

Why did the Permanent Diaconate Disappear from the Early Western Church?

An Overview of Parallel Histories

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Introduction

The apostles in Jerusalem in the early first century, finding it difficult to combine the distribution of food to the poor with preaching the word and prayer, appointed seven ministers to serve those in who were in need,¹ charity being considered as central to the ministry of the early Catholic Church. These men, who later came to be called deacons, flourished with great influence and prestige in the early centuries of the Church.

Despite that early recognition of useful service, the permanent diaconate as a separate order all but disappeared in the Western Church by the late fifth century.

Fifteen centuries later, the Roman Catholic Church restored the permanent diaconate as a free standing order.

Overview of the Early Days of the Diaconate

Institution of the Diaconate

In Chapter 6 of the Book of Acts, we read that the apostles delegated the responsibility for caring for those in need to “men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom” by praying and laying hands on them.² These seven men were what are now termed our first deacons.

Among these men was Stephen, the first Christian martyr. We see the expression “deacon” (*diakonia* in Greek) first used by St. Paul in his Letter to the Philippians in 63 CE.³

Early Development of the Diaconate

¹ *The Holy Bible*, Acts 6:1-7

² *The Holy Bible*, Acts 6:1-7

³ “Deacons.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04647c.htm>. (last accessed November 15, 2018).

Saint Paul, writing about 57 AD, includes the term “deacons” in his greeting in Philippians (1:1) and writing to Timothy lists the qualities and virtues which all deacons are expected to possess and exercise in their ministry (I Tim 3:8-13), suggesting that the diaconate had “already become a separate office in the Church.”⁴ St. Clement of Rome (about A.D. 95) clearly describes the institution of deacons along with that of bishops as being “the work of the Apostles themselves” (Ep. Clem., xlii).⁵ We learn from the *Didache* (first century) that deacons, along with bishops were to be considered “honored ones” in the Church.⁶ Saint Ignatius of Antioch, about 100 AD, says that it “would be impossible to have the Church without bishops, priests⁷ and deacons. He explains that their task was nothing less than to continue ‘the ministry of Jesus Christ’.”⁸

Later, accounts of deacons in the third and fourth centuries suggest that the deacon, at least in some instances, could be a powerful figure; consider for example what we know of St. Lawrence (225-258 CE) and St. Ephraim (306-373 CE). "A deacon was a powerful figure in the early Church, as evidenced by deacons such as Sts. Lawrence and Ephraim," said Owen Cummings, Regents Chair of Theology at Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon and author of *Deacons and the Church*. "Many (deacons) were in charge of the treasury, and many became popes."⁹

⁴ *The Holy Bible*, 1 Timothy 3:8-13

⁵ Clement of Rome, St. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Cross, F. L. (ed.)

⁶ Jonathan Draper (1996). *The Didache in Modern Research: An Overview*, (Leiden: The Netherlands, 1996), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didache> (last modified November 18, 2018, last accessed December 7, 2018)

⁷ “Priests” were first termed elders and they were also known as presbyters.

⁸ Ignatius of Antioch. *Letter to the Trallians*, III. Enzo Petrolino (ed.) *Compendium on the Diaconate*. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 26.

The Restructuring of Holy Orders in the Western Church

As time and circumstances changed and the Church expanded, the need for yet another order similar to that of a bishop, the presbyterate, was established whose development eventually led to a restructuring of Holy Orders in the Western Church in which “the diaconate was redefined as a *transitional* step in a *cursus honorum* that led from several minor orders through the diaconate and presbyterate to the episcopate.”¹⁰

A Different Way in the Eastern Church

“Although the permanent diaconate disappeared in the Western Church, the order remained right to the present a vital part of the Eastern Church, even after the Great Schism of the twelfth century.”¹¹ In the East, permanent deacons continued to perform the same functions over the course of two millennia. Thus, the *way* of the permanent diaconate in the East may be used as a foil in understanding the *way* of the permanent diaconate in the West, including its redefinition in the fifth century and its re-emergence in the twentieth.

The Re-emergence of the Permanent Diaconate in the Western Catholic Church

Just as the permanent diaconate was established to meet the emerging needs of the Church in the first century, so too it was *re*-established in the mid twentieth century to meet the emerging need of the Church in latter days. Due to a lack of priests as an unfortunate result of the Second World

⁹ Betsy Wiederkehr Huss, “Resurgence of Deacons has its Roots in Nazi Concentration Camp”, Diocese of Little Rock Website, <https://www.dolr.org/article/resurgence-deacons-has-its-roots-nazi-concentration-camp>, (last modified September 14, 2017, accessed December 8, 2018).

¹⁰ William T. Ditewig, *The Emerging Diaconate* (Mahwah, NJ.: Paulist Press 2007) 77-78. Also: Norman Brockman, SM, . *Ordained to Service: A Theology of the Permanent Diaconate*, (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press), 1976, 28-29

¹¹“A Short History of the Permanent Diaconate.” Archdiocese of Newark Website, www.rcan.org/short-history-permanent-diaconate (last accessed November 15, 2018)

War, many lay men throughout the world were already performing the task of deacons but without being ordained to that ministry. Although the idea had merit, and was discussed periodically from as early as the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century to the mid twentieth century, Pope Pius XII in 1957 made a determination that the time had still not yet come to restore the free standing Order of Deacon.¹²

Ten years later, the bishops at Vatican II looking at the pastoral and missionary needs of the Church in the twentieth century believed that the time had come to restore this Order to its full measure and they voted as a group to re-establish such a diaconate ministry.

The Second Vatican Council, as the International Theological Commission (ITC)¹³ stated in 2002, wanted to “confirm by sacramental grace those who were already exercising the diaconal ministry”. Ordaining them to the diaconate would enable them to “exercise their ministry more effectively” (5. 1). (36)¹⁴

¹² Pope Pius XII, October 5, 1957, *Guiding Principles of the Lay Apostolate* <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12layap.htm> (last modified October 5, 1957, last accessed December 7, 2018) 1

¹³ The International Theological Commission of the Roman Catholic Church advises the Magisterium of the Church, particularly the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), a dicastery of the Roman Curia. Its membership consists of no more than 30 Catholic theologians appointed by the pope at the suggestion of the Prefect of the CDF for renewable five year terms. They tend to meet annually for a week in Rome, where the Commission is based. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Theological_Commission (last accessed November 18, 2018)

¹⁴ International Theological Commission (ITC) *From the Diaconia of Christ to the Diaconia of the Apostles*. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_05072004_diaconate_en.html (last accessed November 18, 2018) Paragraph 200

Thus the permanent diaconate was initially restored on October 30, 1963, and promulgated as part of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) on November 21, 1964.¹⁵

An Overview of Parallel Histories

A Short History of the Episcopate

The episcopate was essentially the result of the evolution of the authority of the apostles to more localized area leaders.

¹⁵ Vatican Council, Edward H. Peters, and Gregory Baum. *De Ecclesia; the Constitution on the Church of Vatican Council II Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI*, November 21, 1964 (*Lumen Gentium*). Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1965. 29

As mentioned in Chapter 6 of the Acts of the Apostles, these apostolic men delegated responsibility for administration of social ministries (and other responsibilities, as we, either explicitly or implicitly) to a group of subordinates called deacons, while retaining responsibility for preaching *the Word*.

As the membership of in the church increased, the bishops (“apostles”) delegated some of their (remaining) responsibilities to yet another *order* of ministers, called *presbyters* (elders).

