

THE ROLE OF THE ARCHDEACON TODAY

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1. THE ORIGIN OF THE OFFICE

The early period

The office of archdeacon has its origins in the early history of the Church. The archdeacon is referred to by St. Jerome and other writers of the fourth century. He was the principal deacon of a local church. The eminent Victorian ecclesiastical lawyer, Sir Robert Phillimore wrote: 'The primitive offices of the archdeacon may be enumerated under five heads. First, to attend the bishop to the altar and to order all things relating to the inferior clergy and ministrations in the church. Secondly, to assist the diocesan in the distribution and management of the ecclesiastical revenues.'

The archdeacon also 'assisted the bishop in preaching; for as any deacon was authorised to preach by the bishop's leave, so the archdeacon, being the most eminent of the deacons was more frequently selected for the discharge of this duty.' Phillimore goes on to list the archdeacon's other duties as assisting with ordinations of inferior clergy and exercising his authority to censure those same clergy. By the seventh century the archdeacon was 'the eyes, ears and mouth of the bishop' carrying out on a much wider scale the duties mentioned by Jerome, for 'he seems to have been fully possessed of the chief care and inspection of the diocese, in subordination to the bishop.'

Archdeacons and the priesthood

As a consequence it is often argued the archdeacon from early on was in priest's orders to enable him to discharge his responsibilities more effectively, though it is not clear when this change occurred. Anselm's Canons issued at Westminster in 1102 record; 'that archdeacons be deacons'. In 1126 the canons are still showing that an archdeacon is in deacon's orders: 'that none be promoted to a deanery or priory but a priest; none to an archdeaconry but a deacon.' The attendance at an English council by Othobon, cardinal deacon of St. Adrian, legate of the apostolic see to the kingdom of England in 1268, provides interesting evidence, for he had been Archdeacon of Canterbury, and even after being chosen by the pope as his legate, remained a deacon. In the early fifteenth century William Lyndwood is still qualifying a statement about an archdeacon with the words 'if he be not a priest', suggesting that the transition was still in progress.

The Norman Period

Bishops in the Norman feudal society were much more 'political' than they had been in the Saxon period. It is thus natural that someone so closely associated with the episcopate as an archdeacon should find his role, as the church official on the spot, developing and expanding as his lord and master spent more time out of the diocese. J. D. Dickson argues in his book *The Late*

Middle Ages 'that it seems likely that the principal factor in its (the office of archdeacon) rise was the decision of William the Conqueror to terminate the hazy-minded Anglo-Saxon habit of having admittedly ecclesiastical business settled in the local courts.' Interestingly enough the archdeaconries are often associated with the old hundreds or shires. R. S. Mylne in *Canon Law* (1912), writes 'the prevalent idea in the Middle Ages was that the Church and State were two co-ordinate institutions, each with its own separate jurisdictions, independent of each other, and yet most closely connected. Thus each kingdom possessed its Archbishop as well as its King. In like manner the Bishop possessed similar territorial jurisdiction to the feudal noble, and these together formed the upper House of Parliament. And in England, as each county had its Earl and Sheriff, so each county also had its Archdeacon.' Certainly the archdeaconries proliferated in this period and there was more than one archdeacon for each bishop.

Further development

Sadly, the reputation of the archdeacon suffered during the medieval period largely as a result of the archdeacon's court which passed judgment upon the moral behaviour of the inferior clergy and the laity. Because of its concern with adultery and fornication, writes Dickinson, the archdeacon's court became known as the 'bawdy court'. The behaviour of the local congregation was equally his concern. The misbehaviour of the medieval English laity mostly follows stock patterns. 'These duties produced no little business but were surpassed in spectacularity by sexual offences of the perennial types over which the archdeacon had jurisdiction.' Chaucer satirises the whole structure of the courts and of its officials upon whom the archdeacons depended. The archdeacon also gained a reputation as a money grabber. Visitations were costly affairs and the tax, called 'procurations', levied upon each parish was a matter of complaint, as were the 'synodals' payable for the twice-yearly synods. He also supervised the period when a parish had no incumbent and as a consequence was entitled to a third of the profit on the sequestration when the vacancy came to an end.

