

Notes for the Presentation of:

William T. Ditewig, "The Deacon as a Voice of Lament and Link to Thanksgiving and Justice"
Liturgical Ministry 13(2004)23-31.

Preliminary Note: This article is written from an entirely Roman Catholic perspective and the history discussed is of the revival of the permanent diaconate in the Roman tradition. The Lutheran and Anglican experiences are not discussed.

A. PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

1. To explore the link between lament and thanksgiving in the Eucharistic celebration in the light of a revived diaconate. P. 23.
2. To explore the role of the deacon as:
 - a. Leader of the community's lament
 - b. Moving the community to thanksgiving and praise
 - c. Challenging the community to live out the implications of lament and praise in the world.

B. STRUCTURE OF THE ARTICLE: THREE PARTS

1. Highlights of modern history of the diaconate {*Historical frame*}
2. Role of Vatican II in defining modern diaconate {*Historical frame*}
3. New way of thinking about the diaconate as linking lament and thanksgiving {*Theological Exploration*}

C. ROOTS OF THE CONTEMPORARY RENEWAL OF PERMANENT DIACONATE ("B. 1" Above)

1. The German Experience Prior to WW II
 - a. 1840 – Passavant letter: Renewed diaconate as sign of expanded ordained ministry.
 - b. ***Deutscher Caritas Verband***: development of charity as universal calling in the church (1934) [Liturgical commissioning for those involved in works of charity]

Three elements in G. Von Mann's proposal:

1. Link between worship and charity
 2. Charity as constitutive element of the church
 3. Official designation/liturgical commissioning of those acting as mediators of charity in the church's name.
- c. Schutz's comparison of deacons with lay workers involved in social action.
 1. Advantages of ordained deacons
 - a. Ties mission of charity to the bishop
 - b. Only by means of deacons could the church's charitable work

survive the Third Reich

2. Schutz's proposal
 - a. Deacons form ascetical community

 - b. Deacons are to possess professional competence in liturgy, charity and catechesis
 - c. Deacons linked to church through ordination by bishop

2. A Summary of Conclusions Reached by the end of WWII.

- a. Charitable service *linked to ministries of word and sacrament is a constitutive element of the church.*
- b. As constitutive, diaconal should be a part of the church's sacramental life
- c. This diaconal ministry, therefore, flows **from** the bishop as symbol of unity.
4. The function of the deacon is to integrate, publically and permanently, service worship and witness.

JON GOMAN'S NOTE:

These four points are exceptionally important. Sacraments present to the church what the church is (point 1). If the diaconate represents an aspect of the church's being, its creation and maintenance is sacramental (point 2). Therefore, the living symbol of the church's unity (note that it's ontological unity, not just political) should create the diaconal symbol. Note that this takes the relation between bishop and deacon outside the realm of power politics and places it on the much more Christian foundation as a presentation of meaning and being (point 3). Finally, the purpose of the deacon is to witness to what the church is, not necessarily to perform specific functions (point 4).

In other words, in inquiring about diaconal ministries, is our concept of service broad enough? Or do we tend to confine diaconal ministry to social service? For instance, in terms of the diaconal ordination vows, "to interpret to the church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world" might include interpreting the need, concern and hope for improved education, even among those with sufficient financial means to afford currently available education. To teach may be as diaconal as work in a soup kitchen.

C. 2. Dachau and Post-War Developments

- a. Emergence of the idea of the diaconate as reforming the church in order to prevent the tragedies of 1st half of 20th century.
- b. Recovery of a sense of the church's servant ministry and, especially, of the need for a public sign of that ministry.
- c. Wilhelm Schamoni, S.J. and Otto Pies, S.J. write about the need for the diaconate.
 1. Not a need for more ordained ministers, but for the re-presentation of

Christ the servant.

2. The ministry of deacons is not subordinate to that of priests, but is a ministry to priests as well as laity.

JON GOMAN NOTE: The Christ who came to serve, serves the church and her representatives as well as the outside world. Priests need to have the sacrament of the church as servant presented to them as much as the laity do.

d. Hannes Kramer forms the first “diaconal circle” in 1951. The question of the diaconate begins to come to the attention of the Roman Catholic Church outside of Germany.

e. Events Immediately Preceding Vatican II

1. Pius XII opens the possibility of an ordained permanent diaconate in an address of Oct. 5, 1957.
2. Diaconate Circles open an office in Rome to serve a resource provider for Council Fathers interested in the diaconate.
3. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler edit *Diakonia in Christo: Uber die Erneuerung des Diakonates* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962). Made available to the bishops at Vatican II.

JON GOMAN NOTE: Note the considerable academic reflection which preceded and accompanied political action. Rahner and Vorgrimler were among the best Roman Catholic theologians of the 20th century. The “Diaconal Circles” in German and France (Lyons) has objectives simiolar to, on a more high powered level, the discussion of the Advent Group. Political action was preceded by thorough scholarly preparation .

3. Vatican II

A. Initial responses to proposal for renewed permanent diaconate were negative

B. Positive responses

1. Doepfner of Munich

- a. If diaconal service is present in the church’s life it will be strenghened by encouraging its sacramental expression.
- b. Clerical celibacy ought to be subordinate to service and therefore no issue for a restored diaconate.

