

Ordination ?

A guide for men exploring
their vocation in the
ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
Diocese of the United Kingdom

“And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding”.

Jeremiah 3:15

This booklet is intended for those looking at Ordination to the Diaconate or Priesthood, so it will concentrate on these rather than the other opportunities for Christian Ministry, such as vocations to the Religious Life or the Ministry of Lay Reader or, for women, the Lay Order of Deaconess. To discuss these ministries please contact the Diocesan Office.

Called by God ?

To be called by God is to experience a deep and personal stirring within one's soul.

All who believe in the person and power of Jesus Christ, all who are baptised, are called to walk with their brothers and sisters on their journey to the Lord. This is an open call to all God's people, the vocation of all Christians.

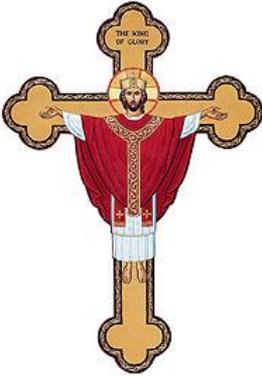
But the call of God can take a more specific shape. God calls some men to a service of leadership in the Church as deacons and priests. In proclaiming God's word, celebrating the sacraments and shepherding the flock to which they themselves belong, deacons and priests live out the call they have experienced.

Diocesan Prayer



ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, who by the childbearing of blessed Mary Ever-Virgin hast revenged our ruin and by the ministry of thy holy angels dost ever succour and defend us: Keep, we beseech thee, our Diocese under thy continual help and protection; that we, ever needful of thy grace, may bring forth for thee the fruit of good works and the harvest of souls; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost ever, One God, world without end. **Amen.**

What is a Vocation?



In the religious sense, a vocation is a call from God: we can't make it, no-one else can give us one, it can only come from Him. The main question to be asked and answered when thoughts of ordination come into our mind is this: does God want me to be ordained? Is He calling me?

If God calls us, then we have to answer something, basically either yes or no. This is where ones 'wanting' the vocation comes in. Our 'wanting it' or 'being interested in it' does not 'make' the vocation, but our wanting has to come into the picture, and this is where it comes in: How do I want to respond to God if He is calling me? Will my answer be yes or no?

Perhaps you are asking yourself how can you say yes or no if you are not sure He is in fact calling you? One way of seeking this reassurance is to look for some signs that are necessary for a vocation, it will help to look and see if they are present in your life. However, to go beyond the signs and actually discover if you have a vocation you need something else besides signs: you have to be 'on good terms with God' - you have to 'speak His language'.

Let us first check the signs: you must have health enough for the vocation. This includes physical health (the minimum will vary according to different vocations), psychological health (in particular free from any major scars, neuroses, dependencies, for

example - you are going to guide others so your own 'house' has to be in order), and spiritual health (belief in the Church, practice of the sacraments, giving prayer a place in your life, etc...). You must also have the human maturity that corresponds to your age, and be able to take on commitments and function stably in your present responsibilities; there must be a core to you that is not overly influenced by others so that you live by principle rather than by others' opinions. And your motives for considering the vocation must come from your faith, and not from human convenience or gain.

I said earlier that you needed to be on 'on good terms with God' and you have to 'speak His language'. What is God's language? Love. You can only get in a position to figure out if God is calling you if you love him, if you are struggling (though you might fall at times) to grow in your life of grace, doing good, avoiding sin, serving others, giving God time in prayer.



I think you can only open your soul to the vocation if you love people, and love them enough to give your life to serve them.

Let's be clear 'abstract' vocations don't exist. God calls to something specific - however varied or different the individual vocation is, for

example: You may be called to the Religious Life as a Monk, either contemplative in a Monastery or running a Mission or Parish. In the ACC Internationally, we have small Benedictine and Franciscan Communities of men and women. Or, as many men find, you may have a vocation to 'Diocesan' Priesthood, that is working in or being in charge of a Parish or Mission.

