

Coloma Catholic Life.

Liturgical Year

Pentecost Sunday; Liturgical colour – red
9th week of Ordinary time – liturgical colour - green

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for May For Deacons

We pray that deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and to the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church.

Video link: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-05/pope-francis-prayer-intention-may-2020-permanent-deacons.html>

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for June

The Way of the Heart

We pray that all those who suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus.

Pope Francis Tweet

"Come, Holy Spirit: you are harmony; make us builders of unity. You always give us yourself; grant us the courage to go out of ourselves, to love and help each other, in order to become one family. Amen."

Interview with Deacon Paul Mannings, Archdiocese of Liverpool, to mark the end of the month dedicated by Pope Francis to prayer for Deacons



Tell me a little about yourself.

My name is Paul Mannings, I'm Deacon of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. I'm actually based in Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. For the simple reason most of my life has been spent within that parish, so it seemed the logical thing to happen. As Deacons, we are to serve anywhere, my ministry has tended to be in the Cathedral parish. My

paid job is one of the archdiocesan adviser teams, members of the team for Religious Education; it's also seen as part of my diaconal role, so you have the parish ministry and full-time professional role. The professional role I was in before I was ordained.

Do you find there's a bit of a conflict between the two?

Absolutely not because diaconate is all about service to people, well we can do that in so many different ways and it suits me to actually weave my ministry within my whole life. I'm very lucky to be able to do that, so there's no conflict of interest at all.

Before you were an adviser, were you in the teaching profession?

I was in the teaching profession before that. I have a breadth of experience in teaching. I taught for four years in Primary schools, then I went into Secondary and spent most of my career in Secondary, private sector, non-maintained sector, state sector with some focus on special education as well. I had something like 24 years classroom experience.

So how long have you been a Deacon?

Since 2008, so I'm into my twelfth year.

Why did you become a Deacon? Aren't Deacons chosen to do it, perhaps recommended by a Parish Priest?

I'd like to humbly say, maybe God had a hand in it. Really, it's something I had considered over quite a few years and for various reasons didn't ignore the call, didn't ignore it all, just put it there as a possibility. When the time was right, by which I mean when I know I could devote as much time to the needs of other people that I could, I then accepted that ministry. But all through my discernment, all the official four years of it, I wasn't going to come out the other end necessarily as a Deacon, I was going to decide, is this for me? Is this the route that I'm going on? Are my reasons right? Are my motives right? Is there anything in this for me? Because, frankly, if there was, I wouldn't have carried on.

For discernment, I should have said formation. Formation took four years and was part-time. I was doing that while I was maintaining a full-time job as well. It took up a lot of study time and times when the brethren were all together in formation, retreat opportunities, extraneous duties and it was fairly true to say that any work for the diocese had to take second place, because while we are in formation, clearly they want to make sure we are suitable, that we feel suitable and not to overburden us with extra parish activities, though most of us did some.

During formation what sorts of things did you have to do?

It varies very much for each individual Deacon. I'm lucky that I'm able to have my qualifications behind me. One or two others did basic courses in theology or scripture. But all together we actually studied the whole Theology of a Deacon; the whole theology of what it means to be a deacon in terms of ministry at the altar, ministry of God's word and ministry in charity, which is the beautiful threefold spirit of service that we have to take on. Our work is rooted in being the Archbishop's men; we are directly accountable to him and will go to wherever the need is, according to what he feels, according to his own director of the diaconate. We are also to build up or enrich the library we had at home concerning the deacon in the modern world; how to practically carry out our ministry. When I actually got within shouting distance of being ordained, anyone who asked what presents I might like, I said "*National Book Tokens please,*" so I could extend that library that I had! We were also encouraged to lean on our own family experiences and how that's going to help; the understanding of the daily life of earning a living and carrying out a ministry. It's interesting,

because when we were ordained there was a period of extended formation, induction if you like, for a lot of the following year. However, your formation is *never* finished, ever!

Being controversial, you mentioned about being 'men for the Archbishop', given that in the New Testament there were deaconesses, do you think that's a role women ought to be able to fulfil within the Church, as it was part of the early church as well?