The Victorian archdeacon is epitomised for all times by Anthony Trollope: 'A poor archdeacon, an archdeacon who did not keep a curate or two, an archdeacon who could not give a dinner, and put a special bottle of wine on the table, an archdeacon who did not keep a carriage, or at least a one horse chaise, an archdeacon without a manservant, or a bankers account, would be nowhere in an English diocese. Therefore, though the archdeacon is not paid for his services as archdeacon, he is generally a gentleman who is well to do in the world, and who can take a comfortable place in the county society among which it is his happy lot to live.'

2. THE MODERN ARCHDEACON

For all the subtle developments and changes he remains today still an officer of the bishop and his principal inspector general. He is very much a 'steward', a description which Jerome could well have used sixteen centuries ago. If an archdeacon exercises his role with care and efficiency he is in fact releasing the bishop and all the clergy and parish officials to engage more effectively in the mission of the church. Thus simply by being a good steward the archdeacon is being pastoral.

The Report on Archdeacons and Their Work by Marc Europe, being a research analysis of the Archdeacon of Wandsworth's 1990 questionnaire, reveals that the average size of an archdeaconry is 525 square miles with an average population of 440,000. Such statistics present one with the alarming concept of a vast managerial problem so absorbing that there is little time for a pastoral ministry. However, as with parochial life after a certain number has been reached the statistics become irrelevant. Archdeacons do not relate to parishioners, they relate to clergy, churchwardens, and occasionally parochial church councils. It is therefore these statistics which are relevant. The average number of clergy in an archdeaconry is 104; the number of parishes is 117; and places of worship 148.

A member of the bishop's staff

The Marc Europe report by Boyd Myers shows that slightly more than half the diocesan bishops have one monthly staff meeting with the remainder holding more frequent meetings. He is perceived as the Bishop's executive officer in the sense in which any modern large organisation has an executive officer who is responsible for seeing that the wishes of the chairman and the decisions of the board of directors are carried out. In today's climate, with the archdeacon seen much more in executive managerial terms, it is inevitable that his role as the bishop's action man, results in his leaving staff meetings with a list of clergy, churchwardens, and pressure groups to meet, or convince, or gently cajole. It is at this point that he is his most pastoral, with a spiritual oil-can in his hand. His predecessors like Archdeacon Grantly would have brought the magisterium of the office to bear, but this is no longer possible, let alone desirable. If the archdeacon can achieve the happy acceptance of staff policy decisions then the mission of the church can advance and he has fulfilled the most ancient role of his office as steward of the church in his area.

3. THE ARCHDEACONRY

An Archdeaconry is a legal division of a diocese for administrative purposes presided over by the archdeacon. This definition has the slight suggestion of Barchester Towers but it is how the section on the Archdeacon begins in the 'Opinions of the Legal Advisory Commission.' A study of the Statutes, the Canons and the Measures of Church Assembly and General Synod will show just how much the archdeacon is involved in the legal administration of his archdeaconry. At the heart of the administration lies the archdeacon's involvement in the affairs of each of the parishes. His concern and care of the clergy in his area is because they are the parish priests; for the churchwardens because they are the custodians of the fabric and possessions of the parish churches.

The Rural Dean

The rural dean is a key person in the administration of the archdeaconry. The origin of his office is even more obscure than that of the archdeacon. It is clear from the canon law that deaneries were sub-divisions of archdeaconries. The 'bishop's presbyter' or archpriest appears to have had an oversight. There was some sort of power struggle in the early medieval period from which the archdeacons in England emerged ahead of the deans rural but

behind the deans of cathedrals, which latter were independent of the bishops. Elsewhere in Europe the dominance of the archdeacon was not quite so clear cut and area deans survived and archdeacons disappeared. The office of rural dean was revived in England in 1836. The modern rural dean's role is clearly defined by Canon C23, but is seen much more in terms of an executive officer of the bishop with responsibilities to the bishop and the archdeacon, and responsibility for the clergy in his deanery, on the one hand; and of a responsibility for the lay church officers on the other. In his relation to the archdeacon, the rural dean has taken over the duty of the annual inspection of the fabric and registers of the parish churches. Generally speaking, in most of the administrative duties associated with the office the rural or area dean is responsible to the archdeacon; and in the pastoral duties he or she is responsible to the bishop, even when the dean acts at the request of the archdeacon.

