

A Call for the Rejuvenation of the Ministry of the Ordained Deaconess

Addressed to

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and the
Secretariat of the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church

Submitted by Saint Catherine's Vision (SCV):

*An International, Pan-Orthodox Christian Fellowship of Women Theologians and Other Lay
Servant-Leaders*

Feast Day of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, November 24/25, 2014

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Introduction

“The apostolic order of the deaconess should be revived. It was never altogether abandoned in the Orthodox Church though it has tended to fall into disuse . . . The revival of this ancient order . . . would represent a positive response to many of the needs and demands of the contemporary world. This would be all the more true if the diaconate in general (male as well as female) were restored in all places in its original, manifold services (diakoniai) with extension into the social sphere, in the spirit of the ancient tradition and in response to the increasing specific needs of our time. It should not be solely restricted to a purely liturgical role or considered to be a mere step on the way to higher “ranks” of clergy.”¹

These affirmations are contained in the Statement of the historic “*Inter-Orthodox Symposium on the Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women*” held October 30 through November 7, 1988 on the island of Rhodes, Greece.² Convened by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Symposium brought together hierarchs and theologians from the Autocephalous Churches.³

Mindful of the Statement from Rhodes, this *Call for the Rejuvenation of the Ministry of the Ordained Deaconess* is offered with much respect to His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Secretariat of the Great and Holy Council in anticipation of this important assembly.

¹ Gennadios Limouris, (ed.), *Place of Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women*, (“Tertios” Publications: Katerini, Greece) 1992, p. 31-32; See also: Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, “The Inter-Orthodox Theological Consultation on Women in the Church,” *Ecumenical Trends*, 18:3, 1989, pp.33-34; and Idem., *Women Deacons in the Orthodox Church: Called to Holiness and Ministry*, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1999), pp. 160-67.

² This is also referred to as the “*Conclusions of the Consultation Report*,” Limouris, pp. 21-34.

³ This now well-known consultation was convened under the leadership of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I, of blessed memory. Hierarchical representatives from each of the canonical Eastern Orthodox Churches were invited to discuss this topic together, making their concluding recommendations the most authoritative Orthodox communication regarding the ministry of women to date.

I. “God is Wondrous in His Saints”

For both the living and the departed, the declaration “God is Wondrous in His Saints” is an audacious and ancient affirmation prayerfully proclaimed by the Church during the weekday celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The centrality of this proclamation in the life of the Church is by no means a coincidence. Being among the “holy ones of God” marks the calling of every member of the Church who has “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27) through Baptism. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the vocation of every baptized Christian is to be “Christophoros” or “Christ-bearer”.

Since the days of the Apostolic Church countless “holy ones of God” have been called to the ordained ministries of the episcopacy, presbyterate and diaconate from within the “royal priesthood” (I Peter 2:9) of God’s People. By Divine Grace, they were called to be servant-leaders who “build up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12b) and to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12a).

Women have been included in the great number of holy persons called to serve. Among those in this number are women ordained to the diaconate, or deaconesses. The number of women deacons has varied from time to time and place to place. The Rhodes Statement points out that: “It was never altogether abandoned in the Orthodox Church though it has tended to fall into disuse”. The example of St. Nektarios the Wonderworker, who ordained two deaconesses in the year 1911, is especially significant.⁴

II. “Sovereign Lord, You who do not reject women offering themselves and desiring to minister in Your holy houses . . . but rather receive them in an order of ministers . . . ”⁵

One of the two prayers for the Byzantine rite for the Ordination for the Deaconess solemnly states that the Lord does “not reject women offering themselves and desiring to minister in your holy houses, in accordance with what is fitting”. In the ordination service, we pray that the Lord receives her “into an order of ministers” and bestows “the grace of your Holy Spirit also upon this your servant who desires to offer herself to You, and fill her with the grace of the diaconate, just as You gave the grace of your diaconate to Phoebe, whom You called to the work of ministry” (See: Appendix I).