I think we can take encouragement from the fact the Holy Father, a couple of years ago, opened up a commission to explore the possibility of women being ordained as deacon. Basically, I at a personal level, have no issues with whoever I am told, whoever is to be ordained, will be ordained, whether that person be man or woman. I do what I'm told! If asked personally how I felt, I have no issues whatsoever.



Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool

You mentioned single men being deacons, I know there are two types of deacon – permanent and transitory. I always understood permanent deacons were married, is that not the case?

It isn't the case. We need to be careful about the use of the phrase 'permanent deacon.' A deacon is a deacon. A deacon is ordained deacon. Within that there are two routes, it'll be transient, obviously going on to priesthood or permanent in that we will actually stay there. The actual transient or permanent is a *descriptor of the type* of diaconate we've taken up, but we're all deacons. It's essential to clarify that role; it's one of the major orders. Obviously, deacon, priest, bishop being the three hierarchical ranks within the Church. Being single, if that person is single at the point of ordination to the diaconate, that person will remain single. I've been married for forty-two years now; if my wife pre-deceased me, though there's very little chance of that! All her family live on forever, ours don't! If that did happen, I'm not allowed to re-marry. Dependent on age, some might say to the Bishop, I'm widowed now, could I be considered for ordination to the priesthood? It's all measured on the wish of that Bishop, it's not an automatic assumption. Ordination is indelible, once ordained, we're

ordained. Active ministry expires for everybody, officially, at seventy-five, but at every level, with the permission of the Bishop, we can carry on in ministry and it's looked at every year.

As a Deacon, what do you actually do?

A very wise priest once said to me *"this is not your holy hobby! This is not your Sunday thing! This is your life, so what you need to concentrate on is fulfilling your diaconal duty every day of your life. So that on a Sunday afternoon, rather than fitting everything in, you just might have time to be with your family and to spend time with them as well. Balance it!"*

We actually assist with the parish sacramental preparation. In the Cathedral parish there are several of us, priests and deacons and all of us co-ordinate one of the sacramental routes. It might be baptism, eucharist or RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). We may co-ordinate that group, but we all take a role in assisting each other within those groups. My job is the co-ordination of RCIA, those 18+ who seek to consider full communion with the Church. We meet, we discern, we have a great time. We also meet with our parents and young people for Holy Communion and Reconciliation preparation as well. I'm broadly involved with marriage preparation within the Cathedral parish. I serve as a governor at our local school, which is attached to the Cathedral. I'm very much involved in parish visiting – I'm talking about the housebound; I'm talking about some assistance at hospital. I also am involved with the Guild of Guides. Not the girl guides, but those who welcome visitors to the Cathedral, we take people on guided tours. For many years, before I was ordained, I looked after that group of people. To be honest with you, I gently decided that once I was ordained, I should still carry on with that ministry, because what could be more diaconate than welcoming the stranger, welcome the visitor, sitting at the desk saying *"this is our Cathedral, we're glad you're passing through"*. That's diaconate. There's a whole range of other interconnectedness, but that is the big thrust of the work I do within the diocese. There are also several diocesan commissions that I'm on in my role as deacon and education, these involve vocations in general; the RCIA, our youth. There's plenty to do!

I waited until my son was older and able to understand what I was taking on. For me, it suited me to wait. I've got to say there are deacons, their wives, their children who are all in it together. The same as my wife is in it with me, together. My wife is clear she is not the deacon's wife, she is a person in her own right, who whatever she does in the church, she does it because *she* wants to do it! She's not an appendage to me, she's a great support and that's what she wants to be. We found that in married life it's a tremendous support. When I was talking to my wife about how much time it was going to involve me being out and about, a broad smile came on her face, she said *bring it on!"* I don't want people to say at my funeral *"your dad did this or that"* and they reply, *"it's a pity we never saw him!"* Family comes first, events of family come first. If it became necessary to take time off active ministry for the benefit of my health or the health of somebody in my family, well then, you'd do it! That's how it all fits in; it's a crafted art that we all acquire over time and the thing is there are no two deacons the same, each of us fit it in around our own commitments.

That leads on to the next two questions – what is the biggest challenge being a deacon? And what is the greatest pleasure you get from being a deacon?

