



- "The service of the deacon is the Church's service sacramentalized." (John Paul II, *Address to US Deacons*)

## Benedict XVI



- "Love needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community."
- The Seven: "decisive step. . .for putting this fundamental ecclesial principle into practice." With the Seven, *diakonia* became part of fundamental structure of the Church."



## Benedict XVI



- The Church's deepest nature expressed in three-fold responsibility [word, sacrament, charity]. "These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable." Charity is not "a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is. . . an indispensable expression of her very being."

## Points from the Council Themes of the *National Directory*

- Deacons needed as part of renewed identification of church-as-deacon
- Radical Sacramentality of the Deacon
- Relationship to the Bishop
- Restored the *permanency* of diaconate



## From Vatican II to Present After the Council. . .



- 1964 – *Lumen gentium*
- 1965 – Second Vatican Council closes
- 18 June 1967 – *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*: Pope Paul VI implements Vatican II decision on the diaconate

## Getting Started

- First bishops' conferences to request permission (1967):
  - Germany
  - France
  - Italy
  - Brazil
  - Cameroon

## The first ordinations. . . .



- 28 April 1968 – Cologne, Germany (5 ordinands)
- 8 years of preparation/service
- Ages: 35 – 47

## The first ordinations. . . .



- 3 November 1968 – Rottenburg, Germany (9 ordinands)
- 8 December 1968 – Bamberg, Germany. 3 Franciscan brothers; after ordination sent to Paraguay and India
- 8 December 1968 – Douala, Cameroon. 7 African deacons for diocese of Douala.

## 1970 International Statistics: 100 Deacons

- |                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| ■ Algeria – 2  | ■ France – 5        |
| ■ Belgium – 9  | ■ India – 2         |
| ■ Brazil – 13  | ■ Indonesia – 1     |
| ■ Cameroon – 8 | ■ Paraguay – 1      |
| ■ Chile – 9    | ■ South Africa – 2  |
| ■ Germany – 45 | ■ United States – 3 |

## 1968: US Bishops

1. To complete the hierarchy of sacred orders and to enrich and strengthen the many and various diaconal ministries at work in the United States with the sacramental grace of the diaconate;
2. To enlist a new group of devout and competent men in the active ministry of the Church;
3. To aid in extending needed liturgical and charitable services to the faithful in both large urban and small rural communities;
4. To provide an official and sacramental presence of the Church in areas of secular life, as well as in communities within large cities and sparsely settled regions where few or no priests are available;
5. To provide an impetus and source for creative adaptations of diaconal ministries to the rapidly changing needs of our society.

## The Diaconate in the US. . . .



- 1968: Letter to Holy See is drafted (based on previously-approved French letter); letter sent in May
- Request approved in August
- At November meeting:
  - standing Committee
  - Secretariat established
  - 4 Training Centers (2 national/2 diocesan) established and approved by USCCB

## The Diaconate in the US. . . .

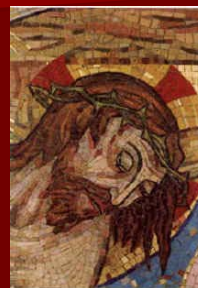


- June 1, 1969: Archbishop Sheen ordains Michael Cole first permanent deacon in US (Rochester)
- May 24, 1970: Bishop Charles H. Helmsing (KC-St. Joseph) ordains Paul McArdle
- June, 1970: Monterey, CA
- 1971: first large classes; first "Guidelines"
- 1984: new Code of Canon Law; revised "Guidelines"
- 2005: National Directory

## Current and Future Diaconate



## Challenges and Tensions from the Data



- Aging of US Diaconate
- Increasing "full time" deacons
  - Employment vs. Assignment
  - Deacons as "compensating" for shortage of priests?
- More than 1/3 serve only in a parish

## Deacon Overseas: One Example

- Diaconate in Hungary
  - 9 deacons in 1990
  - 46 by 1999 (54 in 2004)
  - RISK



## Task 1: Expanding our Sense of Servanthood

- Church teaching: WORD, WORSHIP, CHARITY are all "diakonia"
- We don't just get 1/3 of the pie, but a portion of all of it
- We are signs of Christ-the-Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah)



