

5/87 Distinctive and Permanent Diaconate

(This report was received by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney in October 1988.)

Introduction

1. The Synod requested that area deanery conferences make responses to the report received by the Synod last year concerning the distinctive and permanent diaconate. The conferences were requested to debate and respond to the following basic motion.

"This area deanery conference notes the suggestions contained in the report on the distinctive and permanent diaconate and responds by nominating the following ministry roles or tasks as being appropriate for men and women ministers serving permanently as full-time deacons in an area deanery such as this, or in any other specialised ministries within the Diocese."

2. It was suggested that conferences move, by way of amendment to the basic motion, for the insertion of a list of duties, along the lines of those in the present Ordinal.

Responses to 1987 Report

3. The summary of responses from area deanery conferences runs to 13 foolscap pages. It will be tabled at the Synod session with the detailed responses and other responses received from deaconesses and parish sisters. It is only possible to draw the most basic of conclusions from those responses.

- (a) The preferred duties are those in the Ordinal which presently pertain to deacons, but a number of additional duties were recommended, the main one being that of presiding at Holy Communion in the absence of the priest.
- (b) A number of practical concerns would need to be addressed (whether the deacon could be part-time or even honorary, the stipends and working conditions, dress, etc).
- (c) Some see the distinctive and permanent diaconate as including persons nominated by a congregation, and readers, and that it should be controlled by a diocesan board.
- (d) Some reject the distinctive and permanent diaconate as a separate order in favour of developing the present diaconate, and some would like to see two entirely separate orders with candidates being ordained as deacons or priests from the outset.
- (e) Some reject the concept of a distinctive and permanent diaconate altogether.

Options

4. The concept of the distinctive and permanent diaconate in the report is that of ordaining persons (men or women) as deacons on the basis that they will not normally be ordained to the priesthood. In effect, a permanent diaconate.

5. As things now stand, the question of whether to have a distinctive and permanent diaconate and, if so, how, is for the Synod to consider in principle and there appear to be several options.

- (a) Accept and implement the concept within the context of the present ordinal.
- (b) Accept the concept within an amended Ordinal, which would require the promotion to the General Synod of a bill for a canon "whereby the Australian Prayer Book Service for the Making of Deacons be prescribed and whereby the Collect and Rubric at the conclusion of the Book of Common Prayer order of service be deleted for the reason that it suggests to some persons that the present order of deacons is transitory and not permanent" (item 40 of last year's report).
- (c) Accept the concept and promote to the General Synod a bill for a canon to establish a distinctive and permanent diaconate as a separate order.
- (d) Reject the concept altogether.

6. Options (b) and (c) require the co-operation of the General Synod.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

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Diocesan Secretary

18 August 1988

Note: *Copies of the detailed responses and other responses referred to in paragraph 3 of this report are no longer available.*