

## Dear Parish Family

Thank you so much for all your interest, support, encouragement and prayers as I journey towards ordination as a Permanent Deacon. Many of you have asked how I am getting on and how long until I am ordained.

God willing, I will be ordained in Summer 2025 – only just over a year to go! But the next formal step is to be instituted as Lector on 12<sup>th</sup> May this year.

The formation programme consists of one Saturday per month, plus an annual weekend retreat, at St Mary's College, Oscott, the seminary just north of Birmingham. It comprises four elements: spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and human (personal development), with liturgical experience and regular assignments. In addition, much of my pastoral formation takes place through my involvement in our own parish and in other ways locally (for example, this academic year I have had placements with the Food Bank, Becky's Café and our local Catholic schools and am about to begin working in the chaplaincy team at Bournemouth Hospital).

There are **four formal liturgical steps** leading to ordination:

**Conferral of Candidacy:** This took place in the chapel at **Oscott** in **October 2021**: after a year's formation and a rigorous assessment process, Bishop Philip formally accepted me as a Candidate for the Permanent Diaconate.

Earlier this term, after returning to Oscott in September after a year out due to Long Covid, I had another formal review/assessment, as a result of which Bishop Philip approved me to receive the next two ministries:

**Institution as Lector\*:** This will take place at **St Joseph's** on **12<sup>th</sup> May 2024** during 9am Sunday Mass. Fr Paul will conduct the short ceremony on behalf of Bishop Philip.

**Institution as Acolyte:** This will take place at **St Joseph's** on **3<sup>rd</sup> November 2024** during 9am Sunday Mass. Fr Paul will conduct the short ceremony on behalf of Bishop Philip.

In February 2025, there will be a final formal review/assessment and the bishop will then decide whether or not to invite me for ordination:

**Ordination as Permanent Deacon** by the bishop: This will take place (God willing...) at **Portsmouth Cathedral** one Saturday or Sunday in **June or July 2025**.

### \*What is a Lector?

"The lector is instituted to **proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture**, with the exception of the Gospel. He may also **announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer** and, in the absence of a psalmist, **recite the Psalm** between the readings." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*)

"...he is to **instruct the faithful for the worthy reception of the sacraments**. He may also... take care of **preparing other faithful who are appointed on a temporary basis to read the Scriptures in liturgical celebrations**. That he may more fittingly and perfectly fulfil these functions, he is to **meditate assiduously on sacred Scripture**." (*Pope Paul VI in Ministeria quaedam*)

One key difference between someone who reads at Mass and a formally instituted Lector is that a reader's ministry is temporary and voluntary, whereas a Lector has a permanent duty to the ministry. However, both should "be truly qualified and carefully prepared... The spiritual preparation presupposes at least a biblical and liturgical formation." (*Lectionary: General Introduction*)

*Richard*

*Richard Martin, April 2024*