

## Media Questionnaire: Deacons

Your name, age and original home village, town or city (i.e. the place where you grew up):

**Answer:**

**Name: Ryan Philip Otley, age 32. I grew up Darwen and the majority of my life I have attended St Cuthbert's church in the town, where I undertook several roles including that of Churchwarden.**

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

**Answer: St Anne (Heyhouses), St-Annes-on-Sea**

Tell us about your family:

**Answer: My parents are May and Philip, who are both from Darwen, and I have a younger brother, Adam, and an older sister, Ashleigh. I also have two step-siblings, CharloCe and Darren and step-parents Alex and Gillian.**

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?

**Answer: Before ministry I was a secondary school teacher who taught Computer Science and Business studies before moving to work in a pupil referral unit.**

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?

**Answer: Since leaving university for the first time and immersing myself back in my local parish church, members of the congregation and colleagues at work regularly kept asking have I ever considered priesthood. My answer for many years was no as I was happy teaching. As the years went on and I got more and more involved in parish life my sense of calling got deeper and deeper until I could no longer ignore it and I had to answer it; so here I am.**

What's been the best thing about your training?

**Answer: Living alongside a religious community of Benedictine Monks and learning from their disciplined life of prayer and how to love and live in community with others as the Body of Christ. As well as getting to meet different people from different walks of life and traditions and of the church and being able to learn from them.**

Can you say what is the most important thing you have learned during your training?

**Answer: Prayer, scripture, sacrament and community are the bedrock of Christian Faith.**

Reflecting on the difficult past year, please share a few thoughts about how the pandemic has impacted on ministry at this time (you could reflect how people have adapted to the circumstances in different ways as part of this response) ...

**Answer: I think it has made the church re-assess what it is people need and how the church does pastoral care. I also think it has highlighted the importance of lay ministry and empowering them to go into the world to proclaim the Good News and support those in need.**

Meanwhile, what are some of your personal reflections on ministry in the post-pandemic period that lies ahead; the challenges and the opportunities?

**Answer: I think there is a great opportunity for the church to reassess and work out how it can really live out the gospel in the local communities it has in its charge. In**

**these times it is good to be reminded that there is life beyond ourselves and there is an unbroken chain of Christian witness going back through the centuries. Sometimes we need to stop and reflect that there is more to life than this present moment, that things will change and we will see a new creation. Until then we simply need to share with each other the joys and tears of our common humanity and remember with thankfulness those who have gone before us in faith who have ensured that we can take forward the message of hope for our world.**

Tell us something people don't know about you that might surprise them?

**Answer: I once walked the Three Peaks in the Yorkshire Dales in seven and half hours.**

What do you view as your most significant personal achievement, before or during training?

**Answer: Being a constant positive influence on teenagers who I've worked with and managing to support them in extremely challenging times and giving them support to change their lives.**

How do you hope to continue to support the Diocesan Vision 2026 at a parish level?

**Answer: To proclaim the catholic faith and get out amongst the people and live out the Gospel message with joy and hope.**

How would you express your own vision for the church?

**Answer: For the Church to live, breath and work as the Body of Christ. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 1 Corinthians 12: 26-27**

Finally, when you get the chance, how do you relax?

**Answer: I love walking in the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales and reading crime thrillers with a cup of tea.**