⁴ *The “Ordination” or “Appointment” of Deaconess* (in Greek), Evangelos Theodorou, (Athens: 1954), p. 96, FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, pp. 151-152.

⁵ From the second prayer of invocation (*epiclesis*) for the deaconess from the Byzantine ordination rite; Ibid..

As Orthodox scholars have clearly demonstrated, the Byzantine rite for the Ordination of the Deaconess took place during the Divine Liturgy and at the Holy Altar with two prayers. The woman deacon was invested with the diaconal stole. The newly ordained received Holy Communion at the Altar. As with the rite for the male deacon, this parallel rite emphasized that the deaconess is ordained for service.

Today, the ministry of women ordained to the diaconate would benefit the life of the Church. The deaconess, in the ever-expanding needs of the local church under the direction of the bishop, would assist in areas such as pastoral care, education, mission, and philanthropy. She would also expand the outreach of the church particularly through evangelism and witness as well as care for the sick, destitute and unchurched, bearing further witness to the values of the Gospel in the wider society.

The Rhodes Statement correctly says:

*The revival of this ancient order . . . would represent a positive response to many of the needs and demands of the contemporary world. This would be all the more true if the diaconate in general (male as well as female) were restored in all places in its original, manifold services (diakonai) with extension into the social sphere, in the spirit of the ancient tradition and in response to the increasing specific needs of our time. It should not be solely restricted to a purely liturgical role or considered to be a mere step on the way to higher “ranks” of clergy.*⁶

The need for the ministry of deaconesses is not new. The Scriptures, the Fathers, the ancient liturgical texts and the canons in the life of the Church affirm in their way that “*the ministry of a woman deacon is especially important and necessary*”.⁷ Certainly, this ministry may be needed more in some places than in others. This has always been the case in history. Nevertheless, we feel strongly that there are significant human challenges where this expression of ministry is greatly needed and deeply desired. For example, we acknowledge the increasing need for the Church to minister to parents who experience the loss of a child, dealing with end of life decisions, domestic violence, human trafficking and other forms of trauma, addiction and/or affliction. Despite our personal human sinfulness and frailties, these challenges provide opportunities for the Church to bear witness to the eternal fidelity of the Thrice-Holy loving God through His Divine Compassion (*theion eleos*). Situations of need and human brokenness invite us to remember the Lord’s command, “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

In offering these observations, we call to mind the many deaconesses and their ministries that the Church honors and commemorates. We especially remember: St Phoebe (1st century), “a deacon (*diakonon*) of the Church of Cenchreae” and “Equal to the Apostles”

⁶ Limouris, p. 31-32.

⁷ Syriac *Didascalia*, III: 12.

whom Saint Paul referred to as “a benefactor of many and of myself as well” (Rom. 16 1-2); St. Olympias (4th century), abbess, evangelist, friend and confidant of St. John Chrysostom whom he highly respected; St. Nonna (4th century), the wife of “the elder” St. Gregory of Nazianzus, parents of St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Gorgonia, who was also a deaconess. St. Gorgonia is praised for her love of Christ, study of Scriptures, love of psalmody, and after raising her family, developed a ministry to the needy by opening her home to the poor. St. Theosevia (4th century), devoted wife of St. Gregory of Nyssa, was ordained to the diaconate right after her husband was consecrated a bishop in 371 and remained with him thereafter. Also St. Irene of Chrysovalantou (9th century), abbess, spiritual mother, intercessor and wonder-worker. Before installing her as abbess of her monastery, St. Methodios the confessor for the faith and Patriarch of Constantinople, enthusiastically “ordained (*cheirotonein*) Irene as a deacon (*diakonon*) of the Great Church of St. Sophia”.⁸

Through this *Call* we are reaching out to the wider Church. We are especially asking our hierarchs to discuss sincerely the rejuvenation of the ordained ministry of deaconesses in the life of the Church today for the benefit of all. The final discernment of every ordination has always been the prerogative of the ordaining bishop who discerns the needs of the church and the qualification of each candidate.