The diocesan secretary

Another key person in the administration of the diocese, and therefore of the archdeaconry, is the diocesan secretary. There are few areas to do with property and finance in which an archdeacon can come to a view without consulting and working with the secretary. The latter, because he administers the affairs of the whole diocese has an overview which the archdeacon should value and benefit from in discussions both at staff sessions and in personal meetings. In many ways the role of the diocesan secretary mirrors that of the archdeacon for he too is a steward of the diocesan property and its affairs.

The Patronage (Benefice) Measure

The archdeacon may not now claim one third of the sequestration profit, but he continues to be involved during a vacancy. He virtually becomes a sort of ecclesiastical match-maker! When the process of filling the vacancy gets under way it would normally be the archdeacon's responsibility to see that the rural dean is involved or at least kept informed. The archdeacon is not formally involved in the process laid down in the measure (and herein is perhaps the strength of his position) but, at almost every stage at which he is informally involved, he has opportunity to explain that the parish indeed participates through the representatives in the appointment process, exercising a veto, if necessary, upon the patron, who must finally submit the name of the agreed candidate to the bishop.

Archdeacons can in special cases institute, as a commissary, in the absence of the bishop and induct on the same occasion. This is more likely to be the case when the bishop at the last minute is unable to be at the service, or weather conditions make it impossible for him to get to the church.

Care and discipline

Most archdeacons would see the continuing pastoral care of incumbents and the parochial clergy as a vital part of their role as archdeacon. Much will depend on the way the diocesan bishop structures the pastoral care using his senior staff. It cannot be otherwise but that pastoral care will include various inquiries under the measures which discipline the clergy. The archdeacon will

need to be familiar with three of these in particular. First, the amended Incumbents (Vacation of Benefices) Measure 1977 which is a measure making provision where there has been a pastoral breakdown in relations; second, the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963 and, third, the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (Amendment) Measure passed in 1974. Although communicating the technical details of pensions should always be left to the Pensions Board, a grasp of the salient facts, especially of early retirement options open on health grounds, is of immense value to an archdeacon in allaying the fears of clergy.

When pastoral breakdown threatens it is more than likely that the archdeacon will be brought in to try to sort out the problems. It is during this period that the archdeacon will be taking those steps to promote better relations between the incumbent and the parishioners. If he is unable to make much progress, then his role under the Measure of 1977 (and now amended) may be brought into play. This role is to assess the nature of the complaint and the reasons for it.

There is no function specifically given to the archdeacon in the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure of 1963 and its later Amendment passed in 1974, but it is inconceivable that the bishop should act once a complaint has been laid and verified, without the archdeacon being consulted; or indeed that the archdeacon should not be aware of the problem from earlier attempts at trying to remove the cause of the complaint.

Good management practice is based upon the manager being informed of what is happening on the floor or out in the field, and being able to take action which is appropriate at an early stage. It facilitates the 'light hand on the tiller' approach. To achieve this the manager must have clear lines of communications. For the archdeacon it means making clear to churchwardens and clergy that they have easy access to him, and indeed should be encouraged to talk about problems at an early stage, especially if these might hinder happy pastoral relations in the parish. It is here that the training days for churchwardens can make clear that such lines of communications exist and should be used.

The Visitation

The Visitations of the archdeacon, often still called Visitation Courts, have an ancient origin. The article in the Ecclesiastical Law Journal (Vol 2 July 1991), entitled 'Points of Law and Practice concerning Ecclesiastical Visitations' by Peter Smith sets this out. The modern Visitation in practice focuses upon the Care of Churches Measure, for the archdeacon's role as inspector general of the local church's care of the fabric, registers and fittings of the church building is central to the visitation. The admission of the churchwardens to their office for the ensuing year provides the constituency for the visit. The preceding Inquiry is the basis of the information gathering process concerning the affairs of the parish and the clergy. The charge delivered at the Visitation, on the other hand, provides the means of communicating to those present the matters the archdeacon considers important.

