

## Discernment and Formation

To discern whether or not God is calling him to the Permanent Diaconate, a candidate undertakes a period of prayerful reflection, discernment and training.

An introductory year of vocational discernment is followed by three years of personal, intellectual and pastoral formation. The process of discernment and formation is facilitated by a team led by a Director of Formation appointed by the Bishop.

The call to the Permanent Diaconate by the Bishop in the name of the Church is a gift given by God to his Church to extend, diversify and enrich pastoral ministry among God's people.

## Welcome

As Bishop of Down and Connor, I welcome the introduction of the Permanent Diaconate into our Diocese. I salute those who will be ordained on Sunday, 14 October 2018 in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast.

On behalf of the faithful, clergy and religious of the Diocese, I thank all who have contributed to their formation over the past four years.

To these men, to their wives and to their families I express heartfelt gratitude and appreciation. I assure them of my prayers and support. I commend them to the prayers of the priests, religious and people of the Diocese of Down and Connor.

✠ Noel Treanor  
Bishop of Down and Connor

4 September 2018  
Feast of St MacNissi

## Prayer for Permanent Deacons

Lord Jesus, you came to serve, not to be served.  
Fill our deacons with love, compassion and courage.

In their service of all God's people,  
fill them with the Spirit of your love  
that they may be  
friends of the poor,  
preachers of your word,  
ministers at your altar,  
servants of your Church,  
and the voice of the forgotten.  
Amen.



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Down and Connor Diocesan

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## The Introduction of the Permanent Diaconate

**Diocese of Down and Connor**



**“If anyone wants to be first, he  
must make himself last of all  
and servant of all”**

**Mark 9:35**



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

On Sunday, 14 October 2018, we shall celebrate the Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate of men for service in our Diocese.

The Permanent Diaconate was a ministry in the life of the Early Church. In line with this early tradition, the Second Vatican Council provided for its restoration as a distinct ministry of service.

Permanent Deacons play a key role in encouraging the active participation of the faithful. The restoration of the Permanent Diaconate is not intended in any sense to undermine the roles and ministries of other active members in the life of the local Church.

Permanent Deacons, like priests, on the occasion of their ordination make a public declaration of obedience to the Bishop. From that day forward, Permanent Deacons exercise their ministry in communion with the Bishop and with his priests in service of the local Church.

### **So, what is the Permanent Diaconate?**

In the gospels we see how the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth was characterised by humble service. He called his disciples to imitate him. At the Last Supper, after he washed the feet of his Apostles, Jesus said: “I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you” (John 13:15).

In the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 6: 2-4) we read how Stephen and six others were appointed by the Apostles to assist them in their mission, specifically through works of charity. Their hallmark was service and works of charity.

The Permanent Deacon responds to the call of Jesus and his Church in three specific ways: through the ministry of Charity, the ministry of the Word and the ministry of the Altar.

### **The Ministry of Charity**

- To serve the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised;
- To coordinate the local Church's response to their needs;
- To have a special care for matters of social justice;
- To foster and support parish groups and organisations.

### **The Ministry of the Word**

- To proclaim the Gospel and sometimes preach at Mass and other religious services;
- To help people in their study of the Scriptures and to lead them in prayer.

### **The Ministry of the Altar**

- To assist the Bishop or priest at Mass;
- To distribute Holy Communion at Mass, in hospital and in the homes of the sick, the housebound and the dying;
- To celebrate baptisms, to officiate at weddings and to assist at funerals.

### **Who exercises this ministry?**

In the Church there are two forms of the Diaconate – the Transitional Diaconate and the Permanent Diaconate.

### **The Transitional Diaconate**

These are men who become deacons on their journey to priesthood, usually for one year.

### **The Permanent Diaconate**

These are men who remain deacons all their lives, one of the most famous being St Francis of Assisi.

Candidates for the Permanent Diaconate may be married or unmarried.

The Church requires the married candidate for the Permanent Diaconate to be, at least, thirty-five years of age. This requirement enables the candidate and his wife to discern his vocation to the Permanent Diaconate within the totality of their married life and vocation.

Likewise candidates who are single must be, at least, thirty-five years of age. In keeping with the tradition of the Church, those who are ordained as single men make a solemn promise of celibacy.