“Presbyters were given broad responsibilities to minister to the faithful in remote geographic areas in lieu of the bishop(s), including pastoral leadership, headship of liturgical assemblies, and sacramental functions (as they developed).”¹⁶ In this vein, we should note that the authority (and therefore the power) of bishops increased substantially after the Edict of Milan (313 C.E.). They continued preaching the *Word*, but their role as superior leaders of subordinate communities (“parishes”) developed and became widely known and accepted.

“During Diocletian’s reign in the late third century, we begin to see the term ‘diocese’ used to refer to the geographic area under the authority of a bishop, an indication of the growing organization of the church, of which the establishment of the presbyterate was an important element.”¹⁷ The *presbyter*, first mentioned toward the beginning of the second century C.E.,¹⁸ became basically “a little bishop” in *his* geographic sub-section of a diocese.

¹⁶Herbert Thurston, “Deacons”. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908) *from New Advent*: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04647c>. (last accessed December 7, 2018)

¹⁷ New World Encyclopedia contributors, 'Bishop', *New World Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Bishop&oldid=996727> (last modified June 10, 2016, last accessed December 7, 2018.)

¹⁸ Ignatius of Antioch. *Letter to the Magnesians*. Translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and

A Short History of the Presbyterate

The priesthood developed gradually in the early Christian church as first bishops and then men called elders, or “presbyters,” began to exercise certain priestly functions, mainly in connection with celebration of the Eucharist.

The priestly office was originally vested only in the bishop. As time went by and the need for meeting spiritual needs at greater geographical distances from the *cathedra* became apparent, the order of *presbyter* was created to share the bishop’s priestly “sacramental” or “spiritual”

edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0105.htm> (last accessed December 7, 2018).

functions. In the bishop's absence, the presbyter could exercise certain of the bishop's functions as his delegate. This presbyterate order (order of *elders*) appeared as early as the late first century. Ignatius of Antioch was one of the first to mention "all three orders of bishops, priests and deacons", ca.100 C.E. in his Letter to the Magnesians (Ep. ad Magnes., vi and *passim*.)¹⁹ Earlier writings of the Church, for example the *Didache*, and the works of Hermas, Clement of Rome, and Irenaeus often use the terms "bishop" and "priest" indiscriminately. "The current consensus among scholars is that the presbyterate gradually developed as an offshoot of the episcopate, and not vice versa (although some argue the opposite: that the episcopate had its origin in the elevation of the presbyterate to a higher rank.)"²⁰ This consensus is supported by early attestations to the hierarchical distinctions between bishop and presbyter. In his Epistle to the Magnesians (vi and *passim*), for example, Ignatius as early as the very beginning of the second century C.E. describes with remarkable clarity- the hierarchical distinctions between the monarchical bishops, the priests, and the deacons. He emphasizes that this triad as a whole is essential to the constitution of the Church: "Without these [three] it cannot be called the Church."²¹ And of course, this distinction among the orders may have existed much earlier.

¹⁹ Ignatius of Antioch. *Letter to the Magnesians*. Translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0105.htm> (last accessed December 7, 2018).

²⁰ Tim Drake, "The Role of Deacons: Then and Now." *Catholic Answers*, <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-role-of-deacons-then-and-now> (last modified October 1, 2005, accessed September 15, 2018).

²¹ Ignatius of Antioch. *Letter to the Trallians*, Chapter 3, III. Enzo Petrolino, (ed.) *Compendium on the Diaconate*. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018) 26.

The first Letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 5:17, 19), ca. mid first century, for example mentions "presbyters" who were subordinate to Bishop Timothy.²²

Later at the beginning of the third century, the Carthaginian churchman Tertullian calls the bishop the "*summus sacerdos*", under whom are the "*presbyteri et diaconi*" are subordinate (On Baptism 17); and Cyprian (Ep. lxi, 3) speaks of" the "*presbyteri cum episcopo sacerdotali honore conjuncti*", i.e. "the priests united by sacerdotal dignity with the bishop."²³

Although there is no known written reference such as Acts 6 which dates the establishment of the presbyterate, it seems that the priesthood was created very shortly after the diaconate. It makes sense that if the apostles began experiencing trouble in the management of the *social* ministries with the growing number of followers, they might soon begin experiencing trouble with the management of *sacramental ministries*, as well. (More on the development of the presbyterate development is found in the history of the sacraments, below).

Significant Church Events in the Early Centuries

As the expanding Church became more and more organized, the need for functional definition and discipline among the members of the clergy was of paramount importance.

Several Church councils were held in the fourth century which impacted upon the functions of deacons. Initially ordained to assure "the distribution of food to widows and other vulnerable

²² Ignatius of Antioch. *Letter to the Trallians*, Chapter 3, III. Enzo Petrolino, (ed.) *Compendium on the Diaconate*. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018) 26.

²³ Joseph Pohle, "Priesthood." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911). <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12409a.htm>.(last accessed November 2, 2018)

members of the Christian community”,²⁴ some deacons assumed considerable stature in the Church. Prior to the deployment of presbyters to remote *ecclesia* for example, deacons performed some of the sacramental functions we have come to consider as reserved for priests and bishops. Inevitably, the overlapping functions of deacons and presbyters would have to be addressed, as well as the relation of the two orders to one another (as both, seemingly, reported directly to the bishop with little correlation to each other), and this was accomplished – at least in part- in the fourth century Church councils.

The Council of Elvira (306 C.E.)

At the Council of Elvira in 306 C.E. there appears in Canon 32 with respect to the ministry to the sick, “However if constrained by illness if it is necessary, a presbyter may give him communion.... *or even a deacon* (emphasis added) if the priest command him.” In this canon, it appears that the deacon is in some way, if only informally, supervised by the priest. One can deduce that “the deacon apparently was to be used for sacramental roles *only* in the absence of the presbyter.”²⁵

In this vein, Canon 32 uses the term *sacerdos*, i.e., “priest.” This term has caused some confusion among scholars. Now by *sacerdos* does the canon mean *presbyter*, or *bishop*, or both?

²⁴ Acts 6:1-2 which refers both to “the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1) of food, probably bread, to widows, and “to serve at table.” (Acts 6:2) Thus some have seen deacons as “waiters,” in the literal sense, while others “think that it is not the serving of food that is described here but rather the keeping of the accounts that recorded the distribution of food to the needy members of the community.” See: *New American Bible, Revised Edition*. Acts 6:2 FN, <http://www.usccb.org/bible/acts/6:2#52006002-2>

²⁵ William T. Ditewig, *The Emerging Diaconate*. (Mahwah, NJ: The Paulist Press 2007), 75. -----John J. McCarthy, *The Diakonia of Charity in the Permanent Diaconate: Its application to Certain Clerical Offices as addressed in the Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*. JCD diss., Pontifica Studiorum Universitas A.S. Thomas Aq. In Urbe, 2000. 25

The text is not clear on this point, and therefore it is not clear whether or not the canon refers to a deacon's subordination to a presbyter, which would be the first written indication of this state, or to a bishop, which is expected. Were the orders of deacon and presbyter now ordered into a new hierarchy? Possibly.