Let's deal with the challenges first! It's people's total misunderstanding of who we are! That's something I was warned about and I said, *"if you can't stand the heat, don't go in the kitchen, because you're going to get it all the time!"* There's a kind of a notion that we're

some kind of a half priest. Well, we're not anything priest! We're a vocation in our own right. My vocation was for marriage and diaconate; in my case it wasn't for priesthood. I always tell people who I am, what I can do and what I can't do that's important! I once went to a house to visit a gentleman and I said I'm a Deacon at the Cathedral, *"Oh! So, you're not a real priest then! So I said "I'm not an anything priest, I'm a Deacon." "Oh! In that case could you send me a proper priest!"* I went back to the Dean and said, "he wants a proper priest!" I took it better than the Dean, he was furious, but we handled it well.

Also, people have to realise, we're not Father's little helpers. We've got to be very careful about that, we're not some kind of parish runner. We can be part of the parish running team, we are a vocation route. It's going to be a long time; the diaconate has always been there, but the restoration of the diaconate didn't come about until the 1970s. When you consider that's not a long time. In many dioceses there is misunderstanding of who we are and what we are. That's the biggest challenge.

What's the highlight? If you took me back to 2008, I'd do exactly the same again! That's because it's had its serious moments and precious moments, but I wouldn't have it any other way. My diaconate is part of my life, a big part. Most people are defined by their jobs and that can lead to having problems when they retire. I'm defined by my diaconate; that's the pleasure, to get up with no two days the same. All that will happen when I eventually retire from full time paid work is that I'll wake up, do full time diaconal ministry and wonder how I managed to fit a paid job in as well!

You've mentioned lots of things you can do as a Deacon, just to clarify the things you cannot do as a deacon?

Well of course we cannot consecrate, that's the priest or bishop alone. We cannot hear confession, because we can't give absolution and of course that means we can't give the Sacrament of the Sick because this comes with the possibility for absolution as well. They're the three major things we cannot do. That's funny because when I did more hospital ministry than I do now, the first thing people would ask is *"can you hear my confession?" "I'd love to, but I'm not allowed to!"* It was a good breaker, because we'd have an opening – why can't you then? From their hospital beds, they understood far more about the diaconate than the general public did. It meant we had a great rapport!

How can a Deacon best support the priests of the parish?

By being there. We can best be there to carry out the wishes of the priest in terms of service that the priest needs enriching. We do work at the direction of the priest and we can best serve the priest by establishing our own ministry within a ministry. We can help Father be the visible sign of ministry within the actual parish as well. There's plenty of work that I do, that I don't have to be ordained to do. Maybe, and I say this in all humility, maybe, I bring the grace of ordination to actually serve in the best way that I can.

Is there any one outstanding experience as a deacon that comes to mind, or you're very proud of, in the right sense of the word, or is it the whole experience of being a deacon is outstanding in its own right?

What's outstanding in its own right is the privilege that I have to be with people in their special moments. These can either be the happy moments, the wedding. It can be the sad moments because I've said we can't give; we can't anoint but we can be there with the

dead and we can be there with the family of the deceased. I can visit the families who've suffered a death; I can be with the children in school and they know me as Deacon Paul. So the actual great thing is the privilege of service, because if anyone asks me to sum up what's diaconate all about, it's the image of God, not in us, it's the image of God through service.

In terms of your prayer life and spiritual development, are there any specifics that are mandatory and what helps you in your spiritual development?

I had, he died recently, one of the best spiritual directors I could ever possibly have had. He happened to be a priest; it doesn't have to be a priest, it can be a woman, man, ordained, consecrated, lay person. I chose a priest, who felt he wasn't particularly spiritual! It's somebody I turn to for any spiritual guidance or advice I might need and that can vary time to time, situation to situation. With regards to prayer life, the Office of the Church the seven times in the day when we come together, we're bound by promise to take part in the Divine Office, which means essentially Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer. If we can fit in the other offices, that's wonderful, but these are the ones we are bound by promise to say. They're the three hinges of the daily office. There's a possibility of this becoming mechanical. I always try to say my office within the broad time framework that the Church provides, because if I'm saying it alone, I'm still in unity with sisters and brothers in all parts of the world. The one thing I need to make perfectly clear is that you do not need to be ordained to actually take part in the prayer life of the Church. The Divine Office can be shared with everybody, the difference is we have made a promise that we will take part in the Liturgy of the Hours.

