

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEACONS<sup>1</sup>

## NATIONAL DEACON PROFILE 2015

Rev Dr Anthony Gooley

The National Association of Deacons (NAD) in Australia conducts a biennial survey of the deacons of Australia in conjunction with the NAD Biennial Conference. The first survey was conducted in 2013. The last conference was held in 2015. This report concerns the 2015 results. Those who participated in the conference were given an opportunity to complete the survey during the conference. All deacons in Australia were sent an email from the Chair of the NAD executive, Dcn Nick Kerr, with a link to the survey to complete and return.

At the time of the survey there were 150 deacons in Australia. Ninety-nine deacons responded to the survey (66%). This is a very high return rate and provides for solid confidence in the data that is revealed. Not every respondent completed every question but the lowest response rate to any question was 90%. Only deacons incardinated into a diocese or equivalent responded. There were no responses from any deacons who are members of religious institutes (RI) with the right of incardination. It can be ascertained from the Australian Directory for Clergy that there are a small number of deacons who are members of a clerical RI.

The purpose of the survey is to gain a snapshot of the deacons in Australia and also some indications of how this ministry has been received within the Church across the country. The survey gathers information on a number of topics:

- The location and age of deacons
- Qualifications; both secular and theological
- Work history; prior to and post ordination
- Ministry appointment
- Remuneration
- Ongoing formation

It is hoped that the profile might contribute to awareness of the ministry of deacon, highlight the potential of this ministry for the Catholic dioceses of Australia and have some practical application for planning; for future needs, for promotion of the ministry, and for formation programs.

### **Year of Ordination**

Of those who responded the largest number were ordained after 2001 (88%), the next largest group were ordained between 1991-2000 (23%). Only 3% were ordained between 1980-95 and 2% prior to that. This may indicate that those more recently ordained participate in the survey but the numbers suggest that there is a growing presence of deacon within the diocese of Australia.

This in itself is remarkable given that a number of dioceses do not promote the ministry of deacon in diocesan vocations programs. More than one respondent in follow up interviews indicated that the vocations office in his diocese provides no information about the ministry of deacons in their regular promotions material or on special days such as vocations Sunday or even engages men in discernment of a diaconal vocation. Yet other respondents indicated that they have active promotions of diaconal vocations through brochures, periodic advertising and prayers on vocations Sunday. At least one of the deacons in the survey is part of a diocesan vocations team.

In some dioceses respondents reported that the promotion of diaconal vocations is separated from the work of the diocesan vocations team and is the responsibility of the Office of Deacons or equivalent. In this way vocations are fostered sometimes in a low-key manner.

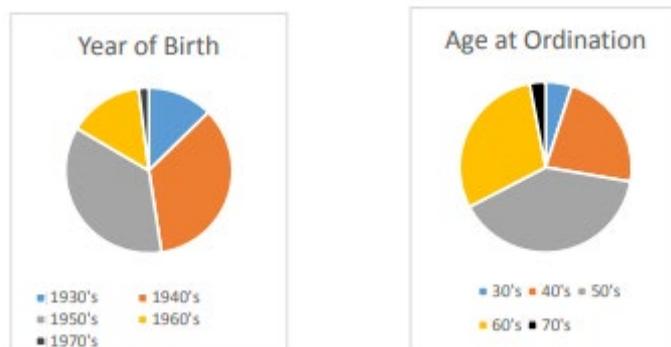
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<sup>1</sup> The report and data belongs to the National Association of Deacons (NAD). The report is prepared by Rev Dr Anthony Gooley, Head of Theological Studies, BBI - The Australian Institute of Theological Education. NAD also acknowledges the voluntary contribution of Mrs Jan Nelson who processed the raw data into Excel spreadsheets in preparation for analysis.  
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## Age at Ordination and Year of Birth

Canon law establishes that the minimum age for ordination of deacons is 25 years for those who are called to the celibate life and undertake to do so and 35 years for men who are married<sup>2</sup>. This means that men in their twenties and thirties could commence the deacon formation program. Typically, formation takes four years so that twenty-one and thirty-one would be the age at which would meet the minimum age for acceptance into a program. This has implications for promotion of diaconal vocation.

While there is not mandatory upper age limit it is recommended that a man should not be accepted into a formation program if he has passed the age of retirement. If this means the typical secular employment age of retirement, then this would be mid to late sixties. If it refers to the canonical age of retirement, then this means seventy-five years.