The Council of Arles

Canon 18 of the Council of Arles in 314 C.E. is specifically addresses "city deacons" who apparently, have exercised authority claimed by the presbyters of one or more urban areas. (The situation giving rise to the canon is unknown.) The Canon states that, "concerning the city deacons, that they do not take too much upon themselves but preserve to the presbyters their order, that they do nothing without the presbyters knowledge."²⁶

On the face of it, the intent of the canon is to promote *coordination* between the two orders. It suggests the existence of three conditions: 1/ that the two orders were not hierarchical at the time, i.e., that neither was subordinate to the other; 2/ that (i) there were sufficient numbers of deacons, (ii) with sufficient authority among the faithful, (iii) in at least one significant urban area, to cause conflicts with the presbyterate serious enough to require adjudication by a synod of bishops; and 3/ that "the presbyterate required a synodal canon (a serious formality) to press its claims."²⁷ Interestingly, the *tack* the bishops took to resolve this conflict was *not* to subordinate

²⁶ "The Canons to Sylvester from the Council of Arles (314 C.E.)", *Fourth Century Christianity*, retrieved from C. Munier, *Concilia Galliae* a.314-a.506, (Turnhout: Brepols 1963,) <https://www.fourthcentury.com/arles-314-canons-to-sylvester/>), (last accessed December 7, 2018) Canon 18.

²⁷ "The Canons to Sylvester from the Council of Arles (314 C.E.)", *Fourth Century Christianity*, retrieved from C. Munier, *Concilia Galliae* a.314-a.506, (Turnhout: Brepols 1963,) <https://www.fourthcentury.com/arles-314-canons-to-sylvester/>), (last accessed December 7, 2018) Canon 18.

the diaconate to the presbyterate (or *vice versa*), but rather, to begin drawing a line between the normative functions of the two orders, with preference given to presbyters for presiding at “services,” viz.: “Concerning deacons who we have learned are conducting services in many places, be it resolved that this ought to happen as little as possible.”²⁸ Note that presiding at services was not *forbidden* to deacons, which suggests one or both of two conditions: 1/ that presiding at “services” was normative²⁹ for deacons; or 2/ that the bishops felt a continuing need for the deacon-as-presider.

The Council of Nicaea

It is only at the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. that the *hierarchical* positions of the diaconate and the presbyterate among Holy Orders is clarified definitively, viz.:

Canon 18: It has come to the knowledge of the holy and great Synod that, in some districts and cities, the deacons administer the Eucharist to the presbyters, whereas neither canon nor custom permits that they who have no right to offer should give the Body of Christ to them that do offer. And this also has been made known, that certain deacons now touch the Eucharist even before the bishops. Let all such practices be utterly done away, and let the deacons remain within their own bounds, knowing that they are the ministers of the bishop and the inferiors of the presbyters. Let them receive the Eucharist according to their order, after the presbyters, and let either the bishop or the presbyter administer to them.

²⁸ “The Canons to Sylvester from the Council of Arles (314 C.E.)”, *Fourth Century Christianity*, retrieved from C. Munier, *Concilia Galliae* a.314-a.506, (Turnhout: Brepols 1963,) <https://www.fourthcentury.com/arles-314-canons-to-sylvester/>, (last accessed December 7, 2018) Canon 15.

²⁹ Some scholars believe that deacons regularly served as presiders during the Diocletian persecutions, when few bishops and presbyters were available to do so. “In the absence of the bishop, deacons could also preside at the evening agape meal, which involved distributing a blessed cup and blessed bread (in that order) to those who were assembled.” Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, *The Deacon’s Ministry of the Liturgy*. (Collegeville, Minn, 2016), 5.

Furthermore, let not the deacons sit among the presbyters, for that is contrary to canon and order. And if, after this decree, any one shall refuse to obey, let him be deposed from the diaconate.

In short, the canon places the presbyterate above the diaconate in the hierarchy, although it does *not* ban deacons from administering the Eucharist to the laity. Curiously, neither does the canon forbid deacons from presiding at “services” (cf. Council of Arles, Canon 15) when bishops or presbyters are not present.³⁰ “Once again, as was the case at Arles, the canon, in and of itself, not to mention the fine details with which it is laden, suggests 1/ that the sacramental duties of deacons were strongly normative at the time of the Council, and 2/ that “at least some deacons were held in very high esteem, as attested by the practices proscribed by the canon”.^{31,32}

Times were changing! The role of the presbyter had expanded by the beginning of the fourth century, and as there is only so much functional “space” in any enterprise, the role of the presbyter had begun to crowd the role of the diaconate, especially in urban areas, where the faithful – and the clergy – were concentrated. Inevitably, this caused a form of *role strain*, which, as we have seen, grew serious enough to be addressed at several Councils of the Church. Each succeeding fourth century council – Elvira, Arles, Nicaea – excised a bit more from the existing function of the diaconate and ceded it authoritatively to the presbyterate, until the functional boundaries between the two orders had been stabilized (tacitly) and solidified into a new norm.

³⁰ Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (ed.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 14.. Council of Nicaea, Canon 18*, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900.) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm>. (last accessed December 7, 2018)

³¹William T. Ditewig, *The Emerging Diaconate*. (Mahwah, NJ: The Paulist Press 2007), 76.
-----Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark. 1896) 1:193

³² James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press. 1995) 89.

The Emergence of the Parish

As the Church expanded to regions away from the seats of the bishops (cathedrae), and as the role of the bishop evolved (to be less “hands-on”), dioceses were divided into sections known as parishes, better to meet the sacramental needs of the faithful.

Parish: (Latin parœcia, parochia, Greek paroikia, a group of neighboring dwellings).

History

The first Christian communities were founded in cities and the entire “Divine service” was carried on by the bishop and his clergy; the few faithful outside the cities went to the city or were

visited from time to time by clerics from the presbyteries. In the fourth century we find in the villages groups sufficiently large to be served by a resident clergy. Such churches and their clergy were originally under the direct administration of the bishop; but soon they had their own resources and a distinct administration.

Given the broad authority of presbyters within defined geographic areas (“parishes”), the need for permanent deacons decreased, even as the potential for conflicts of authority between deacons and presbyters increased. “Within the geographic areas assigned to presbyters, for example, the sacramental duties of permanent deacons – serving as bishop *extenders* – became superfluous, as they had been assumed by the presbyters themselves, serving in their own right as bishop *extenders*.”³³

Nevertheless, as “parishes” grew under the leadership of presbyters, the problem confronting apostles of the first century now confronted presbyters: How does one meet *all* the needs of one’s flock without subordinates? How does one engage in sacramental ministry and the preaching of the Word *and* address all the *practical* problems of the faithful? It could be overwhelming, especially in large parishes, and most especially in those large parishes that served diverse groups (e.g., in cities) and many people of limited means. As we shall see, deacons – proven as able administrators of the practical ministries of the church – could and would be utilized to aid presbyters as they had aided bishops in the past.

³³ Herbert Thurston, "Deacons." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 4. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908). <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04647c.htm> (last accessed December 7, 2018)

The Influence of the Roman Empire

In the early fourth century, as Christianity took on a new role in the Roman Empire as the official religion, the Church began to take on the trappings and structures of the state.