Recognition of the vocation that God has for you, where He wants you to be and where He wants you to work can produce two reactions - the first a deep feeling that it is right. And simultaneously I think there has got to be some fear, a recognition that this is not going to be easy, you're going to have to give a lot, grow a lot, put yourself in second place. Being a priest or deacon is more than loving God, it is, in a sense, being **in love** with Him in so far as that He becomes the focus and centre of your being. Flowing from this love is the love one must have for His creation including your brothers and sister in Christ - perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of vocation.

So, what do I suggest you do now? See if you have the initial signs. Then pray, saying to God: "maybe it's you who is putting these thought in my mind, inviting me. Help me to be generous enough, if it is you, because you know there are lots of other things I would like to do as well." Then look. At this point you will definitely need some outside help: you need to open yourself to the experiences of others who have felt God calling them. An ACC Priest who you trust is probably the best person to turn to or you can contact the Diocesan Office. You will probably be put in touch with your nearest ACC Parish in any case, if you have not already done so, because the priest

running that Mission or Parish will be an important part of the process for exploring Ministry in ACC. You will have some books recommended to you and perhaps be invited to a meeting to discuss matters further. The process from here on in is covered later, but before we move on lets look at time scales.

Knowing when the time is right

You may think I have avoided the part of your question that asks how you know it is time to become a priest. I haven't, you simply cannot know before you do all the above. If you have the general signs, and feel that this is something you feel is really right and have the support of an ACC priest and there are no substantial reasons to wait, it may mean 'now's the time'.



Discernment of Vocations

One thing you have to keep in mind (and it's amazing how often we forget it, but it certainly brings us a lot of peace) is that if God is calling you to His Ministry, this can come in many forms, not only ordained (there are other ministries in ACC such as Lay Reader), however, if you receive a distinct calling to the Sacred Priesthood, God is definitely going to give both you and the Church enough signs for us to mutually recognise the fact - However, sometimes the process of discernment can take a considerable

time and it doesn't just begin and end with either an interview or beginning a training course. It is a formation process to deepen faith and understanding and to prepare one for the challenges, frustrations and joys ahead.

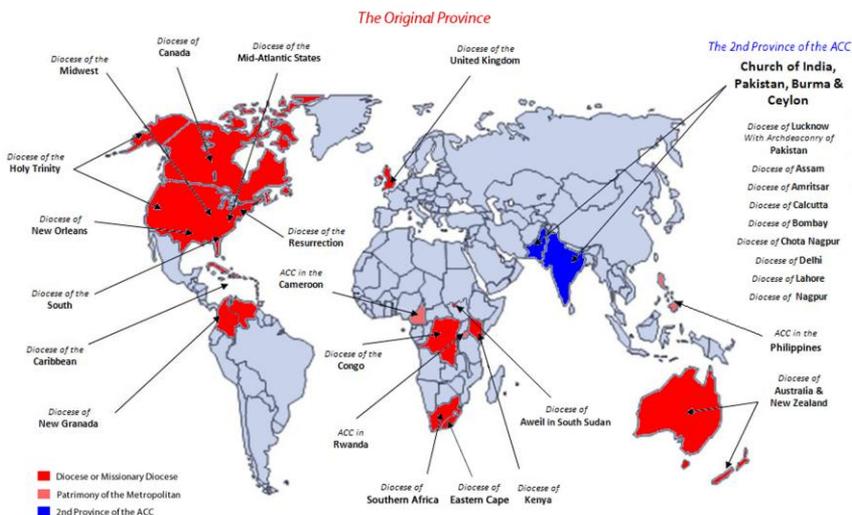


The formation involved in preparing you for ordination involves focusing on what the priesthood is for. The priesthood is not for ourselves, for our personal satisfaction and delight; it is for the service of the Church and souls. God makes us priests so that He will be able to make himself present in the Eucharist for all who need Him. He makes us priests so that all who need their sins forgiven can come to us and be cleansed of them. He makes us priests so that the sick can be strengthened with the Sacraments, so that His word will be preached, so that people will receive hope and be renewed through our work and service.

Ministry in the ACC

The ACC is small in comparison to many churches. We are traditional in our teaching and in our Liturgy. We have limited resources, both financially and in man power. We do not have the comfort of large historic endowment funds or have the privilege, except in a very few cases, of historic Church buildings.