We can see from the charts that a large portion (70%) of men are ordained in their 50's and 60's. Of the sixty category 27% were over sixty-five years of age. Only 2% were in their seventies at the time of ordination. If the law meant typical retirement age as 65 then these are beyond that limit. Only 5% were in their thirties at the time of ordination. This data reveals that typically deacons are older at ordination than the minimum canon law allows. This may be because promotions are not aimed at younger men or it may reflect the stage of life of the deacon. In follow up interviews some deacons indicated that if they had known of the option of the diaconate as a vocation they would have commenced formation earlier in life. Others reported waiting until late thirties and early forty because career and family obligations made the possibility of pursuing a diaconal vocation less attractive or achievable at that time.

One other factor contributing to age of ordination was the amount and time of formation that was required for ordination. Some deacons, particularly in early years of the diaconate in Australia had short formation programs. In some dioceses deacons were required to complete four years of formation and could be ordained when they had completed a substantial portion of a theology degree. These continued on after ordination to complete their intellectual formation. In other dioceses deacons reported that the degree needed to be completed pre-ordination and as most undertook part time study this would take six years.

Year of birth may correlate with what is known about vocations to priesthood and religious life from other studies. The vast majority of deacons who responded were born in the 1940's and 50's (68%). This group are highly represented in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Those born in subsequent decades did not experience the boom in vocations to priesthood and religious life that began post World War II and concluded, with almost a bust in the 1970's. This vocations boom was something of a statistical aberration in the history of vocations. Perhaps those in this age category had been formed in a deeper sense of ecclesial identity and vocation that later ages did not experience firsthand. One can only speculate now and suggest further investigation in the future.

In any case the need to promote and foster vocations to the diaconate seems evident and perhaps many of the same factors which have seen diminished presbyteral and religious vocations are at play. We need to keep in mind that on a global scale the Order of Deacons is the fastest growing order in the world. It grows more than presbyteral vocations to diocesan priesthood and religious priesthood and has a faster rate of growth than many RI.

<sup>2</sup> C.I.C., can. 1031, § 2. Cf Paul VI, Ap. Lett. *Sacrum diaconatus ordinem*, II, 5; III, 12: l.c., pp. 699; 700. Can. 1031, § 3 prescribes that "Bishops' Conferences may issue a regulation which requires a later age"

## Dioceses

### DIOCESES WITH DEACONS (respondents)

Armidale	Adelaide	Townsville (non-resident)
Bathurst	Perth	Military Ordinariate
Bunbury	Port Pirie	Wollongong
Canberra-Goulburn	Cairns	Sale
Hobart	Broken Bay	Melbourne
Melkite Eparchy	Brisbane	Wagga Wagga
Parramatta	Maitland-Newcastle	
Sydney	Lismore	
Ukrainian Eparchy	Coptic Church	

There are thirty-three Catholic dioceses in Australia, consisting of five metropolitan archdioceses, twenty-two suffragan dioceses and other jurisdictions including four Eastern-rite dioceses (Eparchies; Ukrainian, Melkite, Maronite, Chaldean), the Military Ordinariate, and the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross. Some Eastern Catholic communities in Australia are too numerically small to have their own hierarchy and the clergy and laity of these communities are assigned to the jurisdiction of a Latin bishop, such is the case with Coptic Catholics in Australia.

The respondents to the survey are incardinated into twenty-three of these dioceses, the majority of which are Latin or Roman Catholic. Deacons in this survey are also found in the Melkite and Ukrainian Churches under the jurisdiction of the corresponding Eparchy. One Coptic Catholic deacon is a respondent and he is incardinated with a Latin Diocese where he is also resident. This Coptic deacon ministers in the context of the Coptic Catholic community.

The largest numbers of respondents in the survey are to be found in descending order; CanberraGoulbourn, Adelaide, Brisbane, Parramatta, Melbourne and the Military Ordinariate. Deacons who are members of Eastern Catholics Churches are 2.5% of the respondent group. The numbers here do not necessarily correspond to the actual numbers of deacons within each diocese, eparchy or other jurisdiction as we know all did not reply.

The majority of deacons remain in the dioceses in which they were ordained and incardinated. The greatest amount of movement between dioceses occurs among deacons of the Military Ordinate, some of whom were later incardinated into the territorial diocese in which they are currently resident. Only two percent of the deacons who are not members of the Military Ordinariate have been excardinated and then incardinated into a new diocese and most of these because family or work commitments took them permanently to another diocese.

There are a small number of deacons who are members of religious institutes and who would be incardinated into the institute but none of these are respondents to the survey.

## Marital Status

All but two of the respondents are married. One of these two; one is celibate and one of these is widowed. The law of the Church, both East and West is that ordained men may not re-marry after a divorce or death of a spouse.<sup>3</sup> Given that in Australia life expectancy for men (80 years) is lower than that of women (84 years), one would predict that many deacons would in fact pre-decease his wife but such a statistic does not take into account individual life risk and health factors. If we consider that most deacons were born in the decades of the 40's and 50's we could expect that a number of them will face the prospect of the death of a wife.

In the case of the death of a wife the local church (diocese) would be expected to offer spiritual and pastoral care for the deacon as he transitions to a life lived alone and without prospect of entering into a further marriage because this is normally not permitted except where young children are involved and with the permission of the Holy See. In the case of the death of a deacon, the local church should also have concern for the spiritual and pastoral care of the widow. In both cases the local church has

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<sup>3</sup> Directory 59; Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, 29b.

obligations for the financial support of deacons and wives in this situation if they have not made suitable provisions for themselves.<sup>4</sup>



### Educational attainment

Deacons were asked what **secular educational qualification** they had obtained apart from those required for ordination. All the deacons in the survey group had completed Year 12 or equivalent high school exit credential. Many of the deacons possessed multiple post high school qualifications.

University undergraduate level qualifications were held by 61% of respondents. University post-graduate qualifications were held by 30% of respondents. Doctorates were held by 5% of respondents and of these five were PhD's (a research degree) and one was a professional doctorate (course work and smaller research project).

Among those with a Bachelor degree a number of these had honours degrees; first class or second class first division.

The most recent ABS data (6227.0 - Education and Work, Australia, May 2016) indicates that 44% of the general population have a bachelor degree or higher. 82% of respondents in this survey have a bachelor degree or higher which is almost twice the national average.

A wide range of fields were represented among those with university qualifications. Some of these are: psychology, geophysics, mathematics, commerce and finance, management, education, business, engineering, social work, civil law, environmental science, computing, geology, medicine, dentistry, nursing and various aspects of policing and military duties.

Trade qualifications were held by 3.5% of respondents. Most of these would have been obtained through a combination of apprenticeship and technical college (TAFE) certificates. Some of the certificates (15%) were trade related and others were specific areas of learning related to a primary area of employment; for example, a certificate in workplace health and safety obtained by a person who had primary care for safety management.

The responses reveal that deacons are a very highly qualified sector of the Church. The ministry of deacon attracts men who are intelligent, motivated and self-disciplined enough to obtain university level qualifications, often at a high level. Other deacons bring a wealth of experience from farming, trades and the factory floor onto the life of the Church. These men have a wide variety of knowledge, skills and life experience on which the Church could draw if bishops chose to use this talent pool wisely. It would be interesting to speculate about how much individual bishops know about the highly-credentialed nature of most of their deacons and if they knew, how that might affect the way that deacons are integrated in the life of the diocese to draw on their work experience, wisdom and intelligence.

Deacons were asked to indicate the level of **theological education** they had obtained. A number of deacons had completed a Bachelor of Theology or Master's degree in theology prior to commencing formation as deacons. Most commenced study in theology during their time of formation. Several deacons had more than one level of qualification in theology.

Of the 8% who had a Certificate III or IV in theology more than half of these used this qualification as recognised prior learning (RPL) for entry into a higher qualification. For the remainder of this category this was their only theological qualification. Only 2.5% had no theological qualification. Some of those with certificates only, were ordained in the early years of restoration of diaconate and from areas where access to theological colleges was not possible. Of greater concern were the five responded without a theological qualification; one was ordained in 2003, three in 2006 and one in 2012. Some of these were from remote dioceses without a theological college but one was from a city with a theological college and university where formal studies could have been undertaken. Low level qualifications in theology or having no qualifications in theology are significant pastoral and homiletic issues. How can such men be expected to meet some of the challenges and expectations on ministry and preach effectively and

<sup>4</sup> Directory §20, §62

truthfully without proper formation? Fortunately, in these days of online education, this situation may be remedied.

Most deacons (72%) have a bachelor degree or higher. Those with a bachelor degree in theology were 45% of respondents, Masters 23% and those with a PhD in theology 3%. They are for the most part highly credentialed in theology and have a much higher rate than the general population for holding bachelor or higher degrees. The intellectual formation has been equivalent to or better than that received by most presbyters.

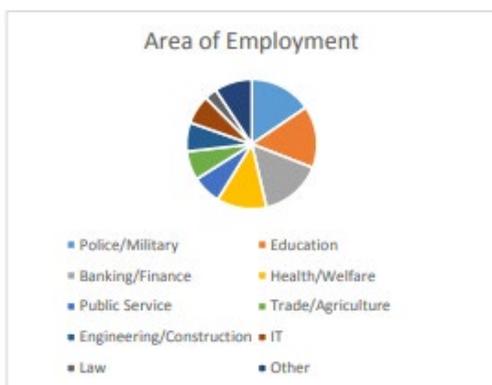
Intellectual formation is only one quarter of the formation required for ministers of the Church. The survey did not address the question of formation in the other three domains; human, spiritual and pastoral. Nor did the survey address the question of comparison with lay pastoral workers, such as pastoral associates, sacramental coordinators, campus ministers in schools and universities or those who are part of a hospital pastoral care team. One could predict, but would need to investigate to confirm, that deacons would as a group have a higher level of qualification than most lay pastoral workers considered as a group. Such data may be interesting to gather and analyse as it has implications for appointment of lay people and clergy to pastoral ministries. We have in some dioceses for example, lay campus ministers working in Catholic schools mostly without any theological or pastoral training and deacons who are highly qualified and some capable of undertaking such roles but either the Catholic school's office prohibit appointment of deacons (a number of deacons claimed such prohibitions existed) or the bishop has never considered appointing deacons to roles such as these or other pastoral placements.<sup>5</sup>