## Deacon as Sign of Christ, the Suffering Servant

1. Song #1: the Servant is described as God's agent to bring justice, but not by force. Quiet and confident leadership.
2. Song #2: the Servant as prophet, called before birth to lead the people. Again, not by force; leadership by example; unsuccessful in human terms



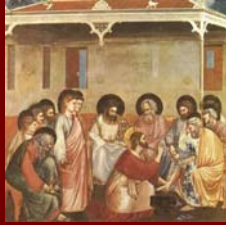
## Deacon as Sign of Christ, the Suffering Servant

3. Song #3: The servant is beaten and abused, but perseveres; described as both teacher and learner.
4. Song #4: The servant bears the pain and suffering of others, and is described as one who intercedes with God. Servant fails in his own lifetime, but is vindicated by God after his death.



## Deacon as Sign of Christ, the Suffering Servant

- Remember John 13 and the footwashing at the last supper:
  - More than simple menial service
  - John substitutes this account at the same point the synoptics describe the institution of the Eucharist!
  - Christ and *kenosis*: pours himself out completely for others
  - Tells the LEADERS that they must do the same, or that they cannot have fellowship with him.



## Task 2: Facing the Challenges

- For 1200 years, diaconate was experienced as transitory
- Renewed diaconate concurrent with renewed episcopate and laity, along with shortage of priests
- The very meaning of ordination itself (to ANY order!)
- Functionalism



## Some Issues with a Theology of Diaconate

- Little to no current theological vocabulary unique to diaconate
  - Current language developed for presbyters
  - Limited experience of "deacon" in the contemporary church
- "In persona Christi"
- "In persona Christi Capitis"
- "*sacra potestas*"
- Common misperception: "Ordained = Priest"
- Incardination
- Participation in *episkopē*

## Task 3: It's all about relationships

## Ecclesial Relationships in *National Directory: Chapter Two*



- With Bishop
- With Diocese
- With Presbyterate
- With Deacons & Candidates
- With Religious
- With Laity
- With Society



## With Presbyters. . . .

- "Deacons in communion with priests. . ."
- "Diaconate not abridged or substitute form of priesthood, but full order in its own right." (#50)



## With Presbyters. . . .

- "Deacons and priests should develop genuine respect for each other, witnessing the communion and mission they share with one another and the bishop" (#52)

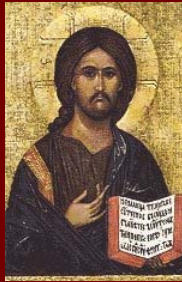


## States of Life



- Married
- Celibate (and celibacy's impact on all deacons)
- Widowed, both deacons and wives; dispensation from *impedimentum ordinis*
- Facing divorce

## Permanency

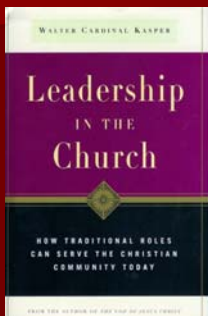


## Cardinal Walter Kasper



- Theologian
- Former Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart
- Prefect, Council for Christian Unity

## Cardinal Walter Kasper



- "The Diaconate" in *Leadership in the Church: How Traditional Roles Can Serve the Christian Community Today* (NY: Crossroad, 2003)

## Concrete Observations on Diaconate Today: The Basics

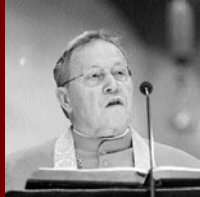


- "Renewal of diaconate is first of all a spiritual task. The basic spiritual attitude of the deacon must make it clear that the Christian path is not an ascent or a triumphal march in glory, but a path that looks downward, following Jesus Christ, who descended from heaven." (p. 39)



## A "perceptive eye"

- This basic attitude of the deacon must "include a perceptive eye for those suffering distress, illness, or fear. The task is to bring a healing that sets free and empowers them to trust and so to serve and love others in their turn." (p.40)



## LG29: "...supremely necessary for life of the Church."

- "The goal of diaconal activity is not simply help, but the empowering of life, so that those who lie prostrate may get to their feet. . . . In some situations, the deacon can and must become the public advocate of the weak and powerless and of all those who have no other voice or lobby." (p. 40)