Summary Paragraph

“The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest”. (Mat. 9:37-38)

We offer this *Call for the Rejuvenation of the Ministry of the Ordained Deaconess* with the hope that it will be prayerfully considered prior to the 2016 *Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church* by our Hierarchs, who serve as our Fathers in the Lord. Together with this document, we are submitting some additional background material for our hierarchs to review prior to their historic meeting and we are also sharing this document with the greater Church for edification, consultation and prayer. This *Call for the Rejuvenation of the Ministry of the Ordained Deaconess* is presented by Saint Catherine’s Vision or “SCV” (www.saintcatherinesvision.org), an international, Pan-Orthodox fellowship of women theologians and other lay servant-leaders addressing contemporary concerns from an Orthodox Christian perspective. Founded in 2001, with our hierarchs’ blessing, we are an endorsed organization of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. We fervently support the conclusions regarding the rejuvenation of the ministry of ordained deaconesses as stated by the 1988 Rhodes Inter-Orthodox Symposium. We are offering for consideration in this document a few suggested initial parameters for this ministry’s renewal and implementation. We believe that the ministry of ordained deaconesses may be of great benefit in many places within the life of the Church today as it has been in the history of the Church. Established in the

⁸ Theodorou, p. 42, Demetrios Tsamis, (ed.), *Myterikon* (in Greek), (Thessaloniki, Greece: 1990) vol. II, p. 258, cf. vol. IV, p 264-65, FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, pp. 1-17, 28-58.

Compassion of God (*theion eleos*), the God who loves us first, this Apostolic ministry may become a witness in those many places that thirst for the outreach of Christ, the One Who Serves (Luke 22:27).

III. Expressing the Vision of the Church: Examples from Recent History

Contemporary discussions regarding the ministry of deaconesses can be traced across the Orthodox world, including the Church in Russia, Georgia, Greece and elsewhere, reaching back at least to the early 1800's. It was within this historical context that St. Nektarios of Aegina ordained two nuns as deaconesses at the monastery in which he served.⁹

Today, we acknowledge with profound gratitude, the efforts of Orthodox theologian and scholar, Professor Evangelos Theodorou, Professor *Emeritus* of the School of Theology of the University of Athens, who has conducted research and advocated for this ministry since the 1940's. With great respect and tender appreciation for his steadfast, faithful service within the life of the Church, this *Call* is written and submitted in his honor.

In addition to Professor Theodorou, visionary arch-pastors have also advocated for this expression of ministry. For example, Archbishop Michael of America (+1958), of blessed memory, sent an *Open Letter* in 1953 to his flock which advocated the establishment of the ministry of deaconesses in his Archdiocese (See: Appendix II). This same desire was also expressed in the 1960's by Archbishop Iakovos of America (+2005), of blessed memory, during the keynote address of at least two Clergy-Laity Congresses.¹⁰ Likewise, His Beatitude Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens (+2008), of blessed memory, also actively advocated for many years for the rejuvenation of this ministry. While serving as the Metropolitan of Demetrias (Volos, Greece) he ordained a nun for service within her monastery in 1986. He continued to advocate for the rejuvenation of this ministry in subsequent years during his tenure as the Archbishop of Athens. He invited Metropolitan Chrysostom of Chalkidos to speak to the Synod of Bishops for the Church of Greece in 2004 while they were discussing the topic of *The Role of Women in the Entire Structure of the Church: Rejuvenating the Order of Deaconesses*. Metropolitan Chrysostom offered a well-documented presentation stressing among other things that:

It is certainly possible to rejuvenate this praiseworthy order, with its many diversified and blessed activities, as long as the Church decides this is necessary, after carefully weighing her needs and

⁹ Constance Tarasar, *Woman: Handmaid of the Lord*, (Yonkers, NY: Thesis, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1965), pp. 332-342, FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, pp. 149-78.

