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Therefore brethren pick out from among you seven men of good report full of the Spirit and of wisdom



Deacons

(God willing, Allan Marshall & Andrew Weiss will be ordained to the Holy Order of Deacon, Anglican Church of Southern Africa on Saturday 30th August at the Church of St Nicholas, Matroosfontein at 10:00)

Dear Family of St Michael's

As we are on the threshold of a very historical event in the life of our parish...the ordination of Allan & Andrew next Saturday, I thought that I would teach you a little about what a Deacon is.

What is it?

In the early church the diaconate was an important office. "Diakonia" is a Greek word found quite often in the New Testament. We usually translate it 'ministry' or 'service'. There are two other words like it, the verb "diakonein", meaning to serve and the noun "diakonos", one who serves: in everyday Greek, someone who waits at table. From this noun comes our word deacon.

We read about it in Mark 10:35-45:

Mark tells the story of James and John asking for the chief places in the kingdom. The other ten disciples were angry with them. Jesus however seem to be emphatic and challenging:

If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant to the rest.... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.

Jesus came to call people into a kingdom where any position of authority carried with it the call to service. He himself taught and cast out evil spirits with authority(Mark 1:22-27), an authority given by God. Yet he saw himself as a servant. The authority given to him was not an authority to lord it over others, but an inner strength to minister where angels fear to tread.

Jesus formed a community to carry on his work on earth and to be the sign or sacrament of his continued presence. As

Jesus represented God, so the Church represents Jesus in the world. To do that it must be a servant Church. Diakonia – ‘deaconing’ – is the vocation of each and every member.

In the New Testament diakonia(service) implies looking after the hungry, poor, outcast, widows and orphans.

In Acts 6:1-7, we read of the seven who were chosen. The apostles laid their hands upon them with prayer. They were appointed to organise poor relief.

In the Epistle 1 Timothy 3:8-13 we find the fullest treatment of the diaconate as an office in the local church:

Qualifications of Deacons

⁸ Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; ⁹ they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹ Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; ¹³ for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Ordination – Empowerment to Minister

Ordination is the public recognition by the church that a man/woman is called to a particular ministry. It is a sacrament whereby the person who is ordained receives both authority for what he/she is called to do and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

A deacon is ordained to be in a public and visible way the symbol of the servant- Church. He/she may go on doing whatever he/she was doing as a lay minister. But ordination is more about being than doing. By this the church shows us all that we are called to be servants, following the servant Christ.

What do they do?

There are certain functions sacramentally and liturgically that only a Priest can perform and others that he/she shares with the deacon. A Priest is ordained first a deacon and then a priest and thus even if he/she is a priest they remain deacons. From early writers like Hippolytus we learn deacons can:

- 1) Baptise – with the Priest/Bishop’s permission
- 2) Eucharist Service – read the gospel, lead the prayers of the faithful, dismiss the congregation at the end of the service.
- 3) Peace – announce the peace
- 4) Gifts of the people – receive the gifts of the people and present it to the celebrant and administering communion
- 5) Easter – carry the Easter candle and sing the Exultet
- 6) Preach – under oversight of their Priest/Rector
- 7) Instruct confirmation and baptism preparation
- 8) The Sick – visitations
- 9) The Poor – looking after the poor

What can’t they do?

- 1) They cannot bestow blessings.
- 2) They cannot preside over the Eucharist.
- 3) They cannot hear confessions and absolve those who repent.
- 4) They cannot anoint the sick – if not licenced.
- 5) They cannot marry couples seeking marriage.

Respect those who are to be ordained deacons and hold them in high esteem and affection for the work they do.

I commend them to your prayers.

With love....**Fr Jerome AHC**