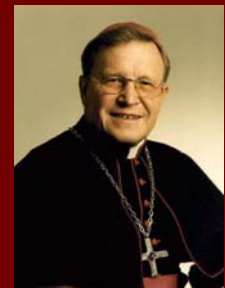


## Concrete tasks...

- The deacon = "contact partner" for all those in need & they must be able to look confidently to him for help.
- Since his ministry includes word-worship-charity, deacon can make others aware of connection between faith and life.
- "In his ministry of the altar, he lays the needs of human beings on the eucharistic table, and naturally he also speaks of these needs when he preaches. He must make the parish aware of urgent situations of need, motivating them to share with one another and to give practical help."

## More concrete tasks

- One essential task consists in finding, training, and guiding volunteers, concentrating more on accompanying them professionally, personally, and spiritually....
- Ideally, the deacon should initiate and support self-help groups, e.g., for single parents or drug addicts. Note that this cuts across church boundaries!



## Still more....



- More than the parish. Assigned to a parish, but with a broader scope as well: city, deanery, region
- LEADERSHIP: "as the official representative of the community" he is the obvious contact person for regional Catholic charity organizations and health centers. He should be represented in ecumenical diaconal associations.

## Finally....

- "Deacons of a diocese also form an advisory body that can be the bishop's eyes and ears with respect to human needs, and they can help him to be the "father of the poor"



## 10 Points to Ponder: #1

- Ordained diaconate is a RADICAL commitment to share in Christ's kenotic mission
- Reflection: How "kenotic" is my own approach to ministry?



## 10 Points to Ponder: #2

- Ordination is also a share of the bishop's apostolic ministry: "eyes, ears, heart, soul" of the bishop
- Relationship with the bishop is critical
- "Let loose the Deacons!": Are they ready?



### 10 Points to Ponder: #3



- Points #1 & #2 → Get out of our comfort zones; diaconate is RISK
- Will what I'm doing now help prevent another Dachau?

### 10 Points to Ponder: #4

- Ordination means LEADERSHIP
- Vision, hope, inspiration, challenge, pouring out oneself for others
- Willing/capable of leadership?



### 10 Points to Ponder: #5



- Don't get stuck in old patterns of ministry; be creative; risk creating new forms of ministry
- E.g., Preaching: but with a difference!
- Truck stop ministry, Apostleship of the Sea....

### 10 Points to Ponder: #6

- Don't get co-opted into another's share of ministry (priests or laity)
- DMLPD 40



### DLMPD 40:

In every case it is important that deacons fully exercise their ministry: in preaching, in liturgy and in charity to the extent that circumstances permit. They should not be relegated to marginal duties, be made merely to act as substitutes, nor discharge duties normally entrusted to non-ordained members of the faithful.



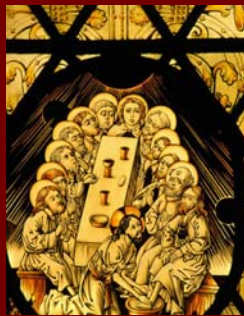
### 10 Points to Ponder: #7



- Be Mobile: Stir the pot, enable, empower, let go, move on.
- Example of St. Paul

### 10 Points to Ponder: #8

- Always think and act WITH the Church; develop a *mens ecclesiae*
- Know how to use our sources, especially Scripture, Vatican II, etc.



### 10 Points to Ponder: #9



- Minister everywhere (not just "in the Church" but in whole community)
- Deacon's ministry in the sanctuary is critically important BECAUSE of what he's doing outside the sanctuary, and vice versa

## 10 Points to Ponder: #10

- Balance, balance, balance!
- Triple *munus*
- Priorities: avoid the heresy!



Final Observation: The  
Diaconate is NOT a  
Program!

## Deacon Thomas Merton



"The first thing about the diaconate is that it is *big*. The more I think about it the more I realize that it is a *Major* Order. You are supposed to be the strength of the Church. You receive the Holy Spirit *ad robur*, not only for yourself, but to support the whole Church." (March 1949)

## Bishop Augustine



"For you I am Bishop, with you I am Christian. The first is the title of the office I received, the second is by grace; the first implies danger, the second salvation"