Following the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E., which granted toleration of worship to persons of all religions throughout the Roman Empire, the Church was free to spread the Gospel without fear of official reprisals. Therefore, once the fears were alleviated and the Church was able to come out of the shadows, the Church followers expanded rapidly both in numbers and geographically. With that expansion came the need for ordained clerical ministers to provide spiritual services to these those new followers. The bishops thus determined that, as they had with the work done by deacons, they needed a new order to perform spiritual or *sacramental* functions. And so the order or elder or later presbyter came about. Each “little bishop,” as it were, was given an area of

responsibility over which he saw for the care of souls. These became “the first *parishes*”.³⁴ With the establishment of *parish* churches to serve the needs of the faithful, the presbyter, or parish priest, assumed considerable authority over sacramental functions within parish bounds. In this capacity, the priest assumed the role of the local church’s chief representative of God to the people.

“The development of sacramental theology resulted in a further emphasis of the priest’s supernatural powers and qualities, adding *gravitas* to his authority.”^{35, 36, 37}

In 380 C.E., the Roman Emperors Theodosius (Eastern Empire) and Gratian (Western Empire) jointly issued the Edict of Thessalonica, declaring Christianity *the* state religion of the Empire, although, with a few bumps along the way, Rome had been moving in this direction since promulgating the Edict of Milan, in 313 C.E. (and slightly earlier, if one considers the Edict of Serdica, promulgated by Valerius in 311 C.E.). Thus, it is not surprising that the Church began to take on the trappings and structures of the state in the fourth century, C.E. It became, over the

³⁴ Auguste Boudinhon, and William Fanning. "Parish." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 11. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911) <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11499b.htm>.(last accessed December 7, 2018)

³⁵Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Priest”. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/priest-Christianity> (last modified 2018, last accessed December 7, 2018)

³⁶ "In the Ecclesiastical History, the Panegyric on Constantine and the life of Constantine... the guiding idea of Eusebius is the establishment of a Christian empire, of which Constantine was the chosen instrument" (J.B. Bury, editor, *Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. II, Appendix, p. 359, London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776-1789, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_History_of_the_Decline_and_Fall_of_the_Roman_Empire (last accessed 12/7/2018).

³⁷ C. Herbermann and G. Grupp, “Constantine the Great,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908). <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04295c.htm> (last accessed December 7, 2018)

course of about seven decades (311-380 C.E.) a formal part of a highly structured Empire, and as such, the Church could no longer operate independently of Roman culture. It became *assimilated*, (although it was undoubtedly *transformative* of Roman culture, as well). Prior flexibilities and diversities in ministry took on a new reality. They became more structured, and in a decidedly *Roman* way. Thus, it was in this period that the Roman phenomenon of the *cursus honorum* became normative for the Church's ordained ministers. The *cursus honorum* – Latin for “course of honors” or “course of [public] offices” – was the sequential order of public offices held by aspiring politicians in the Roman Republic. “As formalized in Roman Law, the *cursus* prescribed minimum intervals between successive offices and forbade repeating an office.”^{38, 39} The *cursus* was the basis of progressive promotion in the imperial, civil and military services. These progressions “through the ranks” were accomplished through the implementation of selection, training and testing methods.

How did the Church's adoption of the *cursus honorum* as an organizing principle affect the diaconate? First, diaconate was reinterpreted (as well as the presbyterate) as a *step* in a *path* of steps, a *cursus*, from laity to episcopacy, which led to a “rethinking” of the diaconate. Whereas formerly, it had been seen as a vocation, in and of itself, it was now seen as a step in a lengthy, vocational *via*. Second, by requiring that diaconate be *ordered* in the *cursus*, either before or after the presbyterate, no longer left it as a free standing entity. Indeed, at least one scholar has

³⁸ William T. Ditewig, “From Function to Ontology: The Shifting Diaconate in the Middle Ages,” Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (ed) *A Companion to the Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill 2015), 353

³⁹ John St. H Gibault, *The Cursus Honorum*. taken from *A Companion to the Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*, edited by Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson.(Leiden; The Netherlands: Brill, 201), 353.

concluded that “the decline of the [permanent] diaconate springs more from the development of the idea of *cursus honorum* than from any other single factor.”⁴⁰

Adoption of the *cursus honorum* as an organizing principle for holy orders had other effects, as well – quite obvious effects – which lend credence to the importance of the very *idea* of the *cursus* as an influence, not only on the future of the diaconate, but on *all* ministries of the Church. “Thus, the Church in the fourth century may observe a *cursus* not only of deacon-priest-bishop, but also of *minor* orders below the deacon (cf. Canon 24 of the Council of Laodicea, 343-381 C.E., which lists *subdeacons, readers, singers exorcists, and doorkeepers*), and of *ranks* of bishops (cf. Canons 4 and 6 of the Council of Nicaea, 325 C.E., which references *metropolitans*)”.⁴¹ In sum, Holy Orders, “which had begun as a “horizontal organic structure” in the first century, had become, by the fourth, a “vertical, hierarchical” one, with well-demarcated, well-defined steps.”⁴²

⁴⁰ William T. Ditewig, “From Function to Ontology: The Shifting Diaconate in the Middle Ages.” Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (ed) *A Companion to the Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*. (Brill 2015) Chapter 12, 346-371

-----James M. Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995) 104.

⁴¹ James M. Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995) 104.

⁴² William T. Ditewig, “From Function to Ontology: The Shifting Diaconate in the Middle Ages.” Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (ed) *A Companion to the Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*. (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill 2015) Chapter 12, 346-371

-----Barnett, James M. *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995) 104

The Influence of Church Growth and Sacramental Development

As time and circumstances changed and the Church expanded to regions away from the bishop himself, the need for another order similar to that of a bishop was identified to address the spiritual needs of followers in outlying locations.

Early in its history, the Church spent considerable time sorting out the theology of its actions. In addition to Holy Orders, which we have been discussing, the form and function of the other sacraments evolved, as well as the liturgies in which they were celebrated, and norms about whom should be administering them.

We know from early Christian writings such as the *Didache* that deacons served alongside bishops and presbyters in sacramental liturgies from very early in the history of the Church (i.e., the first century, if the current scholarly consensus about the dating of the *Didache* is correct). As time went on, “the role an ordained minister played with respect to the Eucharist determined one’s place within the Church. The diaconate went into decline in the post-Nicene period as the Eucharist was delegated by the bishops to the presbyters.”⁴³

⁴³ Owen Cummings, author of *Deacons and the Church*, as quoted by Tim Drake, “The Role of Deacons: Then and Now.” *Catholic Answers*, <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-role-of-deacons-then-and-now> (last modified October 1, 2005, last accessed September 15, 2018),

We surmise from Luke’s report of the establishment of the diaconate in the Acts of the Apostles that deacons were primarily responsible for the distribution of temporal goods. However, the role of the deacon was new, and like almost *any* new role, was defined more in the *doing* than in the *establishing*. (One hesitates to use the word *planning* in this regard – even though a new role may in fact be well planned before people are chosen to fill it – because in the context of the early Church, and as Luke tells the story, it is difficult to infer much planning in the establishment of the diaconate.) Therefore, from Luke’s report, we see Deacon Stephen preaching the Word to the point of martyrdom, (Acts 6, 7) and Deacon Philip preaching the Word to great effect, working “signs” and baptizing many new converts. (Acts 8)

But the Church grew and times changed. The sacramental life of the Church evolved, and with it, the need for more ministers of the sacraments. To address this need, the Church turned to a third order, the *presbyterate*, even though deacons had administered sacraments from earliest times. (Cf. Acts 8) The result, says Owen Cummings, is that even “prior to the fourth century, [when] there weren’t “parishes” [...] as an increasing number of priests began to meet the pastoral needs [of the faithful] the deacons found themselves, in a way, supplanted by the role of the priests.”⁴⁴ As the Church expanded even further, and the phenomenon of the Christian parish evolved in the fourth century, presbyters were deployed to expand the bishop’s pastoral and sacramental reach in defined geographic areas (and in other ways the faithful were partitioned, such as ethnicity or primary language). Naturally enough, the duties of the deacons, whose “territory” was the diocese, sometimes overlapped with the duties of the presbyters, whose “territory” was the sub-

⁴⁴ Owen Cummings, author of *Deacons and the Church*, as quoted by Tim Drake, “The Role of Deacons: Then and Now.” *Catholic Answers*, <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-role-of-deacons-then-and-now> (last modified October 1, 2005, accessed September 15, 2018)

diocese, or parish, and sometimes this overlap became an issue, as we have surmised from fourth century councils of the Church.

