

## TROPARION to St. Phoebe

Commemorated September 3

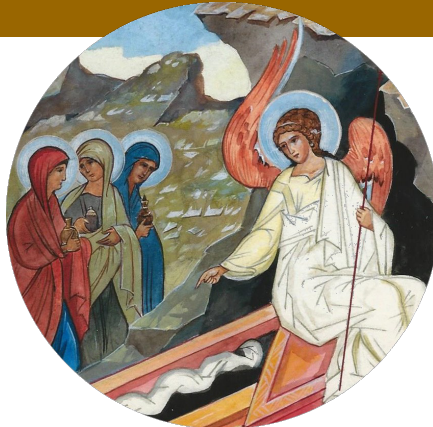
*Enlightened by grace  
And taught the Faith by the  
chosen vessel of Christ,  
You were found worthy of the diaconate;  
And you carried Paul's words to Rome.  
O Deaconess Phoebe, pray to Christ God  
That His Spirit may enlighten our souls!*



In 1988 a high-level Pan-Orthodox Consultation concluded that “the apostolic order of deaconesses should be revived.” Convened in Rhodes by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, this body of bishops, theologians, and academics found that “the deaconess was ordained within the sanctuary during the Divine Liturgy.” Ordination today should be done with “the prayers found in the Apostolic Constitution and the ancient Byzantine liturgical books.” Given these significant findings, the time is right for a dialogue among the laity, deacons, priests and bishops about ordaining women deacons for the building up the body of Christ and the glory of God.

## Christ's Example

*In a time and culture in which women were limited to performing familial duties, and held a marginal position within society, Christ acted in a most radical manner. He spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, He healed the woman with the flow of blood, and first revealed His Resurrection to the Myrrh Bearing Women who are called 'Apostles to the Apostles.'*



## PURPOSE and GOALS

- Sharing the history of the female diaconate in the early church
- Serving as a repository of historical documents, sacred texts, articles, and contemporary scholarship that explores the purpose of the female diaconate
- Discerning how restoration of the female diaconate can help build up the body of Christ
- Aiding and supporting the re-establishment of the female diaconate
- Conducting conferences and seminars to educate others on the history and re-establishment of the female diaconate

*St. Phoebe icon courtesy of Convent of Saint Elizabeth (conventofsaintelizabeth.org). Holy Myrrh Bearing Women icon courtesy of Holy Trinity Icon Mounting Studio (iconstudio.jordanville.org).*

# Deaconesses

IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH



The early Church ordained women in the altar as female deacons, and entrusted them with numerous duties. *How could restoration of this ordained role help build up Christ's Church & His people?*

*St. Phoebe Center*

FOR THE DEACONESS  
orthodoxdeaconess.org

## Why Restore the Female Diaconate?

Female deacons did more than help with female baptisms. Thirteen historical duties are listed in *The Study of Liturgy* and *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of East and West*. They included administration, supervision at Liturgy, taking charge of properties, reporting to the bishop, providing pastoral care to women, sheltering guests, education, and more. The majority of those needs most definitely exist today.



**While the priest is the shepherd of his parish, it is unrealistic and unhealthy to think that he can meet all of the needs of his parish.** Ordained members of his parish (male & female deacons) can help him carry out his pastoral and ministerial roles, **which can result in a spiritually healthier parish.** We have unfortunately seen the responsibilities of the male deacon fall away, leaving a distorted view of the deacon as a liturgical assistant and merely a required first step to the priesthood, rather than a calling of service (*diaconia*). Restoring the rightful role of the diaconate is critical to the health and well-being of the Orthodox faithful.

## Benefits to the Church

Limiting the diaconate to men ignores the gifts and talents of half the faithful, and assumes that the priest and deacon can successfully address the unique needs of women. This is not realistic. Woman-to-woman counseling is beneficial and necessary for the well-being, health, and salvation of the entire Church. Counseling and support can include matters of marital relations, motherhood, abortion, miscarriage, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, care-giving, and other issues.



The female diaconate could strengthen the pastoral care of the faithful by connecting them to the sacramental life of the Church, recapturing the philanthropic dimension of the Liturgy, focusing on the Word of God, and integrating the pastoral, social, and liturgical dimensions of the diaconate more fully. **Assuming that women can minister outside of ordination misses the point of ordination.** Ordination is a setting apart of a person for ministry in a particular community, which changes that person's relationship with the community. Furthermore, when ordained by the bishop, a person's ministry is recognized by the entire Church.

[orthodoxdeaconess.org](http://orthodoxdeaconess.org)

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*Please pray for our work!*

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