



# DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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## **Launch of the Clergy Training Fund 2023** **(30<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time)**

Dear Friends,

It is a privilege to write to you on the launch of the Clergy Training Fund 2023 and to call upon your generosity in prayer and financial support for those training for Priesthood and Permanent Diaconate in Hexham and Newcastle Diocese.

This Sunday is an opportunity to give thanks to the clergy of our diocese who offer so much through their ministry to the people of our parishes and partnerships. The generosity they show to others is exemplary, considering the amount of extra work they have to undertake, as most priests now have the responsibility of multiple parishes.

In the life of our parishes and partnerships we rely upon the service of one another to build up the Church. It is through prayer and the joy of serving others that we find our vocation, our calling in Christ. Among the various ways God calls us the Lord Jesus himself established the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. Through the laying on of hands, priests and deacons share in a very special way the ministry of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve.

Our priests walk alongside us in the good and more challenging moments of life, they celebrate the sacraments for us, particularly the Holy Eucharist. Priests and deacons preach the gospel and are a reminder to us of the love of Jesus. In July this year our diocese was blessed with the ordination of two new priests, Paul Kilduff and Endre Kormos and two new permanent deacons, Alison Rebello and Patrick Rutherford.

Each year we make an appeal to support the Clergy Training Fund in response to the ever increasing costs of training priests and deacons to serve in our diocese. At present Hexham and Newcastle has three men training for the priesthood, one in the English College Rome, another in St. Mary's College, Oscott and another at Allen Hall in London.

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There are also approximately ten enquirers who meet monthly at the priestly discernment meetings at St Mary's Cathedral. We also have four candidates who are currently being formed to serve as permanent deacons.

There is no state funding for seminaries or for the formation of permanent deacons and so the money required to provide each student with accommodation, living costs and tuition for a number of years needs to be found from the generous support of people who contribute to this fund. The Clergy Training Fund is also used to finance the on-going formation of diocesan clergy, whether it be for professional studies or to support the educational costs for those on sabbatical.

All of us are reminded in the short but very poignant Gospel for the 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year just how clear the Lord is in his response to the question coming from the Pharisees "Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Jesus movingly says, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself."

In this teaching we have the Law simplified so that we are able to take it to our hearts more easily, in the hope that we will radiate it back out to others. The love of God needs to be felt and witnessed by everyone if our communities are going to grow. They therefore need to be led and supported by the Church's ministerial priesthood. We therefore need to pray for our priests and deacons and pray that God will touch the hearts of those who feel called to serve as priests and deacons in our diocese.

Your kindness, through this annual collection, legacies and bequests is vital and very much appreciated by those preparing for ministry. It is thanks to parishioners like you, past and present, that we can support the clergy of tomorrow and ensure the flourishing of our Church.

With every good wish in the Lord,  
Father John Bagnall  
*Diocesan Director of Priestly Vocations*