(Cf. Canon 18 of the Council of Arles [314 C.E.], “Concerning the deacons of a city: That they not presume too much for themselves, but reserve honor for the presbyters, so that they do nothing of importance without the presbyter’s knowledge.”)⁴⁵

In short, as the roles of the three orders – diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate – evolved over time, a clearer definition of the role of the priest in the Mass and the administration of the sacraments, as we now know them, greatly limited what a deacon could do *sacramentally*.

Although the deacon remained fully engaged in *administrative* functions on behalf of the bishop, his *sacramental* role slowly dissipated, and also his *authority*, “as an appreciation of the “sacred powers” of the presbyter (as a “spiritual offshoot” of the bishop) – and the importance of those powers for the sacramental life of the faithful – grew.”⁴⁶

“As the role boundaries of deacon and presbyter evolved, the presbyter, clothed in sacramental authority, became the visible sign of the Church in remote areas and thus, the ‘person in charge.’ Eventually, in areas remote from the *cathedra*, onsite supervision and coordination of ministry of the deacons devolved to the local elder/pastor as well.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ “The Canons to Sylvester from the Council of Arles (314 C.E.)”, *Fourth Century Christianity*, retrieved from C. Munier, *Concilia Galliae* a.314-a.506, (Turnhout: Brepols 1963,) <https://www.fourthcentury.com/arles-314-canons-to-sylvester/>, (last accessed December 7, 2018) Canon 18.

⁴⁶ William T. Ditewig, William T. *The Emerging Diaconate*. (Mahwah, NJ: The Paulist Press 2007), 76.
----- C. Munier, *Concilia Galliae* a.314-a.506, (Turnhout: Brepols 1963) 175,181

⁴⁷ Tim Drake, “The Role of the Deacon Then and Now”. *Catholic Answers*, <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-role-of-deacons-then-and-now>, (last modified October 1, 2005, last accessed September 17, 2018)

The Diaconate – Linking Parallel Histories

The diaconate was originally created by the episcopate (apostles) to address certain needs of the Church at the time. It was a free standing order established by the apostles to help meet the temporal needs of the disciples. Over time the role of the deacon was subsumed into a cursus honorum of holy orders, the diaconate becoming a stepping stone on the way to priesthood.

The diaconate was originally born from the episcopate (apostles) to address certain needs of the Church in the first century. It was established as a free standing order to meet the temporal needs of the faithful.⁴⁸ Initially, the apostles “did it all” – proclaiming the Word, leading the faithful in prayer, performing sacramental rites (e.g., healing the sick and disabled), collecting alms, and meeting the temporal needs of the flock – but “as the number of disciples continued to grow” as outlined in Acts 6:1, the apostles found themselves unable to be all things to all people. When one group (“the Hellenists – cf. Acts 6:1) complained that “their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1) the Apostles quickly commissioned a group of trusted subordinates to close this gap. Thus “seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3) were selected from among the disciples, and “presented [...] to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them.” (Acts 6:6)

Early Diaconate Overview

⁴⁸ Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 6.

“The deacons who relieved the bishop of his more laborious and less important administrative functions also came to exercise a certain measure of authority over the faithful.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the authority he wielded was the bishop’s. The deacon merely extended the bishop’s authority as his subordinate and with his direction.

As well, the deacon – from the very start – was an *evangelist*. Was Stephen not proclaiming the Word when he was martyred? (Cf. Acts 6-7) And was not Philip evangelizing in Samaria? “Now those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. Thus Philip went down to [the] city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them.” (Acts 8:4-5)

Finally, St. Luke’s account of the first deacons in the Acts of the Apostles reveals that these men performed sacramental-*like* duties. In Jerusalem, St. Luke tells us that Stephen “work[ed] great wonders and signs among the people.” In Samaria, Philip is described as “doing” “signs,” such as exorcisms and healings. (Acts 8:6-7) Philip also seems to have baptized converts, at least “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” (cf. Acts 8:16) which Luke distinguishes from “receiv[ing] the Holy Spirit,” (cf. Acts 8:17) which is something the Apostles themselves must do.

Nevertheless, despite the exemplary work of the first deacons, and for reasons that will be forever shrouded in history, the early bishops quickly founded a third *order*, the presbyterate, which grew quickly enough that by the early second century, C.E., when Saint Ignatius was on the way to Rome to be martyred, he wrote, “In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the

⁴⁹ Herbert Thurston, “Deacons” *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 4*. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908). <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04647c.htm> (last accessed December 8, 2018)

presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church.”⁵⁰

Western Diaconate

The causes of the permanent diaconate’s eventual decline and disappearance in the Western Church began as early as the third century. But the process itself was a complex one which actually extended over many centuries.

Over the early centuries, even after the beginnings of the presbyterate, the diaconate grew in power over administrative aspects, primarily because they were the “eyes and ears” of the bishop at the diocesan level, this relationship led to very close ties between deacons and bishops. But priests also had close relationships with bishops. And once deacons and presbyters were sent to remote areas away from the *cathedra*, an evolution of those competing as well as complimentary roles inevitably took shape, and not without dispute, as evidenced by the canons of three early fourth century councils of the Church.

Away from the *cathedra*, priests took on more and more *sacramental* duties as distant delegates of the bishop. At this time, after the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E. as the prestige of the bishop (and later, his involvement in affairs of state) increased, many of his common sacramental duties were pushed down to presbyters, perhaps especially in non-urban areas. Now that the bishop as the head of the Church had a new *position* within Roman Society, he relieved himself of other functions that could also be delegated down to presbyters, who might be seen as “little bishops.” Presbyters, finding themselves with greater and greater authority over geographically-defined

⁵⁰ St. Ignatius. *Epistle to the Trallians*, Chapter 3. Enzo Petrolino, (ed.) *Compendium on the Diaconate*. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018) 26.

parishes, came to be recognized as having *generalized* “church authority” in that local area – again, much like bishops. Within parish bounds, once-powerful deacons had considerably less authority relative to presbyters. And of course, assimilation of the *cursus honorum* as an organizing principle for Holy Orders (most apparent in the Western Church) eventually “set” the status of the diaconate as lesser than the presbyterate, and in fact, “a merely *transitional* step to the latter order.”⁵¹

The development of sacramental theology over time, especially in regards to the Eucharist, also contributed to the decline of the diaconate. Its development had a direct bearing on the evolution of Holy Orders by enhancing the value of the Church’s sacramental ministry (the province of presbyters and bishops) *vis-à-vis* its social ministry (the province of deacons – at least until the development of the parish as a largely self-sufficient entity). In the words of one scholar, “The role an ordained minister played with respect to the Eucharist determined one’s place within the Church. The diaconate went into decline in the post-Nicene period as the Eucharist was delegated by the bishops to the presbyters.”⁵² Of course, deacons still *assisted* at the altar, but doing so would merely have confirmed their status – *apropos* the priests to whom they rendered assistance – in a very visible way.