¹⁰ Archbishop Iakovos, *Visions and Expectations for a Living Church: Addresses to Clergy Laity Congresses, 1960-1996*, ed. Demetrios J. Constantelos, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), pp. 20-21, 41; See also: FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, p. 157.

*study, being illumined by the Holy Spirit concerning the 'signs of the times'.*¹¹

Both of these hierarchs of the Church of Greece, together with others, openly supported the conclusions of the Rhodes Inter-Orthodox Consultation in 1988 on the topic *The Place of Women in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women*. As already noted, this Consultation advocated unanimously for the rejuvenation of the ministry of female deacons (See: Appendix III).¹²

Addressing a Conference of Orthodox women in Constantinople in 1997, His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew said that he recognized:

*[the renewed] call for the full restoration of the order of deaconesses. This recommendation echoes a similar one coming from the Inter-Orthodox Consultation in Rhodes in 1988. The order of ordained deaconesses is an undeniable part of tradition coming from the Early Church. Now, in many of our Churches, there is a growing desire to restore this order so that the spiritual needs of the People of God may be better served. There are already a number of women who appear to be called to this ministry.*¹³

IV. Discerning through Contemporary Challenges

The prayers of the ordination rite of the deaconess declare: “*O God,... Who... Bestowed the Grace and Advent of the Holy Spirit not to Men Alone, but also to Women . . .*”.¹⁴ What does this mean for the Church today? In addition to identifying parameters of the depth and the breath of the ministry of the deaconess, we have also been examining various contemporary attitudes and perspectives that challenge Orthodox Christian practice regarding the ordination of women to the diaconate and the ministry of women in general. Approaches which differ substantially from the theological foundation of the Church disrupt and injure the process, thus missing the mark of cultivating growth in the life-giving “*phronema*”.

¹¹ News Release of the Church of Greece, *Statement of the Holy Synod*; Athens, Greece; 8 October 2004 (translation).

¹² A third of the consultants invited to participate were Orthodox women theologians from various parts of the world.

¹³ *Address of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Inter-Orthodox Conference for Women*, (Phanar, Istanbul: May 12, 1997).

¹⁴ From the first prayer of invocation (*epiclesis*) for the deaconess from the Byzantine ordination rite; See: Theodorou, pp. 55-56; See also: FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, pp. 202-04.

We emphasize the importance of the recommendations from the 1988 Rhodes Statement:

*The Church must re-examine potential data, views and actions, which do not agree with her unshakable theological and ecclesiological principles, but have intruded from outside and, being in fact perpetuated, may be interpreted as demeaning toward women.*¹⁵

Through this *Call*, we bear witness to and affirm the authentic vision of ecclesiology that undergirds the order of the diaconate (as well as every order of loving service within the life of the Church) in the manner that faithfully reflects the life of the Church. For our day, again we express our deepest gratitude for the tireless efforts of Professor Evangelos Theodorou, the recommendations regarding “the Diaconate and ‘Minor Orders’” in the concluding Statement of the 1988 Rhodes, Greece Orthodox Symposium and the vibrant witness of many others who for more than a century have been prayerfully advocating on behalf of this vision.¹⁶

V. *Suggested Initial Parameters for the Deaconess: A Pilot Program?*

With both gratitude and clarity, we affirm that the Church guided by the Holy Spirit enjoys the prerogative of setting the parameters of her ministries. The witness of women’s reception into the ministry as deacons reaches back in the life of the Church to Apostolic times (e.g. Romans 16: 1-2). At the same time, we appreciate how the structure and duties of a contemporary ministry of deaconesses may differ in some ways from place to place from the early centuries, while simultaneously expressing the original Apostolic charism for the sake “of the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12).¹⁷ It is our opinion that the Church may be better served if the rejuvenation of this ministry were to take place in a thoughtful and methodical manner. We suggest that small and measured steps be taken at first, perhaps through a Pilot Program that would last several years. Through such a program, a relatively small number of deaconesses would be ordained, intensely working very closely with their bishops during this time frame. This prudent and circumspect approach would give our hierarchs, and hence the Church, the necessary time, practical information and flexibility to discern more about the contemporary need for, and advantages of, this ministry for their specific situations. Needs may vary considerably from one context to another. Guided by the Holy Spirit, this proposed, relatively small scale Pilot Program would give our bishops ample opportunity to evaluate these initial steps and later cultivate a

¹⁵ Limouris, p. 29.