I like to try, this isn't essential, to get to mass as often as I can in the week. Confession, like everybody else, when I need it. If we're trying to make clear how vital the Sacrament of Reconciliation is, especially to our young people, then in my private life I'd better practice what I'm actually saying; to make the point, it's actually occurring in my own life as well. Times in the day for personal reflection, personal meditation take place. Prayer life is essential because it provides the nourishment for everything else we do.

Why do deacons wear clothing that looks like a priest, it can be very confusing trying to tell who's the priest and who's the deacon?

That varies diocese to diocese. In Liverpool diocese for that reason we don't wear clerical collars. We didn't want to be confused with a priest and also sometimes, without saying anything, people will confuse you with a priest, and feel totally embarrassed afterwards. They might end up saying things to me because they thought I was a priest. That's why I always tell them exactly who they are dealing with. The other thing is when we're on the altar, there are vestments that we wear. When we put our stoles on, the priest wears his in the shape of a scarf around his neck, a deacon wears his in the shape of a sash, it's not a sash it's a stole. The outer garment, a priest wears a chasuble, ours is called a dalmatic, which is like a sleeved garment. A chasuble hasn't got a sleeve in it, a dalmatic does.

Here in Liverpool there are certain exemptions where a clerical collar can be advisable. Certain hospital ministries, even for identification by security, that you are actually representing a Church. Prisons, for reasons of security and for the prisoners' own reassurance, they will wear clerical collars. Generally, we don't. All it would take is a different Archbishop,

with a different view to change that. There's nothing to stop me wearing a clerical collar if I wanted to, but in this diocese I've been asked not to, and I prefer to do what I'm told.

I've come to the end of my questions which you've answered very thoroughly, thank you very much!



Interior of Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool

Religious Festivals This Week

Pentecost/Whit Sunday - May 31st



As the second most important festival in the Christian year, Pentecost is often seen as the 'birthday' of the Church, since this is when the disciples of Jesus first proclaimed the Gospel after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is named after the Jewish festival (Shavuot) on which this event happened, which is celebrated 50 days after Passover.

Shavuot commemorates the anniversary of the day the entire nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from God.

The name Pentecost comes from the Greek pentekoste, "fiftieth". Pentecost for Christians accordingly falls on the Sunday 50 days after Easter. The alternative name of Whitsuntide comes from the custom of converts presenting themselves for baptism on this day dressed in white.

Clergy in church often wear robes with red in their design as a symbol of the flames in which the Bible says the Holy Spirit came to the early disciples. The symbols of Pentecost are those of the Holy Spirit and include the wind, the breath of God and flames. The dove is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The Acts of the Apostles tells how the followers of Jesus found

themselves speaking in foreign languages, inspired by the Holy Spirit. People passing by at first thought that they must be drunk, but the apostle Peter told the crowd that he and the other apostles were full of the Holy Spirit.

The central Christian belief that God is three in one – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is at the heart of Christian teaching about the nature of God and is central to preaching and teaching both at this time and on the following Sunday, Trinity Sunday. It is the belief in the divinity of Christ and the reality of the Holy Spirit which separates orthodox Christian faith from other monotheistic religions.

Saints of the Week

St Justin, martyr – 1st June



He was born at the beginning of the second century in Nablus, in Samaria, of a pagan Greek family. He was an earnest seeker after truth, and studied many systems of philosophy before being led, through Platonism, to Christianity. While remaining a layman, he accepted the duty of making the truth known, and travelled from place to place proclaiming the gospel. In 151 he travelled from Ephesus to Rome, where he opened a school of philosophy and wrote defences and expositions of Christianity, which have survived to this day and are the earliest known writings of their kind

St. Justin is particularly celebrated for the two Apologies which he was courageous enough to address in succession to the persecuting emperors Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius. One of them contains a description of the rites of baptism and the ceremonies of Mass, thus constituting the most valuable evidence that we possess on the Roman liturgy of his day. In the persecution of 165, in the reign of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, he was denounced as a Christian, arrested and beheaded. Justin is also referred to as "the Philosopher."

