



Anglican Catholic Church



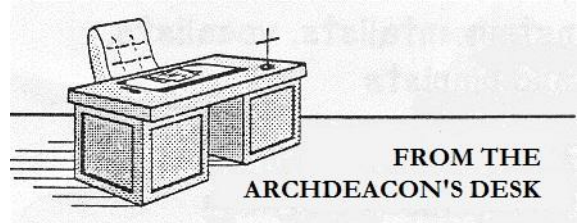
Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

September 2015

My dear friends and colleagues,

This is the first of what I plan to be an occasional letter containing jottings which I hope will be helpful and informative.



First, I would have liked to be able to report that since I retired from parish ministry in Rochester life has been one long holiday! This is rather far from the actuality but it is true to say that, one year on, I naturally miss leading a parish community, however small, and the wide variety of responsibilities which come with it. I have also missed compiling and producing a parish newsletter, so perhaps a missive such as this will fill more of a need within me than in those who receive it! Nevertheless, in case it is assumed that idleness is the order of the day, I am pleased to say that I am never at a loss for something to be getting on with. Within the Diocese I am able to give the Bishop administrative assistance as and when required and have been delighted to arrange Visitations this year to most of the parishes. These Visitations are a great source of joy to me, and the pleasure and support which I am told my visits bring to the parishes and missions are, I can assure you, very much a mutually beneficial experience. It is wonderful to be able to renew acquaintance with the folk in the congregations. Pastorally, I still have the privilege of assisting Fr Jonathan Munn in ministering to the housebound or incapacitated members of the congregation of Our Lady and Saint Francis, Rochester, due to the fact that he has a full-time teaching job and is not usually available during the week for such visits. When the Bishop is on duties which take him away from Canterbury I am called upon to deputise for him at Saint Augustine's, thereby "keeping my hand in". I am well aware that, as Dean of the Southern Deanery, I have not been able to organise Chapter Meetings for some time now, but the practicalities involved where the Deanery covers an area from East Kent to North Devon and South Wales make such an exercise fairly difficult.

On the domestic front, following Carol's surgery I have become rather more of a house-husband than previously and also the regular trips to hospital in Essex are fairly time-consuming. In addition, as some of you may know, we are in the process of house-selling and house-hunting, so the next few weeks promise to be fairly busy in many respects.

On the back of this sheet I have added a little piece about the origins and duties of an Archdeacon. Each Church has, of course, adapted or discarded the role to suit its respective requirements, so there is scope for flexibility and the various dioceses and provinces in the ACC utilise their Archdeacons in varying ways. Nevertheless, we are all labouring in the same vineyard in order to enable the Gospel to be heard amidst the clamour of the modern age.

With every blessing

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What is an Archdeacon?

Those who are old enough (and some of those who aren't) will readily recognise the benign face of Robertson Hare, who played The Venerable Henry Blunt in the BBC's *All Gas and Gaiters* from 1966 to 1971. The classic portrayal of bishops and clergy on television, especially in comedy, is, of course, that they are all buffoons. This may be true in some cases, but, as far as I am aware, thankfully not in the ACC. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church has defined

an archdeacon as, "A cleric having a defined administrative authority delegated to him by the bishop in the whole or part of the diocese." The term "archdeacon" appears for the first time in about AD 370. From the office of the *diaconus episcopi*, a deacon whom the bishop selected to administer the church's finances under the bishop's personal direction, the office of archdeacon gradually developed as certain functions were reserved to him by law. These functions included not only financial administration but also the discipline of the clergy, and examination of candidates for priesthood. From the 8th century there was in the Western Church a further development of the authority of the archdeacon, who now enjoyed a jurisdiction independent of the bishop. Large dioceses had several archidiaconates, in each of which the archdeacon had an authority comparable to that of the bishop. Frequently they were appointed not by the bishop but by the cathedral chapter or the king. However, from the 13th century, efforts were made to limit their authority, and in 1553, the Council of Trent removed entirely the independent powers of archdeacons. Those who had been in charge of different parts of the diocese gradually ceased to be appointed. Only the archdeacon associated with the cathedral chapter continued to exist as an empty title, with duties almost entirely limited to liturgical functions. In the Roman Catholic Church, the archdeacon's duties are now usually performed by officials such as auxiliary and/or coadjutor bishops, the vicar general, and the episcopal vicars. The title remains but is rarely used.

In the Anglican Church archdeacons serve the Church within a diocese by taking particular responsibility for church buildings, the welfare of clergy and their families and the implementation of diocesan policy within an archdeaconry. An archdeaconry is a territorial division of a diocese and these vary in number according to the size of the diocese.

An archdeacon is usually styled *The Venerable* instead of the usual clerical style of *The Reverend*. In the Church of England the position of an archdeacon can only be held by a priest who has been ordained for at least six years. This rule was introduced in 1840. The requirement that an archdeacon be in priest's orders was laid down as far back as 1662.

The Anglican Ordinal assumes that the functions of archdeacons include those of examining candidates for ordination and then presenting them to the ordaining bishop. In this diocese the archdeacon is closely involved with selection and training for ordination.

Next time I will add a little more detail about the historical tasks and duties mentioned, and what an archdeacon hopes to see (and hopes not to see!) when he visits.

Acknowledgements to *Wikipedia* for some of the above information.