¹⁶ Limouris, pp. 31-32.

¹⁷ Even a brief historical overview of ministry and Church service in the Christian East reveals that just as the Holy Spirit safeguards the integrity of the specific charism undergirding all ordained and lay ministries, the manner by which these may have been expressed within the life of the Church certainly needed to vary through the course of time and from context to context.

more extensive, official program in the fullness of time in a way that bears witness to the Beauty and Love of the Thrice-Holy God, for His glory. We are offering the following suggestions for consideration to help with the “first steps” for the rejuvenation of the ministry of deaconesses. These are:

- A. *Regarding the Hierarch:*** The local bishop will be responsible for the selection of candidates. An appropriate Orthodox theological education and demonstrated spiritual maturity will be necessary. If the candidate is married, the spouse must be in good standing with the Church and would express in writing his active and willing support of his wife’s vocation and ministry. This would also entail a periodic assessment of persons involved in the diaconal ministry.
- B. *Regarding the Candidate:*** We support completely the conclusions of Professor Theodorou. He stresses that liturgically speaking, “the primary focus of the deaconess is on diaconal ministry (*diakonikon ergon*)”. He reminds us that*“the ordination of the female deacons took place in the presence of the whole Church, during the Divine Liturgy at the same time as the male deacon's ordination, there were two prayers of epiclesis (invocation) of the Holy Spirit, ‘Theia Charis’ (‘Divine Grace’) is proclaimed by the bishop, as with every ordination . . . in all senses identical”*. He continues: “liturgically speaking, deaconesses do not have it on their minds that they wish to be ordained to the presbyterate or episcopacy”. Professor Theodorou also strongly asserts, “While their focus is on their diaconal work (i.e. not liturgical presidency), this is, nevertheless, real priesthood (*ierosyni*) . . .¹⁸ with real ordination (*cheirotomia*)”“From early Byzantium, this ordination was *specifically* designed for women, while at the same time, the ordination shares in the same *typikon* as the male deacon, completely . . .”¹⁹

¹⁸ Regarding “*ierosyni*” (priesthood), Professor Theodorou stresses the traditional Orthodox liturgical understanding that ordained deacons share fully in the “three-fold priesthood” and so are considered ordained to “major orders”. Nevertheless, male and female deacons are ordained to “*irea diakonia*” (“sacred” or “priestly” ministry) not liturgical presidency, which belongs strictly to the presbyter and bishop.

¹⁹ October 9, 2014 telephone interview with Professor Evangelos Theodorou in Athens, Greece; from a series of interviews conducted with Professor Theodorou between October 9 through November 20, 2014 by Professor Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald on behalf of Saint Catherine’s Vision, Sandwich, Massachusetts, USA. Regarding some detractors today who have begun to insist that present day liturgical customs during the ordinations of male deacons, presbyters and bishops e.g. “Isaiah’s Dance,” etc., would not be taking place for the deaconess, thus in effect indicating her service is not a real ordination . . . the professor stated that “those same ordination liturgical customs that are missing in the original Byzantine texts for the ordination of the female deacon are missing also from the parallel texts for the male deacon of that same time period!”. He strenuously emphasized that “the ordination of the deaconess would bear all of the marks the other ordinations customarily enjoy today . . . we have to accept the Church’s contemporary practice on these things”.