2. Ricketts (Latin America)

- a. Purpose of diaconate is to increase lay ministry
- b. Lay ministry not an end in itself

3. Cardinal Suenens (Key intervention)

- a. Ministry’s of service to the poor can be done by laity, but this is no argument against a restored diaconate.
- b. It is not a question of who can do what, but of how the church qcts to express the fullness of God’s grace. The diaconate is needed for the expression of the fullness of grace.

JON GOMAN NOTE: In what follows I have compressed Ditewig's more complex statement of Suenens argument into a couple of sentences. Note that Cardinal Suenens takes the argument that the diaconate strengthens the church's ministry of service and places it in the world of worship, not just the world of social work. Christian life consists of worship in church in order that service (worship) in the world may happen. The deacon in the liturgy reminds the rest of the church (priests + laity) of the centrality of service as worship outside of worship. The symbolic worship of the church becomes banal without the reality of worship by service and the link which demonstrates their unity.

Compressed Suenens: In thinking about the diaconate, the trick is to escape from merely functional definitions and understandings. Priests are priests because of what they mean to and for the church. Deacons are deacons for the same reason. We need to articulate what the deacon as human being means to the church, not just what they do for this or that program. (This is why the insight of Suenens is key: the deacon's presence gives the church a fuller meaning.)

C. Summary of Progress in Understanding the Diaconate Made at Vatican II

1. The entire church is diaconal
2. The deacon is a living symbol of an aspect of the church's nature

D. THE DIACONATE AS A RADICALLY DISTINCT ORDER (SHIFT FROM HISTORY TO THEORY/PHILOSOPHY)

1. In asserting the uniqueness of the diaconate, it's important not to get lost in what deacons can or cannot do that other groups within the church can or cannot do (presbyters and laity). The diaconate is not "a partial exercise of someone else's ministry."
2. The deacon is to be three things at once: at work in the world, a teacher of the word and active in liturgy. It is the unity of these things to which the deacon is witness.
3. "Deacons are signs of the presence of a broken-yet-risen Christ in a broken but redeemed world."
 1. Therefore deacons give voice to the lament of the world: pain, confusion, lack of meaning. They proclaim the love of God within and to that world.

JON GOMAN NOTE:

The work of the deacon, understood this way, is witness, not solution. There is a difference between saying that the deacon witnesses to the love of God for creation and that the deacon is to act as a Christ surrogate in solving the world's problems. The world's problems continue after the death and resurrection of Jesus and they will continue after any act of diaconal ministry.

The deacon's presence is witness in service, teaching and in worship, thus the diaconate ties the

three areas together. This is one reason why the nature of diaconal ministry is so hard to articulate – we are not used to thinking synthetically as if what is built is synthesis is a whole and single thing – Cartesian analysis still rules the roost. Between assuming that the results of analysis are more real than what is analyzed and the tendency to see concrete actions as more real than symbols the nature of diaconal ministry runs counter to our cultural assumptions.

2. Foot washing as a link between apostolic ministry of the deacon and the kenotic servanthood of Jesus. Kenosis as a model of ministry. Note the important idea of hypodeigma, as encouragement to an exemplary death.

Therefore, the deacon is not tied to specific ministry but to an imitation of the self-giving of Jesus.

D. Paragraph 1, right hand column p. 29, is not clear to me, probably because it has to do with the role of the bishop in relation to the deacon. Apparently, Ditewig understands the bishop as expressing (not possessing, because one cannot possess a ministry which belongs to Christ!) the fullness of apostolic ministry as found in the Eucharist. This is quite Anglican and meshes with the idea that the bishop is the chief eucharistic officer of a diocese and priests celebrate as extensions of the bishop. (Whether or not this is the way bishops and priests understand the relation is another question.) This asserts the radically kenotic nature of the diaconate.

JON GOMAN'S NOTE: This makes the relation between priesthood and diaconate unclear. Is not the Episcopate (or the presbyterate, for that matter) a reminder of how Jesus poured himself out for others?

4. PRACTICAL STUFF – EXECUTING THE MINISTRY

A. Danger of coopting deacons into other ministries. For Roman Catholics in North America the shortage of priests puts pressure on deacons to be seen as mini or substitute priests. The diaconate must be precisely defined and accurately understood to resist this tendency to cooption into other orders

B. Deacons “are ordained precisely to serve at the margins, where people are most at risk, where senseless violence continues to rule, where religion is an alien reality . . .”

JON GOMAN NOTE: This understanding of the diaconate means that deacons are always “on pilgrimage” either leading the Christian people to the world, or leading them back to the church to give their lament over the incompleteness of salvation.

As for A above, note that because all ordained ministry finds its origin in the ministry of all the baptized there will be large areas of overlap in what different ministers actually do growing out of the baptismal ministries all Christians share. Care must be taken not to limit the ministries of any actual person to the elements his or her order symbolizes.

C. The relation between bishop and deacon is to be determined by the deacon's unique ministry. The deacon can only serve the bishop diaconally, that is, in bringing to the bishop the needs, concerns of the world and taking the response of the bishop to the world. The deacon does not take a vow of absolute obedience to the bishop, but of diaconal obedience.