Anglican Catholic Church Worldwide



Although in parts of the ACC, notably in the America, some clergy receive stipends (wages or salaries). The Clergy of the Diocese of the United Kingdom are non-stipendiary, receiving no payment from the Church. Some have state or private pensions, some are in full or part time employment elsewhere, and Applicants for ministry would be expected to demonstrate that they are well able to support themselves, and their families, financially.

Missions and Parishes are expected to pay their clergy expenses, such as petrol, postage and reimburse them for legitimate purchases of such things as; candles, wine and other requisites. However, in my experience ACC clergy often put in far more than ever they receive back financially.

It may be that your only experience of Clergy in other Churches, is that of full time paid Church workers, often in ancient and impressive church buildings.

St Paul was a Tent Maker and so must we support ourselves through secular work. The Early Church began meeting and worshipping in peoples homes - and so have we.



Financial security is obviously important, If you have a family to support now or plan to have in the future, then it is essential that you talk to your wife or fiancée and family about your plans and it will be expected that they support your application fully.

Whilst it is not compulsory that they share your membership of ACC it is highly desirable and you will find it of enormous benefit to your future if they understand the key role they play in support of your ministry. The balance of secular work and family life with training, and then later when exercising your Ministry, is a delicate one, not always easy to achieve but it is possible.

The Application Process

Before all else you should want to belong to and have a commitment to the Catholic Faith as expressed through the life and witness of the Anglican Catholic Church.



You should ordinarily be a member of the Church for at least 6 months before a formal application is made to the Diocese. However in the meantime this doesn't stop you from meeting and talking with other clergy and getting to know something of the practicalities of being a priest in the ACC.

Financial Matters

Unfortunately, limitations on our resources mean the cost of the External Training needs to be met by the

applicant. Some help may be available in cases of genuine need and for the ACC Training component the Diocese will contribute towards some of the costs incurred, such as travel.

The extent of this possible assistance will be discussed and agreed with you in advance. Some discounts may be available from the Official Diocesan Church shop and supplier, the Canterbury Church Shop Ltd (www.canterburychurchshop.co.uk) for books, vestments and other liturgical items.

Aspirant to Holy Orders

At the appropriate time you will be given or should request an application form. This is a fairly long and quite extensive document that asks for biographical details including a list of your work and life experience, your education and the understanding you have about the ACC and the Priesthood. When you feel ready to begin the process you should speak to the ACC Priest who is supporting your application and, provided you are over 16 years of age, with the Bishop's agreement you are at this stage considered to be an "Aspirant to Holy Orders".

This completed form is sent together with supporting documents to the Diocesan Office. You will be required to provide referees who can be approached to support your application. Although you may well have been to the Diocesan Office before this stage you will be invited to a formal meeting and your application will be discussed. If it is decided to proceed at this stage we will then seek the references mentioned above and also ask that you

undertake an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. (This is renewed every three years). A criminal record doesn't necessarily mean that your application will be rejected however we must be certain that our applicants and candidates for ordination and our clergy are thoroughly known to us and any areas of potential concern investigated and dealt with appropriately.

Postulant to Holy Orders

After a time your application will be considered by the bishop formally. It is at this stage that, provided you are over 18 years of age at this time, and the Bishop is satisfied, you will be referred to as a 'Postulant to Holy Orders'. Your Application form is then sent to the Board of Ministry.

The Board of Ministry



The Diocese of the United Kingdom has a Board of Ministry comprising of senior clergy and laity, in accordance with the Diocesan Canons the clergy on

this Board have the additional role of 'Examining Chaplains'. They advise the Bishop and the Diocesan Council of Advice on a range of matters related to Ministry including the theological courses which may be under taken by correspondence or extension study.

Candidate for Holy Orders /Ordinand

The Board of Ministry will advise the Bishop and make a recommendation to him concerning your application. Ultimately the Bishop makes the decision whether to proceed, although he relies and takes very seriously the recommendation of the Board of Ministry.