St Marcellinus and Peter, martyrs – 2nd June

Marcellinus was a priest and Peter was an exorcist, that is, someone authorized by the Church to deal with cases of demonic possession. They were beheaded during the persecution of Emperor Diocletian. Pope Damasus wrote an epitaph apparently based on the report of their executioner, and Constantine erected a basilica over the crypt in which they were buried in Rome. Numerous legends sprang from an early account of their death.



St Charles Lwanga and his companions, martyrs – 3rd June



One of 22 Ugandan martyrs, Charles Lwanga is the patron of youth and Catholic action in most of tropical Africa. He protected his fellow pages, aged 13 to 30, from the homosexual demands of the Bagandan ruler, Mwanga, and encouraged and instructed them in the Catholic faith during their imprisonment for refusing the ruler's demands.

Charles first learned of Christ's teachings from two retainers in the court of Chief Mawulugungu. While a catechumen, he entered the royal household as assistant to Joseph Mukaso, head of the court pages.

On the night of Mukaso's martyrdom for encouraging the African youths to resist Mwanga, Charles requested and received baptism. Imprisoned with his friends, Charles's courage and belief in God inspired them to remain chaste and faithful.

For his own unwillingness to submit to the immoral acts and his efforts to safeguard the faith of his friends, Charles was burned to death at Namugongo on June 3, 1886, by Mwanga's order.

When Pope Paul VI canonized these 22 martyrs on October 18, 1964, he also made reference to the Anglican pages martyred for the same reason.

St Boniface, Bishop & martyr – 5th June



For the first forty years of his life Boniface was known as Wynfrith. He was born in Devon and educated at the monastery at Exeter, and then joined the Benedictine abbey at Nursling, near Southampton. He was a teacher and preacher, but he desired to preach the gospel in a foreign land. In 718, Pope Gregory II commissioned him to do so, at the same time changing his name from Wynfrith to Boniface.

Boniface left England, never to return, and took the gospel to the heathen tribes of Germany, where he had great success. He himself was created Bishop of Mainz, and he founded or restored dioceses in Bavaria, Thuringia, and Franconia. In his later years he worked with King Pepin the Short to reform the Frankish church, and then, over seventy years old, set out to evangelize Friesland

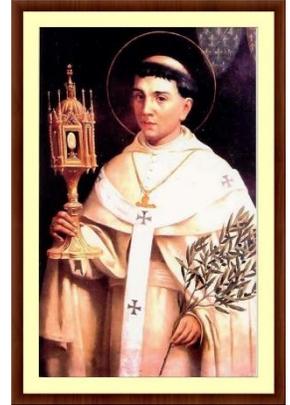
(part of modern Holland) where he was set upon and murdered, on 5 June 754.

He is buried at Fulda, near Frankfurt, in the monastery he founded himself, and is honoured as the apostle of Germany.

St Norbert, Bishop – 6th June

He was born in Xanten in the Rhineland. He came of a noble family and lived a worldly life at the courts of the Archbishop of Cologne (where he held some minor benefices) and of the Emperor Henry V.

At the age of 35 he had a narrow escape from death and his life changed. He became a priest and was full of reforming zeal, which so antagonized the clergy of Xanten that they denounced him as a hypocrite. So he sold or gave away all his possessions and made his way to the Pope (who was then in southern France). The Pope gave him permission to preach wherever he lived, and he travelled through France and Germany preaching. Others joined him, and a community was started in the valley of Prémontré near Laon, which developed into an order (the Premonstratensian Order) with a number of abbeys.



Meanwhile Norbert continued travelling and preaching, until he was consecrated Archbishop of Magdeburg. He threw himself into his new task with his usual enthusiasm, reforming what had been a rather corrupt diocese, antagonizing the clergy (who had established a comfortable life for themselves) and some of the laity, who had quietly taken possession of unwatched church properties – several attempts were made to murder him. He also preached the gospel to the pagans of the district and died of natural causes in 1134.