Deacons are a highly-qualified cadre of clergy and form a pool of potential pastoral ministers that bishops have at their disposal and who, as we shall see later, seem for the most part to be underutilised. As one deacon commented; "The requirements for ordination are like the equivalent of a V8 engine and the scope of appointments to ministry are like a golf cart. Do we need a V8 engine in a golf cart?" He was pointing out the asymmetry between how highly qualified for ministry the deacon often is and the kinds of things to which his ministry is often confined through no choice of his own.



The response to the question of **funding** for theological qualifications varied quite widely from diocese to diocese. In some dioceses, deacons funded their own theological education in its entirety, at a cost to their families of thousands of dollars per year. Some were able to apply for and received fee help and so had a debt to pay off on completion of their degree worth thousands of dollars. Most presbyters will not ever repay their HEC's and Fee Help because they will not meet the taxable income threshold because the vast majority of their income is paid in non-reportable fringe benefits and not cash. Most deacons will pay for the full or partial cost of their theological qualifications out of their own family income, one way or another.

Some dioceses provided funding for part of the theological studies. Some of these picked up the full cost after a man in formation had completed a portion of his studies, perhaps a third of the degree. Some only contributed some subsidies toward the cost of study such as a travel or a book allowance.



In contrast to the formation of deacons the cost of formation for men preparing for the presbyterate and for members of RI the, costs of formation are borne by the diocese or institute concerned. The pattern followed for seminarians and members of RI is typically the way with formation in the Catholic Church. The funding for deacon formation reflects a pattern more common in Baptist and similar churches where candidates fund their own way through college and then are ordained and then apply for a ministry position through competitive interview. This "Baptist" model is typically the pattern for deacons in the Catholic Church, both as to formation and ministry, as we shall see below.

<sup>5</sup> The report cannot verify if such prohibitions are in fact real or are merely perceived prohibitions.

## Employment Prior to Ordination

Deacons who responded to the survey came from a wide variety of employment background before ordination. A number of these deacons continue to work in these same areas of employment postordination.

Military and also police accounted for 17% of respondents. A number of these continue to be active in chaplaincy roles in both of these services.

Those who worked in education (17%) included those in primary, secondary and university levels. The majority of these were in leadership positions in schools; principal or assistant principals. Two in the university sector were lecturers in theology and two in the fields of science and mathematics. There were some who had roles in system level administration within a Catholic Education Office.

Among those in banking and finance (17%) several of these held senior roles in upper level management. This was also the case with most who worked in the public service (7%) who were in significant strategic and other management roles and across diverse sectors of government, both State and Federal.

Respondents who indicated some field of allied health (8%) included a number of psychologists and clinical psychologists and an orthodontist. Those in welfare (4%) included social workers, youth workers and those in either aged care or disability care.

The engineering/construction sector is comprised of those in manufacturing (1%), science (1%) and those involved in engineering and construction directly (5%). The IT sector was 5% of respondents. A number of those in IT were operating at the consultant level and many in the engineering and construction field had management roles.

Law accounted for 2.5% of respondents. There is no indication as to what branch of law or if the lawyers are solicitors, barristers or judges. I am not aware of any deacons who are sitting judges in Australia although there are a couple in the USA.

Those engaged in trades or agriculture accounted for 3% of respondents. A number of deacons (7.5%) did not fit any of the categories on offer.

Although they are a small group (5%) we consider those who were in some church ministry last. This group included men who were working as; lay pastoral associates (prior to ordination), in youth ministry, the marriage tribunal and various aspects of the diocesan curia from the finance office to parish and pastoral support units and the diocesan vocations team. Some of these continued in these ministries after ordination and curiously a small had their employment in these church ministry roles terminated after they were ordained.

