Welcome to this first official Newsletter for the Permanent Diaconate in our Diocese which we hope you will find helpful and informative. The Team aims to publish one each term, in advance of the three Diocesan Diaconal Days (DDD) and as a means of communication and community for all Deacons, students in formation, and aspirants to the Diaconate in Southwark. Your comments and suggestions for content and improvement are most welcome, and should be addressed to Deacon John Greenwood, whom the Archbishop has recently appointed as Assistant Director for On-Going Formation.

Fr Peter Edwards (Director of the Permanent Diaconate).

On-going Formation (OGF)

OGF takes place within the context of the Diocesan Diaconal Days - which gather the whole Diaconal Community of the Diocese - in which each section has its own sessions (established deacons, the recently-ordained, students in formation, and aspirants in the propaedeutic period), while having the opportunity to come together for Mass, the Office, lunch and coffee/tea breaks. General sessions and practical workshops are included in each of the DDDs, and a bookstall will provide deacon-specific, as well as general ministerial literature, often at discount.

As we move towards the start of Year C of the Sunday Lectionary, our new On-Going Formation Programme mirrors and develops that of the recently restructured Diaconal Formation Programme at Wonersh where the three synoptic gospels of the three year rolling programme relate to each of the three aspects of diaconal ministry: Matthew (Yr A) Word, Mark (Yr B) Eucharist, Luke (Yr C) Charity. The Deacon's Ministry of Charity is thus our focus for this academic year, and the recently published *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* will be explored in depth. It is expected that “deacons should be experts in the Church's social teaching” and all deacons are therefore encouraged to attend each of the DDDs, and certainly to make every effort for the annual one in their own Area of the diocese. These three Saturdays each year are mandatory for deacons during their first three years after ordination. (See the Archbishop's recent notes to all deacons.)

We are delighted that deacons are now formally invited to the diocesan priestly OGF meetings. If you have not received your 2006-7 pack please contact the diocesan OGF office.

The morning sessions of our DDDs are reciprocally open to priests of the diocese.

Dates for your Diary!

**November 2006**

4th November - 10.00am
Diocesan Diaconal Day
at Beckenham.
St Edmund's Church Hall
Village Way
Beckenham

**February 2007**

3rd February - 10.00am
Diocesan Diaconal Day
at New Malden.
St Joseph’s
Kingston Road
New Malden

**April 2007**

20th-22nd April -
Diocesan Diaconal Retreat
at Merville, near Lille, France.
28th April - Annual Renewal of Commitment to Diaconal Service at St George's Cathedral.

**May 2007**

19th May - 10.00am
Diocesan Diaconal Day
at Maidstone.
St Francis School
Queen’s Road
Maidstone
Southwark Lourdes Pilgrimage 2006

At the end of August over 170 pilgrims from across the Archdiocese of Southwark led by Archbishop Kevin McDonald gathered in Lourdes for the Annual Diocesan Pilgrimage.

We joined with several other Dioceses as part of the Catholic Association. It was a great joy this year to welcome our first Diocesan group of young helpers under the care of Frs. Geoff Munnery and Brendan McQuillan. We hope to see this group grow and develop in future years.

The beginning of the pilgrimage creates a feeling of excitement and expectancy as to what the week will bring. Some pilgrims are visiting Lourdes for the first time, unsure of what they will find and how they will feel; others are returning to greet a place which has become an old friend, to revisit those parts of the pilgrimage and the town which are now such a part of their lives.

Their joy at being able to introduce the new pilgrims to what for them is a very special place, a very special event in their year is clearly evident.

Once again they are able to spend time in this holy place, drawing close to the Lord through the gentle action of His mother, Mary.

Lourdes now greets over 6 million pilgrims each year with visitors arriving from all parts of the world, and this in itself is a great experience of the Church universal.

Each day crowds of people begin their pilgrimage activities. In many other places such crowds would tend to be off-putting, but in Lourdes they seem to be somehow different, adding yet another dimension to this wonderful place. From the moment of arrival at the hotels, a pilgrim becomes caught up in the experience that is Lourdes. And so it was for our pilgrims.

The pilgrimage for 2007 is:
Friday 24th August until Friday 31st August.

For further details please contact Fr David Hutton at lourdes.southwark@btinternet.com or telephone 020 8462 6745.

Any young person who is 17+ who would like to join the young helpers group should contact: Fr Geoff Munnery at the Catholic Youth Service - geoff@scys.org.uk or Fr Brendan McQuillan - bmcquillan@suttonlea.org.

Deacon Support Groups

These are intended to assist with homiletics, liturgy and pastoral care as well as providing fraternity and an opportunity to discuss Deanery or Diocesan business. They are the responsibility of the On-Going Formation Team.

Groups are now established for

Chatham Deanery meeting at Rainham - contact Deacon Stephen Newman.
South East London meeting at Hayes - contact Deacon John Greenwood or Deacon Michael Baldry
South West London - a new group is to meet 3 times a year at Clapham Common commencing this September - contact Deacon John Dal Din.

These meetings are open to all Permanent Deacons and no one should feel bound to the particular meeting in his area. We hope to extend these groups soon into outer Kent and offers to help establish them would be very welcome; please contact John Greenwood. Minutes of these Groups should be sent to John; among other things, they will assist in compiling the Newsletter.