⁵¹ William T. Ditewig, “From Function to Ontology: The Shifting Diaconate in the Middle Ages.” Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (ed) *A Companion to the Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill 2015), 353

-----Gibault, John St. H. *The Cursus Honorum*. taken from *A Companion to the Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*, Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (ed.). (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016.), 59

⁵² Owen Cummings, Regents Chair of Theology at Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon and author of *Deacons and the Church*, quoted by Drake, Tim. “The Role of the Deacon Then and Now”. Catholic Answers.com last modified October 1, 2005.
<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-role-of-deacons-then-and-now>

The sorting of the orders into a neat *cursus honorum* was not accomplished without friction – the *social friction* which inevitably occurs when two groups overlap in responsibility or authority. Thus, we see various *issues* brought to three separate Councils of the Church in the early fourth century C.E. And when a Church council resolves an issue by promulgating a canon, that issue tends to be settled in stone, for all time. Therefore, the relation between the diaconate and the presbyterate worked out at Elvira and Arles and Nicaea stands to this very day, even after the resurrection of the permanent diaconate – in the West – by Vatican II, fourteen centuries after its absorption into the Church’s *cursus honorum* in the fourth century. Now, as then, the deacon’s role is distinct from, lesser than, and frequently subordinate to the priest’s role in the Church.

Eastern Diaconate

For obscure reasons, the permanent diaconate persisted in the Eastern (Greek-speaking) Church through the fourth and fifth centuries, right up to the present time. Despite its persistence, the permanent diaconate in the East, similar to the transitional diaconate in the West, conformed to the canons of the fourth century councils, and thereafter the role of the Eastern deacon was limited in scope, and frequently subordinate to the authority of a priest. Nevertheless, that the *permanent* diaconate persisted in the East provided the Church, after Vatican II, with a model for the formation of permanent deacons in the West. In the process of resurrecting the permanent diaconate in the West, however, the Catholic Church appears to have affected a compromise between its contemporary role in the East, and its former role in the first-fourth centuries. Thus, in the West, deacons are regular ministers of baptism and they are permitted to preside at marriage ceremonies outside of Mass, unlike deacons in the East.⁵³

⁵³ Father Deacon Photios Touloumes, *The Diaconate in the Orthodox Church*. <http://www.orthodoxyinfo.org/Diaconate.htm>. (last accessed November 15, 2018.)

Conclusion

The diaconate and presbyterate may both be seen as *functional* orders. Both grew from the functional needs of the Church. Both derive their definition and authority from the episcopate. Thus, as the functional needs of the Church changed over time, the episcopate saw fit to modify the roles and role boundaries of the two orders, better to meet those needs. The process, as all processes in the early Church (and perhaps in the Church today), did not have sharp edges. In short, it was messy, leading to role strain and the need for debate and resolution in several Church councils. The Episcopate saw fit, largely for functional reasons, to redefine the diaconate as a transitional order sometime in the fourth or fifth centuries. Even this action was not a well-demarcated “event.” We see that the order was redefined again, fourteen centuries later, as a permanent order, with greater definition and distinction from the presbyterate. In between, the need for a permanent diaconate was debated at various times, no doubt as serious functional needs in the Church remained unmet. All of this demonstrates – as ever – that the Church is a living and breathing *organism* which, to remain relevant to the lives of the faithful, to meet their spiritual and temporal needs, adapts (within the limits of the faith) to the nature of the contemporary world. What does this say for the future of the diaconate? Just this: That its functions and functional boundaries will no doubt change again, as the Magisterium perceives the changing needs of the faithful.

Addendum

The Restoration of the Permanent Diaconate in the 20th Century

Why after so many centuries in relative obscurity in the Latin Church was the diaconate restored to its former place?

There were a number of primary reasons that after so many centuries in relative obscurity the diaconate was restored to its former place in the hierarchy. I think the most significant among them was not only the needs of the church, but also the needs of the faithful in the mid twentieth century.

While the idea of restoring the permanent diaconate resurfaced momentarily at the Council of Trent in the mid sixteenth century, it didn't get off the ground. Four hundred years elapsed before the idea again resurfaced—in the most unlikely of places.

During World War II, a group of Catholic priests and other Catholic men imprisoned at Dachau, a Nazi concentration camp, wondered whether permanent deacons might be able to do positive work for the Church. Just as the first deacons were consecrated for an identified need within the Church, so now once again a need was being acknowledged to which the diaconate might be used to address.⁵⁴

Informally, these men in the camps called themselves "the Deacon Circle." The group continued to meet after the war's end. Their goals were to address the concept of justice through service

⁵⁴ Betsy Wiederkehr Huss, "Resurgence of Deacons has its Roots in Nazi Concentration Camp", Diocese of Little Rock Website, <https://www.dolr.org/article/resurgence-deacons-has-its-roots-nazi-concentration-camp>, (last modified September 14, 2017, accessed December 8, 2018).

and stewardship. By 1959, another group called the “International Diaconate Circle” was organized.

Through their efforts, other influential people inside the Church began to consider the benefits that permanent deacons would bring to the people of God. This idea was then highlighted and discussed in various Catholic periodicals and books.⁵⁵ But still, nothing was moving in the direction of a restoration.

In the address of 5 October 1957, Pope Pius XII declared that the time was not ripe for restoring the permanent diaconate for men – a ministry that existed for centuries before falling into abeyance. Pope Pius XII stated that:

*“We have not yet considered those Orders which precede the priesthood, and which, in the present practice of the Church, are only conferred in preparation for ordination to the priesthood. The duties connected with Minor Orders have long been performed by laymen, and **We know that thought is being given at present to the introduction of a diaconate conceived as an ecclesiastical office independent of the priesthood.** Today, at least, the idea is not yet ready for application. Should it someday become so, what we have just said would still hold true and this diaconate would take its place with the priesthood in the distinctions We have just drawn.”⁵⁶*

But less than 10 years later, the bishops at Vatican II looking at the pastoral and missionary needs of the Church believed that maybe the time had come and they voted as a group to re-establish such a diaconate ministry.

One major reason for doing so was the fact that in various countries throughout the world many laymen were already performing the task of deacons but without being ordained to that ministry.

⁵⁵ Tim Drake, “The Role of Deacons: Then and Now.” *Catholic Answers*, <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-role-of-deacons-then-and-now> (last modified October 1, 2005, accessed September 15, 2018).

⁵⁶ Pope Pius XII, October 5, 1957, *Guiding Principles of the Lay Apostolate* <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12layap.htm> (last modified October 5, 1957, last accessed December 7, 2018) 1

The Vatican Council, as the International Theological Commission (ITC) ⁵⁷stated in 2002, wanted to “confirm by sacramental grace those who were already exercising the diaconal ministry”. Ordaining them to the diaconate would enable them to “exercise their ministry more effectively” (5. 1). (36) ⁵⁸

Through the Grace of God and the persistence of many Church Fathers, especially from the German Council, when the Second Vatican Council convened, there was a serious call for the restoration of the Church’s sacred order.