### Sample of employment prior to ordination

General manager-mining	Orthodontist	Academic
Youth ministry coordinator	Clinical Psychologist	Photographer
School Principal	Senior Army Officer	Social worker
CEO Manufacturing	Lawyer	Manager SvDP
Farmer	Journalist	Global Manager-Petroleum
ITC consultant	HR Manager	Finance broker
Financial Administrator	Engineer	Environmental scientist
Theologian	Police Chaplain	Bank Manager
Military chaplain	Pastoral Associate	Draftsman
Teacher	Park Ranger	Labourer

## Current Employment Status

Respondents were asked to indicate their current employment status. This question is more complex than it may first appear. The standard categories are full time employment, for which 13% gave as their present status; part time employment, for which 22% gave as their present status; and retirement, for which 66% gave as their present status.

The response is complicated by the mixed definition of what constitutes employment and what is ministry. Employment is a secular term and is defined by the presence of a number of recognised indicators of that state. Some of these indicators include; the presence of an employment contract, lines of reporting and supervision, salary in exchange for agreed hours worked or tasks performed, conditions for termination of the contract and the likelihood that a position was obtained by merit through some competitive application process. It is easy to see that a deacon employed by a bank is an employee by applying these characteristics. This is the case with any deacons whose part or full time employment is in the secular sphere.



The situation is more complex with those who are in ecclesial ministry such as chancellor, judge or auditor in a tribunal, diocesan financial administration, pastoral support units, “pastoral associate” or similar position in which ministry is exercised for and on behalf of the Church. Clergy cannot be considered employees of a diocese. A priest is not employed by his

bishop to lead a parish community and a bishop is not an employee of the diocese. Deacons are clergy. A cleric is not an employee of his diocese because the bond of incardination and sacramental ordination establish a sacramental relationship in which the whole of life is oriented toward building up the Church for mission.<sup>6</sup> Bishops, presbyters and deacons all participate in this same essential apostolic ministry. Directory,<sup>7</sup> Therefore, deacons in these roles are not employed for these tasks they are (or should be) appointed by their bishop and not by a lay person or presbyter.<sup>8</sup> They are ultimately responsible to the bishop for the exercise of this ministry and he alone can appoint or remove the deacon from these positions.

There are deacons who are in full time “employment” or part time “employment” in the sample above who are in fact in ecclesial ministry full or part time. The complications of this situation are outlined below.

If dioceses do “employ” deacons in these roles and provide them with titles, contracts, and other indicators that they are employed just as a lay person is employed then this situation has deep implications. The first implication is that it may establish, by proving just these kinds of indicators of employer-employee relationship in civil law, that all clergy are employees and therefore are subject to the same industrial and taxation laws as apply to all other employees. A second implication is that clergy could lose their tax status as religious practitioners in the taxation regulations and all the nonreportable fringe benefits may become reportable, which would reduce the income of presbyters and increase the cost of “employing” them. Presently presbyters receive only a small portion of income as cash, and this is below the tax threshold and they receive the bulk of their remuneration as non-reportable (not taxable) which provides a net income of around \$75,000 or the equivalent of around \$120-140,000 dollars in gross income.<sup>9</sup> Dioceses can provide all of this income quite cheaply because most of the income is a non-reportable fringe benefit according to Australian taxation regulations.

<sup>6</sup> Directory §2 and CIC, can §1034

<sup>7</sup> Joint Introduction §1, and CCC n. 1536

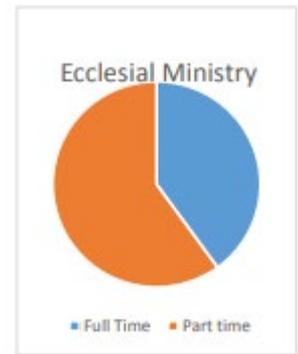
<sup>8</sup> Directory §8

<sup>9</sup> The cash allowance for presbyters is only a fraction of their total income for sustentation. Income also includes housekeeping allowances, provision of a car, fuel, motor vehicle service, health insurance, additional health care payments to cover gaps, overseas travel, donations for weddings and funerals and a great many other things.

Conversely there are significant financial advantages for a diocese from not regarding deacons in these positions as employees. Because deacons are clergy, a diocese can provide a very good remuneration package for a deacon, as they do for presbyters, at considerably lower cost than employing a lay person or treating a deacon as a lay person, for the purposes of employment/appointment to an ecclesial ministry.

## Ecclesial Ministry

The response to the questions on ecclesial ministry revealed some interesting data. Those who indicated that they were in full time ecclesial ministry constituted 40% of the respondents and those in part time 60%. Full time ecclesiastical ministry included those who reported they were working within the diocesan curia in some capacity as well as those who were theologians, teaching in either universities or seminaries. When the responses were interrogated further one could see that a small number of those who were self-described as being in full time ministry had brought together a number of voluntary roles that added up to more or less a full week's ministry. For example, a deacon worked as a volunteer with a hospital, an aged care facility in pastoral care roles on three days and had a paid two-day role in campus ministry at a university. This deacon and others similarly described themselves as in full time ministry. So, we must recognise that full time does not necessarily indicate a deacon is appointed to (or employed by) a diocese in a full time ecclesial ministry.