How delightful it is for all to live together like brothers
Ps 133 :1
Retreats

Deacons should make a retreat “at least every other year” (Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons 70.)

Many do so privately in consultation with their Spiritual Directors. Others have been making retreats together, either deacons only or deacons and wives.

These are now also the responsibility of the On-Going Formation Team.

There will be a retreat at Merville, near Lille in France on the weekend of 20th April 2007 open to deacons and wives as well as deacons on their own.

For further details and to book please contact
Deacon Kevin Dunne.
22 Riddlesdale Ave,
Tunbridge Wells,
Kent
TN4 9AB

Tel: 01892 689800

E-mail: kevinjeandunne@btopenworld.com

A further retreat for deacons only will be arranged for September / October 2007.

Publications:

The Catholic Truth Society (CTS) is publishing one of its new series of leaflets entitled Permanent Deacons in the Parish which is concisely informative and is handy to give to parishioners raising questions about deacons, or to those who may be potential aspirants. (Packs of 25 for £4.95. CTS discounts available). CTS has also reissued (at the cheaper price of £4.50) The Permanent Diaconate with which every deacon should be familiar – containing the two documents: Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons, and the Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons.

We also now have our own Diaconate page on the diocesan web-site, see: www.rcsouthwark.co.uk

Pray for one another as Diocesan Deacons, and especially for those recently Ordained (on 10th June 2006): James Friedenthal (Lewisham), Michael Kennedy (Battersea), Sean Murphy (Beckenham), Malcolm Turner (Strood), John Sampson (New Malden); also for those in Formation: Robert Higgs (Beckenham), Michael Knight (Gillingham) Javier Elderfield (Lewisham), John-Simon Lawson (New Malden), Peter Rennie (Purley), and Martin Rogers (Strood); for others in the propaedeutic period, for five aspirants and others who may attend this October’s Selection Conference. If you know of anyone whom God may be calling to the Permanent Diaconate, please put them in touch (a.s.a.p.) with the appropriate Assistant Director or directly with me - Fr Peter Edwards (Director of the Permanent Diaconate)

Annual Renewal of Commitment to Diaconal Service

This took place for the first time in our Diocese on 10th June this year in the context of the Ordination of our five new Permanent Deacons.

It is now to be an annual occasion and next year the Renewal of Commitment will again be at St. George’s Cathedral and will be on


As well as giving us the occasion to renew our commitment as do our priests on Maundy Thursday, this will also be an opportunity to meet both formally in a meeting and informally over lunch with Archbishop Kevin.

We are very grateful to him for instituting this day which will be on a Saturday close to his own Episcopal ordination on 2nd May.
The Prophetic Ministry of Deacons in Zimbabwe

Extract from a talk given by Archbishop Ncube of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe at the International Gathering of Deacons in Munich, September 2005:

“The Catholic Church for the last hundred years, beginning with pope Leo’s encyclical Rerum Novarum has developed a compact body of social teaching based on the fact that human beings are made in the image of God and therefore they have rights which must be upheld by the Church, the State and civil society. In Zimbabwe the Catholic bishops have issued over thirty letters and exhortations against injustice over the last forty years. But to be a prophet is difficult (Jeremiah 20:7-9.) To be a prophet in this world is to accept and endure a life of unpopularity. To speak the truth and to call for justice is to attract the derision of the world. Like the ancient prophet Jeremiah, we get tired of the persecution. We suffer not only scorn, but the accusations of being old-fashioned, politically incorrect. Prophets of today run the risk of suffering exile, torture, imprisonment, the threat of death. It is no wonder we are tempted to say, with Jeremiah, ‘I will speak no more.’

If the diaconate wants to be relevant, then it has to respond to the signs of the times. The deacons must be seen to make a difference.

One of these signs of the times is the horrific AIDS crisis in Africa…I am very happy that one of my deacons, already ordained in 1979, attends every day to the dying in an AIDS hospice and to those who care for them! Another works as a chaplain in a Catholic hospital where a great number of patients are suffering from AIDS-related sickesses.

The present socio-economic situation of Zimbabwe is another sign of the times. This year (2005) countless numbers of people became homeless and jobless after the government destroyed their shelters and their informal structures of business / income.

One of my newly ordained deacons is working in a task-force that tries to assist the displaced people. He could even be arrested for that activity!

Another senior deacon is already for a long time assisting homeless people – old ones and new ones, because of this operation ‘remove trash’ (trash’ being human people!) – in a centre where he teaches them carpentry skills to find a way of surviving.

One of my new deacons was for many years National Chairman of Iustitia et Pax, the human rights arm of the Catholic Church. During his time as National Chairman this ‘Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace’, together with a group of lawyers, published a ground-breaking documentation of the genocide in Matabeleland in the 1980s.

Another man who wishes to become a deacon is serving right now as coordinator for ‘Justice and Peace’ in our diocese. I am glad to see that some of the deacons have taken up the prophetic ministry of the Church, because deacons through their ministry have a conspicuous standing in the community. They are therefore in a powerful position as a witness to human rights and as a teacher of morality.”