Thus the permanent diaconate was initially restored on October 30, 1963, and promulgated as part of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) on November 21, 1964. ⁵⁹

In June 1967, Pope Paul VI carried out the desire of the Council when he published the Apostolic Letter *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* ⁶⁰ in which he reestablished the permanent diaconate in the

⁵⁷ The International Theological Commission of the Roman Catholic Church advises the Magisterium of the Church, particularly the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), a dicastery of the Roman Curia.^{[1][2]} Its membership consists of no more than 30 Catholic theologians^[1] appointed by the pope at the suggestion of the Prefect of the CDF^[3] for renewable five year terms. They tend to meet annually for a week in Rome, where the Commission is based. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Theological_Commission last accessed November 18, 2018.

⁵⁸ International Theological Commission (ITC) *From the Diaconia of Christ to the Diaconia of the Apostles*. Last accessed November 9, 2018. Paragraph 200. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_05072004_diaconate_en.html

⁵⁹ Vatican Council II, Edward H. Peters, and Gregory Baum. *De Ecclesia; the Constitution on the Church of Vatican Council II Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, November 21, 1964*. Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1965. (*Lumen Gentium*)

Latin Church. The Council, in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, echoes the ancient image and concerns of the New Testament when it speaks of the ministry and nature of the diaconate:

At a lower level of the hierarchy are deacons, upon whom hands are imposed "not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service". For strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his group of priests they serve in the diaconate of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity to the people of God. It is the duty of the deacon, according as it shall have been assigned to him by competent authority, to administer baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, to officiate at funeral and burial services. Dedicated to duties of charity and of administration, let deacons be mindful of the admonition of Blessed Polycarp: "Be merciful, diligent, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who became the servant of all." (Lumen Gentium para. 29) ⁶¹ ⁶² ⁶³ Amen!

Appendix A

Table of Parallel Histories

⁶⁰ Pope Paul VI. Apostolic Letter given Motu Proprio, *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem: General Norms for Restoring the Permanent Diaconate in the Latin Church*, , http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu_proprio_19670618_sacrum-diaconatus.html (last modified June 18, 1967 last accessed December 7, 2018)

⁶¹Gerald O'Collins, *Unlock the Door: The Case for Women in the Diaconate*. The Tablet, Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference, 2018. www.opw.catholic.org.au/latest-news/unlock-the-door-the-case-for-women-in-the-diaconate.html#.W2oGXtJKjcs (last accessed October 2, 2018)

⁶² Brief History of the Permanent Diaconate. Roman Catholic Diocese of Southwark, England, UK. http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk/permdiac_b.htm . (last accessed October 2, 2018)

⁶³Vatican Council II, Edward H. Peters, and Gregory Baum. *De Ecclesia; the Constitution on the Church of Vatican Council II Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, November 21, 1964*. Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1965. (*Lumen Gentium*)

Time Line	History of the Episcopate	History of the Presbyterate	Significant Church Events	History of the Roman Empire	Needs of the Faithful and of Church	History of Sacramental Development and Liturgical Practice	History of the Diaconate
30CE to 50 CE	c30 CE Apostles established by Christ		c. 33 CE Jesus dies and rises	c14-37CE Tiberius		c33CE Last Supper	
51CE to 100CE	c. 90CE Acts 6 mention of the apostles needing help	priests becoming “sacramental” offshoots of the bishop		c.60CE Nero begins Christian persecutions c70CE Jerusalem destroyed by Romans c98-117 CE Trajan	c. 90 CE church expanding. Increased followers need services	c.90CE we see beginnings of word and ministry broken into two roles	c.90 CE deacons originate c. 95 Possibly constitute with the bishops the ruling council in some churches (<i>Didache</i> , also Ignatius and Polycarp) c. 96 Administer the distribution of alms to the poor and needy (<i>Shepherd of</i>

							<i>Hermas</i>)
101C E to 150C E	Bishops continue to be the authority in their areas of responsibility Role of bishop is further defined by defining the writings of the apostolic fathers and the definitions provided by Ignatius of Antioch	c100 CE Ignatius' mention of bishops being assisted by priests and deacons- Letter to the Magnesians Priests/elders being designated to perform certain bishop functions in rural areas		c 117 Hadrian reduces the persecutions of Christians. They now need to have committed a crime to be bothered.	Continued expansion of followers into areas away from the bishop. Little bishops with same powers are needed to fill the role	Theology of Eucharist beginning to develop.	c. 115 Symbolize Jesus Christ (Ignatius) c. 115 Be the Servant of the Church (Ignatius, also Polycarp) c. 115 Act as an agent of ambassador of the Church (Ignatius) c. 115 Functional liturgically at the Eucharist (Clear in Ignatius, although probable in the <i>Didache</i>) c. 150 Administer the Eucharistic Bread and Wine to all present (Justin Martyr) c. 150 Take

							Eucharistic Bread and Wine to the absent (Justin Martyr)
151C E to 200C E	By the end of the 2nd century Christian communities had evolved a more structured hierarchy, with a central bishop having authority over the clergy in his city.	Continuing development of the responsibilities of the presbyterate	By the end of the 2nd century, bishops began congregating in regional synods to resolve doctrinal and policy issues..	c161-180 Marcus Aurelius		Continued development of Eucharistic Theology Continuing development of theology of Holy Orders	c. 200 Be the “eye” of the bishop in all matters but especially in discovering the pastoral needs of the people. (Pseudo-Clementines) c. 200 Keep order in Christian meetings (Pseudo-Clementines) c. 200 Report the sick to the congregation for their visits and help (Pseudo-Clementines) c 200 Baptize on a par with presbyters with the

							bishop's authorization (Tertullian)
201C E to 250C E	Hippolytus: <i>"Spiritus primatus sacerdotii habere potestatem dimittere peccata"</i> : the primate of sacrificial priesthood and the power to forgive sins.			c250 Decius' libellus to sacrifice increased torments to Christians	As "sacramental" services are provided to the outlying areas, the same issues arise with the priests being overwhelmed by workload. The deacons begin to serve and even report to the to the local priest	One's place at the Eucharist determines one place in the hierarchy Continuing development of theology of Holy Orders	c. 215 Instruct the people at weekday non Eucharistic assemblies (Hippolytus) c. 215 Assist with the oils of exorcism and thanksgiving at Baptism (Hippolytus) c. 215 Bring the people's oblations to the bishop and probably arrange them at the Eucharist (Hippolytus) c. 215 Bless non Eucharistic bread at Christian fellowship meals in the bishop's

							<p>absence (Hippolytus) c. 215 Administer the chalice only in Hippolytus, but probably in most places also continue to administer the Bread until sometime in the fourth century (Hippolytus0 c. 215 Be the servant of the bishop (Hippolytus) c. 235 Guard the doors and keep order among the people at the Eucharist (<i>Didascalia</i>) c. 235 Function as full time paid servants of the Church (<i>Didascalia</i>)</p>
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251C E to 300C E	The term for the geographic area of a bishop's authority and ministry, the diocese, began as part of the structure of the Roman Empire under Diocletian		By the 3rd century, the bishop of Rome began to act as a court of appeals for problems that other bishops could not resolve c300 Council of Elvira	c290 Diocletian and Galerian persecutions continue			c. 253 Judge disputes with the presbyters between members of the Church. <i>(Didascalia)</i>
301C E to 350C E	C313CE bishops become very influential in the new freedoms granted by Constantine	Priests become identified as the principal leaders in the rural areas.	314 Council of Arles 325 Council of Nicaea	313 Constantine decriminalizes all worship in the Empire	Church spreads even more without fear of persecution	Place at the Eucharistic table is definitive of one's role in the hierarchy	c. 306 On occasion, head small rural congregations (Elvira) c. 314 On occasion preside at the Eucharist, probably under extraordinary circumstances and in the absence of a bishop (or presbyter?) <i>(Forbidden at Arles)</i>
351C E to		Priest understood to have "sacred powers"	Church begins to mirror cursus honorum			Theology of Orders further develops as it	c. 380 Announce various