Further investigation of the data reveals that a large number of those who also describe themselves as retired are only **retired** from secular employment. In fact, only two deacons indicated that they were retired from ecclesial ministry. Some of those in full time and part time ecclesial ministry are retired from secular work. Many are investing a large number of hours to ministry at a time when many men of similar age, including some presbyters, are really looking for full time lifestyle of fishing and golf. Their dedication and contribution to a range of ministries is all the more commendable for this. It seems many have found a second vocation after they have completed the secular vocation of their career. The shadow side of this situation is that one does not wish to risk the perception that being a deacon is a hobby one takes up after retirement. This is why the age profile mentioned above, is so critical for avoiding this perception, if it is in fact a potential danger.

**Part time ecclesial ministry** was largely but not exclusively tied to parish ministry (65%). Only some of the respondents were appointed to other ecclesial ministry (35%) outside of parish. Those in parish indicated that their primary ministry was that of assisting at Mass, some baptisms, some weddings and some funerals. While all of this may be of great assistance to the People of God and help busy presbyters with some of the burden of parochial life, it is a rather restricted view of the full capacity of the ministry of deacon to enrich the local church (diocese). Some deacons indicated in interviews that sometimes presbyters and other were critical of deacons because they believed deacons only wanted to do the "liturgical stuff", when in fact the deacon very much wanted to exercise the full range of his ministry; including meaningful expressions of the ministry of word and pastoral ministry, but such opportunities were not made available to him. It would seem the ministry of deacon is somewhat under-utilised and it would be interesting to investigate how many deacons would be happy to or desire to seek full time ecclesial ministry in order to exercise the full scope of diaconal ministry.

There are a number of deacons who seem to have chosen part time employment in order to engage in part time ministry. Interviews suggest that a number shifted to part time work after ordination to facilitate this. Their part time secular employment enables them to earn a living and support their families and enable more ecclesial ministry. In effect, they and their families are subsidising ecclesial ministry. A large number (46%) of those who indicated that they were part time employed also indicated they were in part time ecclesial ministry other than their parish ministry. This additional ministry was in addition to this.

Canon law and the Directory 1998 provide very clear rules on the **remuneration** and also for **reimbursement** of expenses incurred in the course of ministry for all clergy and the Directory outlines these for deacons in particular.<sup>10</sup> The survey asked about remuneration but not about reimbursements for expenses. All clergy may freely choose not to receive the remuneration and reimbursements to

<sup>10</sup> Directory 15-20

which they are entitled and for which the church is obliged to provide. Essentially the law is the same for all clergy, with a derogation in place to allow deacons to have income from secular employment. Those deacons involved in part time or full time ecclesial ministry are therefore entitled to remuneration in accordance with the provisions of the law itself.



Some dioceses seem to believe or imply that a condition of entry into a formation program is that a potential deacon (but not a potential presbyters) must be forced to give up the right to remuneration and reimbursements. Such provisions seem contrary to the law and perhaps need to be tested by appeal to a tribunal or the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts. In any case the situation as it is revealed in the survey results suggested the law may not be applied correctly.

Remuneration, either as a salary (as per an employee) or as remuneration (as per a cleric) was reported by only 43% of deacons who report that they were in full time ecclesial ministry. Of those who were in part time ecclesial ministry 52% reported that they received some remuneration. We did not ask about the quantum. Some follow up interviews indicated a range of patterns were in operation. In some dioceses deacons were remunerated in exactly in the same manner as the presbyters from a common clergy sustentation fund, with access to the clergy health scheme, car purchasing arrangements, long service and sabbatical leave and other benefits. In these cases, sometimes adjustments were made to the cash component which was sometime a little higher, perhaps \$25-30,000 rather than the \$15-17,000 given to presbyters. In other dioceses, almost the extreme opposite was in operation. Deacons were excluded from the clergy remuneration funds, health fund and car purchasing plan and any other benefits to clergy. One diocese even change the name of their clergy remuneration fund and clergy health care fund to priests funds so as to make the exclusion clear, although transitional deacons in that diocese were able to partake of all elements of these priests' funds.

A small number of deacons, both in part time and full time ecclesial ministry, indicated that they were paid as employees of the diocese and treated as employees regarding their ministry, even if that ministry was as a chaplain or working in the diocesan curia. Ironically their remuneration as a lay employee is a more expensive option for the diocese, which could have made considerable savings by appointing the deacon and remunerating him as a cleric, which he is. We noted the reasons for this above.