Now that it has been made perfectly clear in the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992, that the registrar is not required to be in attendance, the citation to attend the visitation will probably be sent out by

the archdeacon or the diocesan office. The parochial clergy and churchwardens must be cited. It seems logical that all the licensed clergy in the archdeaconry should also be cited to attend, since matters concerning the Church of England in which they serve are being addressed. Most visitations are spread out over deaneries. This provides an opportunity to invite many other church officers such as readers, parish treasurers and secretaries and deanery officers. There is no doubt that whatever the history of the archdeacon's visitation the modern emphasis is upon the churchwardens and the parish church as the focal point of the people of God. It is a ministry of support and encouragement rather than a review of good or indifferent behaviour.

The Inspection of churches

Visits to the parish church buildings annually are now largely carried out by the rural dean, though the archdeacon, if he has a policy of parish visits over a period of time, would not expect the rural dean to visit on his behalf in the year he was visiting the parish. The rural dean's visit is to inspect the furnishings, utensils and registers together with the inventories and report anything which is amiss or to be commended. Canon C 22 makes a distinction between the yearly visitation and the survey in person or by a deputy of all churches chancels and churchyards. Earlier canons required actual visits to buildings over a three year cycle. The Inspection of Churches Measure 1955 makes clear that whereas the tradition was for the archdeacon to survey churches every three years, now the duty is delegated to the architect appointed by the scheme to be established in each diocese, who shall survey the fabric every five years. The quinquennial inspection by architects or surveyors means that the canon C22 requirement to survey in person or by deputy all churches, chancels or churchyards is fulfilled, for the measure requires that a copy of the report shall be sent to the archdeacon and that he should serve notice on a parochial church council if it defaults in employing an architect or surveyor.

Committee work

Archdeacons find that they are *ex officio* members of most of the boards and committees of the diocese. As has been indicated earlier their membership of these committees enables them to watch over the interests of their own archdeaconries. They will be expected to have a knowledge of the property and the needs of their areas in so far as these fall within the remit of the particular committee concerned. The new Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 1991 makes provision for only one archdeacon to be a member and that, only if it is not to be a suffragan or full time assistant bishop. There is nothing to prevent other archdeacons being nominated by the bishop, or elected or co-opted. The assumption, however, is that archdeacons no longer represent their own archdeaconry on the board, but are on the board because of their knowledge and expertise in the field of education. The glebe committee likewise does not need to have all the archdeacons as members. The diocesan board of finance ensures that archdeacons with an interest or expertise in glebe matters shall be members of the committee, though some diocese do not have a separate one for the glebe. It is of course impossible to conceive of a diocesan advisory committee without a full muster of archdeacons, who are *ex officio* members of it.

4. THE CARE OF CHURCHES

The Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 requires that only one category of church official be invariably on the diocesan advisory committee - the archdeacons of the diocese. Dickson, writing of the medieval archdeacon, says 'a perennial and time consuming activity was the archdeacon's duty to inspect periodically (in theory every three years) all the churches of his area. One aim of this was to ensure that the places possessed all necessary vestments, books, utensils and other ornaments and to see whether the list of these contained any additions or losses since the previous survey or their condition had seriously deteriorated . . . of obvious major importance was the soundness of the building, notably walls, windows and roofs, and this the archdeacon would seek to check.' One does not have to change a single word of this to describe the modern archdeacon.

Archbishop Langton's Constitutions records in 1222 AD the involvement of the archdeacon in the minutiae of vessels and linen; 'we ordain that every church have a silver chalice with other decent vessels, and a clean white linen cloth for the altar: let the old corporals which were not fit for the altar be put in the place appointed for the relics, or be burnt in the presence of the archdeacon (if they are consecrated). And let the archdeacon take care that the cloths and other ornaments of the altar be decent; that books be fit for singing and reading; and that there be two suits of vestments for the priests: and that the attendants at the altar wear surplices, that due esteem be paid to divine office.'

