



Deacon Tim Grauel

New national coordinator for Permanent Diaconate



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The Australian bishops have appointed a new national coordinator for the fastest-growing vocation in the Church in Australia.

Adelaide's Deacon Tim Grauel was recently appointed as national coordinator of the permanent diaconate for the Bishops Office for Clergy Life and Ministry.

The appointment was ratified in August by Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Bishop Greg O'Kelly, the apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Adelaide.

Fr Greg Bourke, executive secretary of the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry and director of its Office for Clergy Life and Ministry, said Australia had experienced a significant increase in the number of deacons.

"Deacons were in great numbers up until around the year 1000 and after then it declined gradually. There's differences of opinions on the reasons for this; however, since Vatican II, the diaconate has been revived and seen significant increases in vocations," he said.

St Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, and St Francis of Assisi, who lived 800 years ago, are two well-known deacons in the very rich history of the diaconate, Fr Bourke said.

"The diaconate is at its best when the ministry is at the interface of the Church and the world, for example prison chaplaincy, emergency chaplains, police chaplains, and proclaiming and preaching the Gospel," he said.

"One quote often attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi that he said to his friars — 'Preach well and preach effectively, and if you have to, use words — is still relevant today and supports the vision and purpose of the modern diaconate."

Deacon Grauel, a former senior manager for a major aged care organisation in Adelaide, said he was excited about the new role and looking forward to the challenge of promoting the permanent diaconate and encouraging sound formation and ongoing formation.

"I'm a relatively new deacon and was ordained just under three years ago, but I have a background as a minister with the Uniting Church," he said.

"I've embraced the challenge of being a deacon and see it as a bridge, both between the clergy and the laity, and between the Church and the world.

"There's a move for deacons to be almost entrepreneurial in the Church by encouraging the Gospel to reach different places and to be creative in doing that."

Deacon Grauel said Pope Francis was very supportive of the role of the diaconate.

"I think it's not just in the name (Francis). The Pope often stresses that we need to be close to the lives of the people, not hidden in an office. He is supporting the mission of reaching out and that's what the deacons are there for – to witness to a mission of charity," he said.

The permanent diaconate was restored following the 1964 "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" *Lumen Gentium*, and enacted in 1967 by Blessed Pope Paul VI in his *motu proprio* on the "Sacred Order of the Diaconate" *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*.

The Australian bishops officially launched new norms and guidelines for the permanent diaconate during their plenary meeting in Sydney in May last year.

The guidelines can be downloaded from the Clergy Life and Ministry website at [http://www.clergy.org.au/images/pdf/Norms & Guidelines.pdf](http://www.clergy.org.au/images/pdf/Norms_%20Guidelines.pdf).