

Overview of the Ministry of Permanent Diaconate - + Martin Hayes, Bishop of Kilmore.

Diaconate is a distinct ministry of service rooted in the person and ministry of Jesus and has its scriptural origins in Acts 6 – the equitable distribution of the charity of the faithful to the poor. The diaconate which grew in the Western Church up until the 5th Century, and thereafter as a transitional stage to ordination to Priesthood, was restored as the Permanent Diaconate by the Second Vatican Council.

In 2006 the Irish Episcopal Conference prepared *The Permanent Diaconate – National Directory and Norms for Ireland* which outlines the reasons for the restoration of the Permanent Diaconate as follows,

- Enrich the Church with the function of the diaconate,
- Confer the grace of diaconal ordination on those already carrying out many of its functions and
- provide for the shortage of clergy.

In his distinct ministry of service, the Permanent Deacon collaborates with the diocesan bishop, priests, and lay ministers. The ministry of the Permanent Diaconate is not intended to substitute the indispensable ministry of priests nor to replace that of lay ministry.

The functions of a Permanent Deacon can be outlined as follows,

- teach by proclaiming the Gospel and preaching,
- sanctify by presiding at the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, the Rite of Burials, assist at the Eucharist and
- witness to the charity of Christ which he can exercise at the diocesan level under the direction of the bishop.

Above all, the Permanent Diaconate is a vocation that comes from the call of God. The diocesan bishop, in consultation with the community of origin of each candidate, is responsible for the discernment of the authenticity of a person's vocation to the Permanent Diaconate, for admitting candidates and for supervising the exercise of this ministry.

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