The Care of Churches Measure

The preamble to the Measure makes clear that it is 'to make provision as to the care of churches and the lands and articles appertaining thereto and of documents of historic interest to the Church of England.' At every point in the measure the archdeacon is involved and this means that he is concerned with the fabric of the engine rooms of prayer and praise and mission of the Church of England. Hardly a day will pass for an archdeacon without at least a telephone call about some aspect of the care of the fabric or the churchyard of a parish church. Many wish that it could be otherwise; that they could spend less time administering the rules and regulations concerning buildings and more time in 'pastoral work'. To have such aspirations is to misunderstand the role of the archdeacon and to miss the point that in the Church of England the parish church, or worship centre, is the engine room of all its activity. As the General Principle of the measure states, 'any person or body carrying out functions of care and conservation under this Measure or under any other enactment or rule of law relating to churches shall have due regard to the role of the church as a local centre of worship and mission.' There will be occasions when the archdeacon has to visit a church or even meet with the parochial church council to discuss the neglect of duties on the part of the parochial church council, churchwardens and the incumbent. More often than not it will be because of their ignoring the Faculty Jurisdiction procedures, though sometimes it is sheer neglect of the buildings. The archdeacon can intervene under the 1991 Care of Churches Measure.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee

The diocesan advisory committee is very often, apart from the usual inordinate length of its meetings, the most interesting committee of all those an archdeacon has to sit on in the diocese. Architects, artists, craftsmen, organ and bell experts, those who are involved in preserving the heritage of the country together with diocesan officials and clergy all find themselves around a table or going out on a tour of churches. Meetings are punctuated with discussions on liturgy, geology, architecture, baptism theology, and the times of services in a small rural church. To the discussions the archdeacon brings a specialist knowledge he has of the particular church, the congregation and the community. Chancellor G. H. Newsom in his most valuable book for archdeacons *Faculty Jurisdiction of the Church of England* said of the diocesan advisory committee membership 'Finally, there are the archdeacons . . . they are central to the working of the whole system. But as members of the committee they have also another function in that an archdeacon knows about the parish from which a case comes, its local problems and its puzzlements, in a way that no other member of the committee does.'

Architects and Surveyors have a very considerable role to play in the care of churches under the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955 and the amending schedule 3 of the 1991 Measure. On the last page of each copy of a quinquennial inspection report sent to the archdeacon reference is made to the need for a faculty when work is undertaken, yet often there is little if any contact between the architects and the archdeacons to explain the changes which take place in the Faculty Jurisdiction. It seems logical that the archdeacons of a diocese should initiate, if not participate, in briefing sessions from time to time to engage the active support of the architects. Often the architect is consulted by the parochial church council about work recommended in his quinquennial report or about other work simply because he or she is 'their architect'. In the negotiations or even commission which follows the faculty procedure is often not mentioned.

The relationship between the chancellor and the archdeacons is an important one, but it cannot be formally set out in codes of practice or guidelines. Chancellor Newsom believed 'that it is essential that the chancellor should be on easy and understanding terms with all his archdeacons and they with him. He and they should meet at least once a year even if there is no specific problem to discuss.' It is clear when archdeacons meet from different dioceses that there is a wide variation in practice. It is perhaps not always understood that a key person in the relationship is the registrar who occupies a middle position in the exercise of the Faculty Jurisdiction. If it is important that the archdeacons should meet annually with the chancellor, it is certainly advisable that they should meet together annually with the registrar.

The churchyards of our parish churches take up a good deal of the diocesan advisory committee's time and thus to the same extent the archdeacon's. The one area over which incumbents and parochial church councils consult the archdeacon only, without reference to the diocesan advisory committee, is the closure of churchyards, reservation of grave space and exhumations.

Insurance

The responsibility of the churchwardens and the PCC to insure the church building is now one of the largest items drawing on the financial resources of the parish. Thirty per cent of the total expenditure of the average PCC is expended on the insurance premiums. The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure of 1921 and of 1956 which restates the PCC's responsibility for the 'care maintenance preservation and insurance of the fabric of the church and the goods and ornaments thereof. . . ' It is the archdeacon who usually has to monitor this responsibility and it is one of the many dilemmas he has to deal with in advising parishes. He will discover what parishes are doing to fulfil their responsibility through the articles of inquiry; and will give advice at visitations and training days.