If acceptance is confirmed by the Bishop, then you are formally admitted as a Candidate or Ordinand to Holy Orders in the ACC.

Training

If recommended to train for the Ordained Ministry you will be expected to follow an approved two year (at least) course of theological study, , leading to an externally validated Certificate or Diploma.

If you already hold theological qualifications these will need to be submitted to the Diocesan Office for the Board of Ministry to consider



whether or not there is a need for any possible further training. You may also suggest an alternative course of study of your own choice, either by correspondence, full time or part time, which the Board would however need to consider and approve in advance.

Training Manual

In addition to this requirement, regardless of the course taken, some aspects of ACC teaching will need to be studied and this includes Liturgical Instruction. A Training Manual is being formulated to assist with this and will also include a reading list and training sessions which will be held at determined intervals and may also consist of occasional residential stays of a day or two. Where this is physically or financially impractical provision may be possible under a more local priest / mentor who would be appointed for each applicant.

Canonical Examinations

Sometime during your preparation for ordination both to the Diaconate and the Priesthood the Bishop will set Canonical Examinations which, in this diocese take the form of essays on subjects the Bishop specifies.

Ordination

Provided that satisfactory progress is made by you, and with the Bishop's agreement, Ordination to the Diaconate could be anticipated at the end of year One of the course followed after the second year of



successful training, and provided the Bishop still agrees, with Ordination to the Sacred Priesthood.

NB: The Canonical minimum ages for ordination to the Diaconate and Priesthood are 23 and 24 respectively. There is no upper age limit.

Our Expectations

Deacons and Priests are under obligation to pray the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer (according to the Book of Common Prayer) and to celebrate or assist at Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation, if not more often. In addition they set time aside for meditation and study throughout their ministries to assist them in their Holy Calling. Whilst it is not an obligation for Aspirants, Postulants and Candidates / Ordinands to do so, early adoption of these practices is recommended and encouraged. In addition retreats and quiet days, finding a spiritual director as well as becoming acquainted, if not already, with the Sacrament of Confession is

extremely important. You are expected to take your commitment to the Church and to your study and preparation for ordination seriously.

Married candidates and those with family and work commitments, sometimes find balancing time spent with family, work and church.

Although there really is no such thing as a *part-time* deacon or priest in the Church of God. We recognise that family and secular work form an important part of living your lives out as ministers of the Gospel and so shouldn't necessarily be in conflict or exclusive to your role as a deacon or priest.

Canonical Oaths

Upon Ordination, and upon taking up any office in the Church, Oaths of Obedience to the Bishop Ordinary and Conformity to the Faith and Practice of the Anglican Catholic Church must be made.

I, **NN**, do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation; and I do solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Anglican Catholic Church.

I, **NN**, do willingly subscribe to and declare that I assent to, and will obey and abide by, the Constitution and Canons which have been, or shall be, from time to time, passed by the Holy Synod or the Provincial Synod, or the Synod of the Diocese of the United Kingdom.

I, **NN**, do swear that I will pay true and canonical obedience to you, the BISHOP ORDINARY of the Diocese of the United Kingdom, and your successors in all lawful and honest commands. So help me God.

I, **NN**, solemnly declare that I have not made, by myself or by any other person on my behalf, any payment, contract, or promise of any kind whatsoever which, to the best of my knowledge or belief, is simoniacal, touching or concerning the preferment to the **CHURCH OR MISSION OF NN** within the **DIOCESE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**, nor will I at any time hereafter perform or satisfy in whole or in part any such kind of payment, contract, or promise made by any other without my knowledge or consent.



Heavenly Father, thy Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, through thy mercy is our Shepherd. May we listen attentively to his voice as he guides us on our journey toward a life of service.

Bless our parish and our families with men who will generously respond to thy call of service as priests in thy Church. Help us to recognize the signs of thy Holy Spirit and to encourage all thy holy people whatever their vocation may be.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. **Amen.**

To discuss this matter further please feel free to telephone the Diocesan Office on 01797 321704 or email: diocesanoffice@anglicancatholic.org.uk

Or write to

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ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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