As with the formation process, so it is to some extent with ministry, that families are subsidising the ministry of the local church. They may be doing this by reducing family income when a deacon takes up part time work to fund his ministry or in 18% of cases where the wife is the sole income earner allowing the deacon to participate in full time or part time ecclesial ministry without remuneration and sometimes without reimbursements. One deacon who had once had a paid role as a pastoral associate had that position terminated when he was ordained because the presbyter said this was allocated to a lay person. He sought to assist in ministry in a neighbouring parish where his ministry was welcomed but restricted to assisting at Mass some Sundays, and to baptisms, weddings and funerals, of which the parish had many because of the concentration of nursing homes in the area. The parish covered a wide area. He was permitted to keep he "stole fees" for these services but offered no remuneration or reimbursements connected with his ministry. In his parish, they would regularly have seminarians on placement, who would receive a living allowance, a fuel card for his vehicle and of course accommodation in the presbytery. The seminarians mostly followed the presbyter around to observe and do some on the job learning and although they did not exercise any ministry they received some income and reimbursements as a lay person, while the deacon received nothing.

Another aspect of canon law also reinforced clearly in the Directory 1998 concerns **appointment processes**.<sup>11</sup> Clergy are only appointed by their bishop, this includes deacons.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, deacons cannot be appointed to an ecclesial ministry by a presbyter or a lay person. Often a bishop will appoint presbyters following advice and consultation with a clergy appointments board or by directly asking a presbyter to accept an appointment. He can do this same thing with deacons.

<sup>11</sup> Directory §8

<sup>12</sup> Directory §40, CIC, canon 157

Our survey reveals that only 16% reported that they had been appointed to their ministry by their bishop. This includes the large number of those above for whom their only appointment is to a parish for liturgical and sacramental ministry. That means 84% were never appointed to their ministry by their bishop or once they had some ministry he did not then confirm it with a letter/deed of appointment. Of those in some form of ecclesial ministry 34% applied for the position that had been advertised, presumably in competition with lay people. Most deacons (66%) after their ordination seemed to have negotiated some kind of hand-shake deal with their local presbyter as to his parish ministry and then carved out some other ecclesial ministry by either creating opportunities for himself or learning about volunteer options within some Catholic organisations such as St Vincent De Paul, Catholic Mission or Caritas.

Given the very haphazard nature of finding an ecclesial ministry it is not surprising that the full potential of the ministry of deacon is not utilised. Complicating the picture are reports from some deacons that some bishops seem to have made a policy of not appointing deacons to any ministry, other than parish. Bishops have no objection to deacons applying for ecclesial positions that may be advertised from time to time, such as pastoral associate or as part of a chaplaincy team in a hospital or police force in competition with lay applicants. Others have been told that deacons will not be appointed to positions for which they apply alongside of lay people in a diocese, because bishops do not want to be seen to be appointing more clerics to positions and deacons in particular. One deacon received informal feedback from an application for a pastoral care role in a Catholic hospital operated by a RI that his application had not been considered because he was a deacon.

There is also the special (and hopefully rare) case where a bishop is unable to appoint a presbyter to a parish because of an acute shortage of presbyters.<sup>13</sup> In which case, if a deacon is available (that is also not just a deacon but actually available) he must appoint a deacon and not a lay person. The imperative is underlined because it is made abundantly clear in the code itself, in the Directory 1998 (§41) and the document; Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the nonordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priest (Article 4 §1,b) interpreting this canon adopted in *forma specifica* by St John Paul II, (which makes the interpretation part of the law itself) that preference must be given to a deacon. This should be obvious from the nature of the sacrament itself but this is not always the case. There are other solid theological reasons for this preference that we will not consider here. We should note another imperative and that is; as soon as a presbyter becomes available the bishop must appoint one. A parish is a portion of the local church which is a Eucharistic communion gathered around its bishop and so therefore a parish should be a place where, if possible, Eucharist is celebrated.<sup>14</sup>

A very small number of deacons (1.8%) in the survey are appointed under this canon (517) as pastoral leaders of a parish community. Evidence would suggest that even if those who did not respond to the survey were included that number would not rise much; nor should it. Deacons are not primarily there to fill a shortage in presbyters. Those that are appointed under this canon do come from large and remote dioceses where there are very few presbyters and where parishes and other communities spread over a wide geographic region.

We mentioned above that this preference for the ordained minister and the sacrament of ordination and its real effects are not always respected or understood in cases where a bishop is unable to appoint a presbyter to the pastoral care of a parish. In one diocese where clarification on the law was asked for and given about canon 517, the bishop decided to advertise the vacancy and call for interested persons to apply. The diocese in question had several deacons, some of whom applied, and the bishop appointed a lay woman. The appointment was made even knowing that the law and good theology required a deacon be appointed.