Parish Records and Registers

The Care of Churches Measure refers also to the records of the Church. These consist of the registers, governed by Canon F11 and the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, which consolidates the enactments relating to the registration of baptisms and burials (the marriage registers are governed by the Marriage Act); and the records which concern the care of the fabric, to which specific reference is made in the Care of Churches Measure and Canon F13 and F17.

Parish meetings

The archdeacon's involvement in the life and work of the parish is not confined to the care of the fabric. Much of the smooth running of a parish and of the local church as the centre of worship and mission depends upon the incumbent and the parochial church council secretary having a good working knowledge of the administrative procedures and the rules which govern the representation of the laity. For the most part these are to be found in Church Representation Rules, an appendix to the Synodical Government Measure of 1969 and the Churchwardens' Appointment and Resignation Measure as amended. A new archdeacon will soon discover that many of his clergy have never heard of their existence. The volume of telephone calls from clergy seeking advice will increase during March and April as the Annual Parochial Meeting season gets into full swing. It is an area of knowledge the archdeacon should have at his fingertip. On occasions he will have to refer callers to the registrar or the diocesan synod secretary. This aspect of his work should be seen as officiating the clergy and the secretaries in their work rather than laying down rules. At times the advice will develop from explaining the rules to advice on conflict management, for the caller is usually preparing him or herself for a possible area of conflict or disagreement expected at the meeting to be held.

5. THE CARE OF THE PEOPLE

A whole generation of archdeacons have been asked by their bishops, when appointed, to be 'pastoral' archdeacons. All would have great sympathy with this desire but, as has been indicated earlier, there is considerable confusion in interpreting exactly what this involves. The Crothorpe Conference's definition of 'being a good steward' so that others are freed to be

the worshipping, witnessing and ministering Church goes a long way to clarifying the truly pastoral dimension of the job. However one cannot escape the fact that a pastoral ministry of care and concern for people is part and parcel of the office of an archdeacon. The archdeacon does not want to be seen as an authoritarian figure, which is so often conveyed by the checks and investigations he has to make because of the statutes and measures which govern his work. At the same time he does not wish to undermine the gravity of much of what he has to do because of a libertarian stance about rules and regulations.

A theological basis

Before an archdeacon can even start his work he has to have a theology of order. From the very beginning the Christian Church has ordered itself by rules and regulations. The rules and regulations have themselves been devised to resolve differences of opinion or interpretation. The rule becomes a measuring rod or ruler, a canon in fact, by which all may measure policies or actions. This saves every person, and every generation from having to re-invent the wheel every time a problem arises or a decision has to be made. Since the following of the rules avoids disputes and conflict it facilitates the proclamation of the gospel. The Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Canon Law (1947) states it thus: 'The Church has, in fact, authority to make only such rules as will further its purpose as an institution for the help of men in their following of our Lord, and which will prevent anything creeping into its life that may hinder it from performing its proper function.' Again later it goes on to claim: 'the Church in every age seeks to have such laws in force as shall assist it in its work of training up the followers of our Lord and are suited to the actual historical situation in which this work has to be done.' So it is that in the administering of rules and regulations that the archdeacon can be pastoral.

The clergy

The principal pastoral contact will be with the clergy. The archdeacon's task is to encourage and affirm their ministry. Gone are the days when this consisted of a pat on the back and a cheerful word in the ear. It is achieved at two levels. First, in creating the general conditions for a less stressful and more fulfilling ministry; and secondly, in maintaining personal contact with clergy and their families, while also offering the clergy individual 'tailor made' plans for ministerial development.

The stress of the workplace is very much in our thinking in today's world. The clergy are not exempt, indeed the factors which create debilitating stress occur frequently in parochial life. Sarah Horsman in her book *Living with Stress: a guide for Ministers and Church Leaders* points out that, 'there is no doubt that the job of a minister has many inherent stresses; some of them are shared with many other jobs others are specific to it.' She lists the stress of being always on call to respond to both the trivial and the emotional crises; the workload of many modern clergy, with shrinking manpower and larger areas to cover; and the expectation of the people which is quite unrealistic. She lists also boredom, lack of supervision, poor evaluation techniques for a ministry. Most archdeacons would be able to elaborate upon the list of factors, the saddest of all being loss of vision and even of vocation and faith.

