

# Permanent Diaconate

## Permanent Deacons

- is a Vocation
- is a servant of Christ  
called to be His Witness  
called to contribute to Evangelization

## Historical background

In the early days of the Church, Deacons were called to serve the community.

... “Your brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom.....” (Acts 6:2-3)

It is a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy, Bishop, Priest and Deacon. The word deacon comes from the Greek *diakonia* with specific perspectives of the Ordained Ministry: to proclaim the Scriptures, to administer sacraments and to serve the communities in charitable activities. Up to the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Diaconate flourished in the western Church, but after this period, it experienced, for various reasons, a slow decline which ended its surviving only as an intermediate stage for candidates preparing for priestly ordination.

However, the service of the permanent deacons was restored after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

## The development of Permanent Diaconates in Hong Kong

In 1988, the Diocesan Council of Priests discussed to establish Permanent Diaconates in Hong Kong. Cardinal J.B. Wu directed and appointed a Working Group to study the feasibilities.

In 1990, the Working Group submitted a Research Handbook outlining

- the historical development of Permanent Diaconates of the Church
- the qualifications of permanent deacons and the progress of development in other dioceses
- the resources of the Hong Kong Diocese and the pastoral spectrum.

In 1991, public consultation was carried out.

In 1992, Cardinal J.B. Wu decided that

- ✓ Permanent Diaconates should be established in the Diocese of Hong Kong
- ✓ An experientmental period of 3 years to be introduced
- ✓ To appoint a Steering Group for the promotion of Permanent Diaconates.

In 1992-1996, the Steering Group

- ✚ Conducted research studies on Permanent Diaconates
- ✚ Conducted familiarization visits to dioceses in North America
- ✚ Compiled a report on the “selection”, “formation” and “supporting services” on Permanent Diaconates.

In 1996, Cardinal J.B. Wu appointed a Diocesan Commission for the Permanent Diaconate and to invite applications.

The first two Permanent Deacons were ordained in 1997.

In 1998, the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Congregation for the Clergy published a Joint Declaration and Introduction on the Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons and Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons. In response, the Diocesan Commission for the Permanent Diaconate and undertook a review of the progress and the formation programmes accordingly.

Present situation

At present, there are 8 Permanent Deacons ordained, 5 Candidates receiving formation programmes, 6 aspirants and 5 applicants under selection.

### ***Qualifications to join the Permanent Diaconate Ministry***

Age : the ceiling is 55 years. For the married applicants, the age limit is 35 years and 25 years for the unmarried applicants.

Academic requirements : the minimum academic requirements are passes in 5 subjects including Chinese, English and Mathematics in the School Leaving Examination and meeting the Matriculation level or equivalent.

Marital status : a good marriage life with support and consent from the wife; for the unmarried applicants, celibacy should be observed after ordination.

Financial requirements : applicants should have a sound financial ability to support himself and the family.

Health : applicants should have a good physical health condition.

Formation

The entire period of formation programme takes about 4 to 6 years. The syllabus will cover -

Studies on -

- ✧ Biblical knowledge
- ✧ Catholic doctrines
- ✧ Moral and Ethics
- ✧ Liturgies
- ✧ Community services

Training on pastoral work -

- ✧ Bible reading

- ✧ Catechism teaching
- ✧ Home visits
- ✧ Spiritual directors of religious organizations
- ✧ Baptism, Benediction, distribution of the Eucharist
- ✧ Preaching and Sermon
- ✧ Blessing of marriage and Resurrection

Training on –

- ✧ Visits to the sick
- ✧ Visits to the prison inmates
- ✧ Pastoral care for students, workers, youth and the elderly, the disables
- ✧ Pastoral care for families, families in crises, new immigrants
- ✧ Pastoral care for alcoholics, drug abusers , gamblers
- ✧ Pastoral care for the Aids infects, homosexuals

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