A last aspect to be considered regarding ecclesial ministry is terminology. Some ecclesial ministries which deacons exercise come with designated titles such as; chancellor, tribunal judge, tribunal auditor, diocesan economist (Finance Director). In other areas, the language is ambiguous. Some deacons working in the pastoral care team of a hospital are called chaplains and others are not. The terms pastoral associate refers to a lay person and a deacon exercising this role in a parish is simply called a deacon as he is exercising his ordinary ministry as deacon, whereas a pastoral associate is an extraordinary ministry, assisting the presbyter in his pastoral care of the parish. A catechist is a lay

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<sup>13</sup> CIC can 517§ 2

<sup>14</sup> Gooley, A. (2017) Preference for the Ordained in Pastoral and Liturgical Leadership. *The Canonist*. Vol 8/1; 110-123

person who has been installed and authorised as a catechist by the bishop. All clergy catechise as part of their ordinary ministry and so presbyters and deacons cannot be called catechists. It is advisable to avoid titles for deacons which are taken ordinarily from those applied to lay people so as not to confuse roles or make it seem like deacons are lay people with a particular interest in church ministry as the Directory suggests.<sup>15</sup> Some Ecclesial Ministries of Deacons Army Chaplain Campus Minister (University) Pastoral Associate Campus Minister (School) Tribunal Judge Director Child Safety Financial Administrator Police Chaplain Prison Chaplain Pastoral Associate Theologian Pastoral Assistant Pastoral Leader of an Ethnic Community Parish deacon

#### Some Ecclesial Ministries of Deacons

Army Chaplain	Campus Minister (University)
Pastoral Associate	Campus Minister (School)
Tribunal Judge	Director Child Safety
Financial Administrator	Police Chaplain
Prison Chaplain	Pastoral Associate
Theologian	Pastoral Assistant
Pastoral Leader of an Ethnic Community	Parish deacon

### Retreats and Ongoing Formation

Canon law obliges clerics to make an annual retreat and to participate in ongoing formation in the four domains of formation: intellectual, spiritual, pastoral and human.<sup>16</sup> The vast majority of deacons (85%) participate in an annual retreat. Interviews suggest these are done in a variety of ways. Some deacons have private retreats with quiet stays in a monastery or similar, some have directed retreats and some participate in preached retreats. A number participate in the annual clergy retreats alongside of presbyters. In some dioceses, the deacons as a group have a retreat with or without wives included. Interviews reveal that in some dioceses the office of deacons or similar contributes some money toward the costs of annual retreats and some parishes pay for the deacon to have a retreat. In other places, the deacon bears the full cost of retreats.

Participation in **ongoing formation** is extremely high (87%). It would be interesting to see what the figures are, if they are available for presbyters. One might suggest that deacons would be predicted to have higher rates of participation in ongoing formation compared to presbyters, although we cannot know without the figures. The expectation is founded on a number of characteristics that we know about deacons from our sample. The first is that they have a much higher rate of university qualifications than the general population. The second is that many of them have multiple qualifications. Finally, the vast majority have come from areas of professional life where ongoing formation or professional development is either mandatory or highly expected. Taken together these characteristics would suggest that they are highly disposed toward the need for and value of ongoing formation.

### Concluding remarks

The survey of 2015 had a very high participation rate which gives confidence in the data. The picture one gains is of a highly educated and well formed group of ministers in the Church. There are few exceptions to the high level of theological formation. The group of deacons, though aging, is also growing in number and for the most part very active in ministry. Most deacons are not financially supported by a diocese or parish or other entity and many rely on their own part time income and some only on the income of their wife and they contribute time and talent to ministry in the Church. Many are restricted, not through their own choice, to sacramental and liturgical ministries at a parish level. Deacons seem to have an enormous amount of untapped pastoral potential even though dioceses have a great deal of pastoral need. The survey would seem to indicate that reception of the ministry of deacon into the church has been patchy and even confused, without clear direction. Although the theological, political and social factors which may contribute to this confusion were not explored one can tell from some of the comments that the ministry of deacon seems not to be well understood by bishops and presbyters or lay people. The data suggests deacons are contributing to the life of the local church

<sup>15</sup> Directory 30-40

<sup>16</sup> CIC, canon 276, § 2 and Directory 56, 63, 70, 82

and would wish to and be able to do much more, given the opportunity. One may speculate to what extent the concern expressed by the Congregation for Clergy about appointment of deacons is being realised; “In every case it is important, however, that deacons fully exercise their ministry, in preaching, in the liturgy and in charity to the extent that circumstances permit. They should not be relegated to marginal duties, be made merely to act as substitutes, nor discharge duties normally entrusted to non-ordained members of the faithful. Only in this way will the true identity of permanent deacons as ministers of Christ become apparent and the impression avoided that deacons are simply lay people particularly involved in the life of the Church.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Directory 40