Yet the archdeacon can address many of these causes of stress because his role and office require him to plan and advise upon, the pastoral provisions in his area; the housing of the clergy; and the deployment of clergy. He can avoid the need for pastoral first aid by ensuring the primary care is properly structured, and that the preventative measures are in place. As a resource person himself, the archdeacon can ease the work of the clergy by providing information regarding the care of churches and churchyards, grant aiding trusts and, advice about coping with conflict in the parishes, personal relationships and the unexpected crises. Training sessions with the leading laymen of the parishes, churchwardens, secretaries and treasurers will provide the opportunity for alerting the other leaders in the parish to the stress points in clerical life and the means of preventing or relieving them. Today's archdeacon has to be proactive that in the end he might be free to be less reactive to the problems which beset clerical life.

Proper evaluation of ministry

Reference has already been made to the importance of ministerial appraisal in today's church. Poor or non-existent evaluation of ministry is a major factor in both stress and the loss of vision, even of vocation. Each diocese will pitch the scheme for appraisal at a different level, using differing systems, but the final outcome will be to give each of the clergy a renewed vision of his or her vocation, and the help necessary for such renewal to be realised. Unless the archdeacon is prepared to give leadership in appraisals, either in principle or in practice his pastoral ministry will become increasingly a process of administering first aid.

Churchwardens and other officers

The archdeacon ministers to parishes. The clergy are important because they are the frontline, in theory at least, but parishes have churchwardens and other officers who also fall within the pastoral care of the archdeacon, though the wardens in particular are officers of the bishop and do have direct access to him. When the minister has lost his vision or way, when the life of the parish has stagnated or become moribund as a result, the churchwardens will come to the archdeacon's study and ask what is to be done. They have a duty to perform for they have been told, probably by the archdeacon, that 'they shall use their best endeavours by example and precept to encourage the parishioner in the practice of true religion and to promote unity and peace among them.' This has ever been the role of the churchwardens. Indeed in the Elizabethan period we are told 'if the parson represented the church spiritual, the churchwardens represented the church militant.' They were the outer works. They touched parish life at every point. They regulated its daily and weekly routine. Today's churchwarden still touches the parish at every point. They need careful pastoral nurturing too – and should get it.

Frequently the archdeacon will make contact with the parochial church council to talk about schemes for pastoral reorganisation, or the quota, or the vacancy in the benefice. These opportunities present scope for a real pastoral ministry, giving the council a vision of the church's work or even if necessary, some sort of gentle but helpful evaluation of the council's own participation in ministry, or just helping the members of the council to get things into a proper perspective.

Preaching and training

Much of what has been said above about giving the people in the parishes a vision of their vocation, and renewing them in that vision, can be achieved by the archdeacon in his teaching and training office. From the start, the archdeacon 'assisted the bishop in preaching' and this is probably more so now as he is invited to parishes for special occasions to do with stewardship, missions, and dedication feasts as well as the inevitable harvest thanksgiving. There are now increasingly opportunities to preach on ordinary Sundays as archdeacons become less associated with cathedrals and parishes and become peripatetic each weekend within their archdeaconries.

Training of church officers has as its ultimate objective the smooth running of the church in the parishes. Since this is a very important part of the archdeacon's office it follows that he should be closely involved in it. Training includes of course, sessions for new incumbents or incumbents new to the diocese. At least one of the archdeacons ought to be involved in the post ordination training giving lectures on canon law, the faculty jurisdiction, and parish administration. This is probably the most useful training an archdeacon can be involved in for it rarely appears in pre-ordination training and hardly ever in the curate's first parish. It is the one subject everyone assumes someone else has covered.

Relations with the rural or area deans

In so far as the role of the archdeacon has changed so that of the rural dean has developed. Increasingly the archdeacon relies upon the deans, to investigate, to plan vacancies, to cope with emergencies, to prepare for the appointment of new incumbents, to rehearse institutions and inductions, to visit and to inspect. Yet the Marc Europe Report reveals that fifty two per cent of archdeacons only meet with their rural deans once a year. The rest meet at least four times a year. There is much scope here for a pastoral ministry to the rural deans of support and affirmation as well as the continuing training through group meetings when all can share experiences and ideas.

Reporting to the diocesan bishop

The archdeacon, as the eyes and ears of the bishop, has also a duty to report back on those matters upon which the bishop has sought information; and, also on occasions, observations which the archdeacon has heard made within his archdeaconry about the bishop's own style of ministry. This requires delicacy, but must not be shirked, for it is important that the bishop should be apprised of criticisms expressed by the clergy and the diocese at large, whether there are grounds for such criticisms or not. In order that each may keep the other informed of what is happening, or being reported in the diocese, each will have to develop an open frankness with each other.

6. THE CARE OF ARCHDEACONS

The figures given in the Marc Europe report on the work of an archdeacon are most interesting. If fifty per cent of archdeacons have no other job but that of being an archdeacon then fifty per cent must be combining their archdeaconry with another task in the diocese or the cathedral or a parish. Much will depend upon the nature of the other job, or the extent of chapter support,

or size of the parish, but it must be remembered that the change in the role has been quite extensive in a matter of twenty years. The 'all gas and gaiters' image which was current in the forties and fifties assumed a leisurely archidiaconal style. Today's archdeacon could be travelling from Cornwall to London in a day and then conducting a meeting or an interview when he returns. He will be expected to travel an average 12,750 miles per annum and spend eight hours a week in the care. Nearly twenty per cent travel over 20,000 miles each year. The report also draws attention to the fact that 'the added responsibilities can lead to conflict of loyalties, and could enforce maintenance thinking rather than aid development.' There is a great danger that the very factors of stress which the archdeacon is trying to remove from the work pattern of the clergy will swamp the archdeacon himself.

If it is a theology of order which helps to motivate the archdeacon's thinking and planning then that same understanding of order must prevail in the organisation of his own work. On Sundays fifty percent of archdeacons will be getting into their cars for a journey to one of the churches in their area. The greatest cultural shock for the new archdeacon is not having a regular base for worship. It is a greater shock for his family, especially if there are children who are still at home. Many would argue that during the weekday an archdeacon should have a base for his recital of the offices and disciplined life of prayer and worship.

The Regional meetings of archdeacons have proved invaluable in the past especially in the southern province where most regions meet about twice a year to pool information and discuss the work of the archdeacon as it is affected by developments and measures.

Frequently it is suggested that a clearer definition of the role of the suffragan bishop in relation to that of the archdeacon is needed. In theory, if the role of the archdeacon vis à vis the bishop is clear there ought to be no overlapping between suffragan and archdeacon.

Which of course brings us back to where we started. Sir Robert Phillimore said that the primitive office of the archdeacon was to attend the bishop; to assist in management; to assist in preaching; to present at ordinations and to censure the clergy, to be in fact the eyes, ears and mouth of the bishop. Today he may not wear a toga, or a dalmatic, or gaiters and a frock coat, but wearing his hard hat as he climbs with the architect to the top of the tower with a clip board in his hand he is recognisably still what he has always been, a steward of the bishop and his diocese.

Look again at Anthony Trollope . . . "To define, – or rather to make intelligible by any definition – an archdeacon's power and duties, would be difficult . . . The archdeacon holds a court, and makes visitations. These visitations may be made pretty much at pleasure. He inquires as to the administration of the services, seeing that the canons are maintained, but has no power to alter aught; and as there seems to be much difficulty in knowing when and by what the canons are maintained, and by when and what they are not maintained, we may imagine that the enquiries of a discreet archdeacon into the practices of a respectable and efficient parson will not be too close or searching in this matter of the canons. He must be an earnest working parish clergyman, or he would hardly have been selected as an archdeacon . . . And he walks just a

head taller than other clergyman around him, receiving that pleasant attitude from the modest authority which he carries . . . but an archdeacon is not raised by his dignity above a capability for jovial intimacy. . .

One can notice with sadness or wry amusement that the Trollopian image still sticks, but just as the Victorian archdeacon was a product of the Victorian church so today's archdeacon is a product of today's church. He tries to fulfil his ancient role in a relevant and efficient way because the insight of the early church was to create an officer who, whatever standards of administration prevails, can adapt to be always the eyes and ears and mouth of the chief pastor of Christ's flock.

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