<p>400C E</p>			<p>c363 Council of Laodicea</p> <p>c400 Council of Toledo</p>			<p>mirrors the cursus honorum</p>	<p>stages of the Eucharist (<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>) c. 380 read the Gospel at the Eucharist (<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>) c. 380 Bid the prayers of the people at the Eucharist (<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>) c. 380 Announce the kiss of peace (<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>) c. 384 Bless the Paschal Candle. (Jerome) These</p>
<p>401C E to 450C E</p>							

451 CE to 500C E		Continuing development of idea of sacred powers The ordinand is now the receiver of a sacred power that changes his very personhood. He can now use this power anywhere he might be assigned.		c476 CE Fall of Western Roman Empire		The transformation in the ontological understanding of Holy Orders changed the view of all ordained ministry in the Church and is especially evident in the transformation of the diaconate	As we continue into the Middle Ages however, this theological meaning will shift.. By the end of the fifth century the deacon was the presbyter's assistant and the presbyter subordinate to the bishop.
501C E to 550C E	We also see in history that many times deacon, not presbyters were selected to fill vacancies in the bishop ranks. Being administrative creatures, this seems normal. The deacon often seemed the	One must understand that by the Middle Ages, the presbyterate had become to be recognized as the only Priestly Order with all the minor ministries subject to it.	529 Council of Vaison		Writings throughout the early centuries stress the responsibility of the deacon for the welfare, good order and discipline of the assembly. Although not exclusive to the diaconate, the diaconate	Theology of Orders continues to evolve	First, there is a very consistent connection between the bishop and the deacon. . The deacon is ordained for him. Second, the deacon is described as a very

	<p>best qualified since many deacons shared in the governance of the bishop and exercised a number of his administrative functions.</p>				<p>seems to have the particular care of this ministry.</p> <p>During the Middle Ages, the main function of the deacon as he still existed was to assist the president at the Eucharist. Once the helper to the bishop to relieve him of some of his burdens, the deacon had now become the helper of the presbyter, or little bishop, to relieve some of his as well.</p>	<p>flexible in his ministry that can take on various roles dependant on the pastoral duties to which he is assigned.</p> <p>The diaconate is clearly distinguishable from the sacerdotal ministries. In fact when the deacons appear to move into more sacerdotal functions, many sources stress that deacons are ordained for service, not for priesthood.</p> <p>During the time of both the diaconate flourishing</p>
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							<p>and decline the deacon's identity as a non-sacerdotal is consistently maintained.</p> <p>Third, just as the deacon has a unique relationship with the bishop, so too does he have one with the community.</p> <p>By the fifth century, it seems, most deacons did little.</p> <p>References to the diaconate basically disappear after the fifth century and by the eleventh century the Order was largely</p>
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							transitional to the priesthood.
551C E to 600C E	Popes begin to exert both temporal and ecclesial power				The diaconate was never formally abolished by the Church. In fact, the Eastern Church continued the order with much more enthusiasm than the Roman Rite. It has always existed as one of the three orders of the clergy, although as we have seen, for many hundreds of years, the order of deacons in the Roman Rite was simply a stepping stone to the priesthood.		We see this in the document <i>Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua</i> , cerca 475, wherein Hippolytus makes the declaration that the deacon is ordained <i>non ad sacerdotium sed in ministerio episcopo</i> . Now in the fifth century, the deacons is ordained <i>non ad sacerdotium, sed ad ministerium</i> , since the deacon is to be <u>the</u> <u>servant of all</u>

					Few people during the centuries imagined it being any different.		in ordained orders. To remove any doubt, the <i>Statuta</i> further states ,”the deacon shall know he is the presbyter’s minister as well as the bishop’s. ⁶⁴
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Appendix B

A Summary of Diaconal Functions with Date and Source

Pre- Nicene:

c. 95 Possibly constitute with the bishops the ruling council in some churches (*Didache*, also Ignatius and Polycarp)

c. 96 Administer the distribution of alms to the poor and needy (*Shepherd of Hermas*)

c. 115 Symbolize Jesus Christ (Ignatius)

c. 115 Be the Servant of the Church (Ignatius, also Polycarp)

⁶⁴ James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, (Valley Forge, PA.: Trinity Press.) 124-125.

- c. 115 Act as an agent of ambassador of the Church (Ignatius)
- c. 115 Functional liturgically at the Eucharist (Clear in Ignatius, although probable in the *Didache*)
- c. 150 Administer the Eucharistic Bread and Wine to all present (Justin Martyr)
- c. 150 Take Eucharistic Bread and Wine to the absent (Justin Martyr)
- c. 200 Be the “eye” of the bishop in all matters but especially in discovering the pastoral needs of the people. (Pseudo- Clementines)
- c. 200 Keep order in Christian meetings (Pseudo- Clementines)
- c. 200 Report the sick to the congregation for their visits and help (Pseudo- Clementines)
- c. 200 Baptize on a par with presbyters with the bishop’s authorization (Tertullian)
- c. 215 Instruct the people at weekday non Eucharistic assemblies (Hippolytus)
- c. 215 Assist with the oils of exorcism and thanksgiving at Baptism (Hippolytus)
- c. 215 Bring the people’s oblations to the bishop and probably arrange them at the Eucharist (Hippolytus)
- c. 215 Bless non Eucharistic bread at Christian fellowship meals in the bishop’s absence (Hippolytus)
- c. 215 Administer the chalice only in Hippolytus, but probably in most places also continue to administer the Bread until sometime in the fourth century (Hippolytus)
- c. 215 Be the servant of the bishop (Hippolytus)
- c. 235 Guard the doors and keep order among the people at the Eucharist (*Didascalía*)

- c. 235 Function as full time paid servants of the Church (*Didascalia*)
- c. 253 Judge disputes with the presbyters between members of the Church. (*Didascalia*)
- c. 306 On occasion, head small rural congregations (Elvira)
- c. 314 On occasion preside at the Eucharist, probably under extraordinary circumstances and in the absence of a bishop (or presbyter?) (Forbidden at Arles)

Post- Nicene

- c. 380 Announce various stages of the Eucharist (*Apostolic Constitutions*)
- c. 380 read the Gospel at the Eucharist (*Apostolic Constitutions*)
- c. 380 Bid the prayers of the people at the Eucharist (*Apostolic Constitutions*)
- c. 380 Announce the kiss of peace (*Apostolic Constitutions*)
- c. 384 Bless the Paschal Candle. (Jerome)

These functions are pastoral, charitable and liturgical connecting and illustrating the interrelation of these activities of the Church in its ongoing life. The deacon is par excellance the embodiment of the ministry of Christ in the world (emphasis added) ⁶⁵

⁶⁵ James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, (Valley Forge, PA. : Trinity Press), 24-125.

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