

Homily for 5th Sunday of Easter 3rd May 2026

A deacon was once asked, “So what exactly do you do as a deacon?”

He explained “Well, on Sunday I proclaim the Gospel, assist at the altar, preach when asked, baptise babies, witness marriages, and help lead the community in prayer.”

“And what about the rest of the week?” he gets asked “Mostly, I explain to people that I’m not a priest” he replies

It is a light-hearted story—but like most humour, it carries a truth.

The ministry of the deacon is often misunderstood. People see the visible role at Mass, but they may not always see the deeper calling beneath it—a calling rooted not in vestments or status, but in service. As we see a reduction in the numbers of priests in our Diocese it’s natural and somewhat unfortunate that the lines between priest and deacon are becoming more blurred.

That’s why today’s 1st reading from Acts 6:1–7 should be an important moment to stop and take stock of why deacons were instituted.

The early Church was growing, but with growth came challenges. Some widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. There was frustration, complaint, and the risk of division.

The apostles recognised that this was not a minor administrative issue. It was a Gospel issue.

So, they appointed seven men, full of the Spirit and wisdom, to oversee this ministry of care.

And at the heart of this reading is a beautiful word from the early Church: *diakonia*.

In Greek, *diakonia* means service, ministry, or care. It is the root from which we get the word *deacon*. But it is more than a title—it is a way of living.

Diakonia is not about rank or recognition. It is about humble, practical, Christ-like service.

The first deacons were entrusted with this ministry so that the community would remain united, and so that those most in need would never be forgotten.

That remains true today.

A deacon is called to serve at the altar, to proclaim the Gospel, to preach, to baptise, and to accompany people in moments of joy and grief. But the ministry does not begin or end at the church door.

For many deacons in the modern Church, ministry is lived alongside full-time employment—in factories, offices, schools, hospitals, workshops, and countless other workplaces.

That is an important sign for the Church. Because it means the deacon does not serve only in sacred spaces, but also in the ordinary rhythms of working life.

A deacon may stand at the altar on Sunday, but on Monday he may be back in a factory, in a boardroom, on a shop floor, or at a desk—living the same vocation in another setting.

And that is not a contradiction. It is part of the calling.

It reflects the reality that Christ is present not only in churches, but in workplaces, in conversations over tea breaks, in decisions made under pressure, in relationships between colleagues, and in the dignity of daily labour.

A working deacon becomes a bridge between the Church and the world of everyday life.

Carrying the concerns of working people into the life of the parish, and he carries the values of the Gospel into the workplace.

He understands the pressures, deadlines, responsibilities, and challenges that so many parishioners live with, because he shares them.

And so his ministry is not distant—it is rooted in lived experience.

That, too, is *diakonia*. It is the ministry of presence in the ordinary. It is the service of Christ lived in real life. And perhaps that is why today's Gospel from John 14 speaks so clearly into this calling.

Jesus says: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Those words are spoken into uncertainty, into a world where the disciples do not fully understand what lies ahead.

And that is often where we live too—in the unknowns of family life, employment, health, and responsibility.

Yet Christ gives us not a map, but himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

For a deacon—especially one serving while also working full-time—those words are deeply personal.

In the workplace, Christ is the way in how we act with integrity.

He is the truth in how we speak honestly and fairly.

He is the life in how we bring compassion and dignity to others.

The ministry of a deacon must not be confined to liturgical robes or parish programmes.

It is lived wearing steel-toe cap boots as much as wearing vestments, in office meetings as much as at the ambo.

Because *diakonia* is not about where we stand, but how we serve. The first deacons in Acts were chosen to ensure no one was forgotten.

Today, the deacon continues that mission—not only in parish life, but in the wider world.

And perhaps that is a reminder for all of us.

Every baptised person is called to *diakonia*—to bring Christ into the places they inhabit daily.

Not everyone is ordained, but everyone is sent.

Into workplaces, homes, schools, and communities—to be signs of Christ's presence.

So today, these readings challenge us to see service not as an occasional act, but as a way of life.

To trust Christ as the way, the truth, and the life.

And to remember that the Gospel is not only proclaimed in church—it is carried into factories, offices, and every corner of human life.

Because when faith enters the ordinary, the ordinary becomes holy