



Obituary for

The Reverend Deacon John Anthony Newman

8th June 1943-8th July 2021



John Newman was born in Woolwich on 8th June 1943 at the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies. As he was born, the hospital was hit by a bomb and as a result, the midwife thought it would be a good idea to baptise the new baby immediately. John was the son of Albert and Josephine Newman and they had one other son, Mark.

John attended the local Catholic schools in Orpington, Margate and Welling and having completed his education he went to work as a trainee salesman in the outfitting department of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society in Bexleyheath. Two years later, he applied for the position of junior clerk with the Royal Mail Lines in the Engineering department. John had always had a love for the sea and had been a sea cadet with the Royal Navy. After four years, he decided to apply to join the Royal Navy and was accepted.

John wrote in his essay upon application to join the Diaconate Programme, that the day he joined the Royal Navy his life changed. During his service career he managed to see most of the world and to live in places long enough to get to know the surrounding area. His time in the navy brought home to him the necessity of helping other people in whatever way he could.

He met his wife, Janice (known as Jan) in 1966 and they were married after a two-year engagement, during which John was on an eighteen-month commission to Singapore, on 12th April 1969 at the Church of Our Lady of the Angels, Erith. Between then and before John finally left the Navy in 1984 the longest period they were together was three years. John reflected that navy life was often, home on weekend leave or a fortnight if they were lucky.

After he left the Navy John took up employment with Thames Water as a shift engineer. He eventually became a training advisor and an NVQ Trainer/Assessor.

His commitment to his faith never waived during his time at sea and upon returning to civilian life, he became actively involved in the life of his local parish of Waterslade. One of his parish priests asked him to consider becoming a Eucharistic Minister and it was during this time that John began to reflect and discern his calling to ministry. After discussions with his wife, his parish priest and friends, this call became stronger and John eventually applied to be considered as a candidate for the Diaconate for the Southwark Archdiocese and was accepted by Archbishop Michael Bowen for formation and began his studies at Wonersh in September 1998. During his formation John was working for the Egyptian Government as a consultant in Water Treatment (Nile Project) and he would fly in and out of Egypt once a month to continue with his studies at Wonersh

John was ordained to the Diaconate by the then recently appointed auxiliary bishop in Southwark, Bishop John Hine at the Church of St Simon Stock, Walderslade on 22nd June 2001. He was assigned to the Chatham Deanery for service in the parish of Walderslade.

Deacon John was a very active member of the parish clergy team at Walderslade and a popular member of the Deanery Clergy. In the parish he was involved in many areas of parish life. He was a great support to his parish priests. John had always been an active member of the Knights of St Columba and in 2015 he was appointed by Archbishop Peter Smith as Council chaplain to council 418 Chatham-Province 12 Southwark. In his letter of appointment, Archbishop Peter wrote, "I have absolute confidence that you will give the Knights many years of faithful service"

Deacon John was called to serve and reached out to others. He was particularly aware of the Deacons Ministry of Charity and the need to bring the message of the Gospel to all places, to all people. One of his many roles that brought him great joy was his time as Chaplain to the Operations Department of the Kent Police.

In 2019, Deacon John wrote to Archbishop Peter to offer his resignation as a Deacon having reached his 75th birthday. In his letter of response the Archbishop wrote, "I am most grateful to you for all the good work you have done and the ministry you have exercised as a Deacon over the years. You have also very kindly said that you will be continuing to help in the deanery if need be. I am happy that you will continue as Chaplain to Council 418 Chatham of the Knights of St Columba. I am sure they will be delighted!"

Pope Francis described Deacons as part of the clergy who live their vocation in and with their family, dedicated to the service of the poor, who carry within them the face of the suffering Christ. They are the guardians of service in the Church. Deacon John led a life of service faithful to his calling to serve the Lord he loved.

John's health had not been good in the last few years and he died on the morning of 8th July 2021 in the Medway Maritime Hospital, Gillingham.

His wife Jan survives him.

Deacon John Newman, who died on 8th July 2021, aged 77 and in the 20th year of his diaconate.

May he rest in Peace and Rise in Glory.

(Photograph from the Walderslade Parish Website)