

THE PERMANENT DIACONATE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Following the restoration and reinvigoration of the permanent diaconate by the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI's *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, two Permanent Deacons were ordained in the 1970's by then Archbishop Lancelot Goody.

In 2001, then Archbishop Barry Hickey called for expressions of interest from men across the Archdiocese.

Because the basic norms for the formation of permanent deacons, together with the directory for the ministry and life of permanent deacons was only released by the Vatican Congregation for Education and Clergy in 1998, there was at the time, no program in the Archdiocese either to train or ordain men to the permanent diaconate.

After several years of preparation, 2006 saw 14 men ordained for ministry in the Archdiocese of Perth as permanent deacons by then Archbishop Barry Hickey.

They were:

- Aaron Peters
- Albert Aitkinson
- Bruce Talbot
- Damian Gorian
- Greg Lowe
- Ivan Sands
- John Kiely
- Mark Powell
- Patrick Moore
- Patrick Seatter
- Paul Reid
- Paul Russell
- Paul Stacy
- Trevor Lyra

Over the past 15 years, these ordained men have served by contributing to the life of the Church in various ways.

Whether by assisting parish priests, holding appointments at Church led ministries and organisations, leading Archdiocesan agencies or serving as chaplains or spiritual directors to various groups in the Archdiocese, these permanent deacons have been an invaluable asset to the Archdiocese.

Pope St John Paul II expressed that the very fact the permanent deacon is an ordained minister of the Church, brings a special dimension to his efforts in the eyes of those with whom he lives and works.



Those serving in the permanent diaconate, St John Paul II said, are “called to hear, guard and do the Word of God, in order to be able to proclaim it worthily.”

“This is at the very heart of the diaconate to which you have been called: to be a servant of the mysteries of Christ and, at one and the same time, to be a servant of your brothers and sisters,” he said.

As the St Paul writes, “Deacons ...must be serious, not double tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then if they prove themselves, let them serve as deacons.” (1Tim 3:8-10)

An intense period of discernment and formation is involved for those considering life as a permanent deacon.

If it is determined by the Bishop that a man may have a vocation to the permanent diaconate, he commences a formal period of discernment known as ‘aspirancy’.

During this period of prayer, study and personal formation, the man and his family (if married) reflect on the nature of ordained ministry and whether it is something the man might be called to do.

Following this, he will be asked to pursue additional human, spiritual, academic and pastoral formation as a formal candidate for possible ordination.

The period of formation, which may last from three to six years, involves significant coursework in theology, scripture studies, practicum in liturgical practice homiletics and Church History.

Once complete, the candidate’s record and process of discernment is reviewed and if deemed appropriate for the diaconate, together with the formal and written consent of the candidates’ wife, the man may then be called to ordination.

Following ordination, deacons, like priests, are required to continue their formation through annual retreats and regular ongoing opportunities.

Do you think you may be called to serve the Church in the permanent diaconate?

Enquire at opd@perthcatholic.org.au

