



Archdiocese of Vancouver  
ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE

February 16, 2011

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

I am writing to share some very important news with you. In light of the recommendation of the Archdiocesan Synod, and after much further consultation, the Archdiocese of Vancouver is restoring the permanent diaconate as a ministry in service of the People of God.

Until now, all deacons ordained in the Archdiocese have been celibate men destined for the priesthood. The vast majority of permanent deacons, however, are married men. They remain in their ordinary occupations to provide for the needs of their families. Unlike bishops and priests, deacons are not ordained to share in Christ's priesthood, but they are conformed to Christ, the Servant of all.

Permanent deacons will exercise a wide variety of ministries in our parishes and in public and Catholic institutions. These include assisting the bishop and priests at the liturgy, officiating at marriages and funeral rites celebrated outside of Mass, and proclaiming the Gospel and preaching the homily. Above all, they will have a special role in the Church's mission of service and charity, bringing to their various ministries the fruits of their experience of family life, secular employment and sacramental grace.

Permanent deacons will provide much-needed help to me and our priests, while supporting the lay faithful already engaged in the numerous ministries that have flourished under God's care in recent years.

The formation of deacons will be a part-time but serious process, mostly on weekends, lasting 4 or 5 years. The candidates will be carefully chosen, and must have the support of their wives. At the time of ordination, a deacon will be no younger than 35 and no older than 65.

How does this announcement affect you? First of all, I am asking each of you to make the new diaconate formation program a priority in your prayer. We all need to pray that many men will answer the call of the Holy Spirit to serve Christ and his Church in this way. Secondly, encourage men you think might be suitable candidates to begin discerning God's will and to seek the counsel of their pastor. We shall soon be announcing the dates for regional information meetings for those who want to know more.

This decision to restore the permanent diaconate is a fruit of the recent Synod, which sought ways to make the Archdiocese a "mission-driven" Church. I am confident that, under the patronage of Our Lady, Queen of the Holy Rosary, the Order of Deacons will contribute to the achievement of that goal.

With cordial best wishes and the assurance of my prayers for you and your families, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ J. Michael Miller CSB". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross symbol at the beginning.

✠ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver