

VISION FOR ACTION – MISSION

Questions about Church you've always wanted answered but don't like to ask!!

These questions are now being answered over time in The Pinnacle. If you have such a question do let me know and we will try to provide answers in subsequent editions. If your question hasn't been answered yet look out for the response in future editions!

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This month we look at some questions that have been asked about the different titles and roles of clergy. Next month we will look at some of the other roles in the Parish.

In the Church of England there are three Orders – Bishop, Priest and Deacon. A person cannot be ordained Priest before the age of 24 nor consecrated Bishop before the age of 30. The essence of one Order is not removed by advancement to another Order so for example a Bishop remains both Priest and Deacon.

Deacon: (from the Greek word *diakonos* meaning a servant)

The diaconate in the Church of England usually lasts for one year after Ordination. (I was a deacon here from July 2006 to July 2007 when I was ordained Priest).

A Deacon can undertake pastoral duties, preach and teach, assist in leading worship and officiate at Morning and Evening Prayer, baptise, officiate at funerals and administer Holy Communion. They cannot confirm, ordain, celebrate the Eucharist, solemnise a marriage, give absolution or a blessing.

Priest: (from the Greek word *presbuteros*)

Most clergy remain in this Order for the rest of their ministry.

A Priest can do all that a Deacon does and celebrate the Eucharist, solemnise a marriage, give absolution and give a blessing. A Priest cannot confirm or ordain.

Bishop: (from the Greek word *episkopos* meaning an overseer)

A Bishop can do all that a Deacon does and all that a Priest does and can Confirm and Ordain.

Some of the other terms we use have particular historical roots but have slightly different meanings these days.

Rector: (from the Latin word *rector* meaning ruler)

In past centuries the clergy received tithes (a tenth part of all the produce of lands) as payment for their labours. There were three sorts of tithes and these were divided into great tithes (the tithes of the major crops) and small tithes (the tithes of the minor produce). When the Incumbent (the holder of the Parochial charge) who in earlier days did not always reside in the Parish was entitled to the whole tithes of the Parish he was termed a Rector. The Rector was then also compelled to provide and endow a clergyman (and it was in those times) to live in the parish and perform the Church duties. This clergyman was known as the Vicar. The vicar's endowment usually took the form of a portion of the glebe (the cultivated land from which rents were derived for the maintenance of the incumbent of a parish) together with the small tithes (because they were generally hard to collect!!). If there were both a rector and a vicar living in the parish, the rector normally had the great tithes and the vicar the small tithes. Legislation in the 20th Century led to the abolition of payment for clergy by tithes.

Vicar: (from the Latin word *vicarius* meaning deputy)

This used to be used just for the priest of a parish where the tithes had been appropriated (see above). Now it is used to denote the priest of a parish.

Curate: (from the medieval Latin word *curatus* meaning one having charge)

Originally this was a clergyman who had the charge or cure (Spiritual care) of a parish but now most commonly used to denote members of the clergy who assist Incumbents in the performance of their duties. Curates are licensed to perform these duties by the Bishop.

Rural Dean:

The Rural Dean is a member of the clergy appointed by the Bishop to act as a channel of communication with the incumbents, other clergy and people of a group of Parishes known as the Deanery. The Rural Dean presides over the Chapter of the Rural Deanery, which are the meetings of the Incumbents, licensed clergy and licensed parish workers of the Deanery. The Rural Dean is also Co-Chair with the Deanery Lay Chair of the Deanery Synod.

Our Rural Dean is The Rev'd William Thackray and our Deanery Synod Lay Chair is Mr Phil Brown.

And finally the question set last month by Kevan about the candles! Having done my research amongst a number of friends and colleagues of different denominations here is my response!

Why should there be six candles on the Altar?

The short answer is because the Magisterium says so! The Magisterium is the teaching or authority of the Roman Catholic Church especially as exercised by bishops or The Pope.

The slight longer answer tells us that the issue is about the significance of the number 7, rather than 6. Traditionally, when the Bishop celebrates Mass, 7 candles are always used. This is a continuation of using the seven-branched candlestick [menorah] in Jewish worship - cf. Exodus 25. 'Seven' is, of course, one of those biblically important numbers - days of creation, gifts of the Spirit etc. And crucially we are told in Revelation 4.5 that 7 lamps of fire burn before the heavenly throne. So when the Bishop celebrated Mass as Christ's representative on earth, earthly worship was framed to mirror its heavenly paradigm. The corollary to this is that when the Bishop was absent, so was the seventh candle. It is still the custom today that when the Bishop is present, the seventh candle is reinstated, and would be placed behind the altar - dead centre - restoring the completeness of this '7' symbolism. (Thanks to Father David Charles for this explanation).