Based on his studies of the ministry of the deaconess through history, the professor identifies that today's deaconesses in most cases, "at the discretion of the Synod and the local bishop may be entrusted to . . . distribute Holy Communion to members of the community who are unable to attend the Divine Liturgy". The woman deacon will respond to the many educational, pastoral and philanthropic needs of the local community as discerned by the bishop. She will minister in particular to women and children, and will work in a collaborative manner with other clergy under the direction of the bishop. We are grateful to the merciful Lord that some of this work has been and is still being done by faithful women under the direction of their pastors and hierarchs. In addition to ordaining women to the diaconate, the Rhodes Statement encourages "further study" for the possibility of women to "enter into the "lower orders" . . . without excluding new orders that the Church may consider".²⁰ At the same time, we join our fervent prayers together with those of Professor Theodorou and many others, who sincerely "desire to experience the witness and ministry of the *ierosyni* of the deaconess".²¹ Through this *Call for the Rejuvenation of the Ministry of the Ordained Deaconess*, we are asking our hierarchs to renew this ministry for the sake of the whole Church.

- C. Regarding the rejuvenation of the whole diaconate:** Deacons, both male and female, in a way that is unique to their charism help make present the ministry of Christ, the One Who Serves (Luke 22:27). The rejuvenation of the ministry of female deacons also calls attention to the importance of the diaconate as a whole.

Conclusions

We are deeply grateful and stress once more how the Church enjoys the prerogative to set the parameters of Her own ministries. We sincerely ask our Fathers in the Lord to rejuvenate this ministry, even if it begins through the humble commencement of a Pilot Program such as the one proposed here. We offer this *Call* out of a deep desire to be of service to the Church. We pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit with regard to the future of this important ministry. We are strengthened by the prayers and numerous affirmations expressed throughout history, up until this day, regarding the ministry of women who have been "filled" with "the grace of the diaconate".²² As we close, we reverently recall the affirmation expressed by our Father among the saints, St. John

²⁰ Limouris, p.32.

²¹ Professor Theodorou, October 9, 2014 telephone interview.

²² From the second prayer of the invocation (*epiclesis*) for the deaconess from the Byzantine ordination rite; See: Theodorou, pp. 55-56; See also: *Women Deacons*, FitzGerald, pp. 202-04.

Chrysostom, who encouraged personally the ministry of deaconesses. He declared that “*this order is also in the highest degree necessary, useful and proper in the Church*”.²³

With great sincerity, we ask for your prayers and thank you for your consideration.²⁴

Respectfully submitted by:

***Saint Catherine’s Vision
Feast Day of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, November 24/25, 2014
www.saintcatherinesvision.org***

²³ *Homily 11 on Timothy.*

²⁴ This *Call for the Rejuvenation of the Ministry of the Ordained Deaconess*, also to a great degree, rests on many years of prayer, effort and prodding by our Co-Founder, Clara Nickolson (+2010), as well as the prayers, writings, advocacy and encouraging friendship of Dr. Elizabeth Behr-Sigel (+2005), and the prayers, friendship and scholarship of the recently departed Dr. Constance “Connie” Tarasar, former faculty member of St. Vladimir’s Seminary. Memory Eternal.

Appendix I

The Byzantine Ordination Rite of the Deaconess

Because of the significance of the service of ordination of the deaconess, we present a translation of the Greek text included in Theodorou's study (H "Χειροτονία," 55-6). This service dates from the eighth-tenth centuries and is found in the Barberini codex and the Bessarion codex. The following rite is from Codices B and K of Goar's *Euchologion*.²⁵

After the holy oblation is made, before the opening of the royal gates and before the deacon says "Having commemorated all the saints . . ." she who is to be ordained is brought before the hierarch, and he recites:

Divine grace (which always heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking, ordains N., beloved of God, as deacon. Let us pray for her, that the grace of the Holy Spirit may come upon her).²⁶

Meanwhile, she bows her head and the bishop places his hand on her head. He makes the sign of the cross three times and prays the following:

O God, the Holy and Almighty, who sanctified woman through the birth in the flesh of your only-begotten son and our God from the Virgin; and bestowed the grace and advent of your Holy Spirit not to men alone, but also to women; look now, Lord, upon this your servant and call her to the work of your diaconate, send down upon her the abundant gift of your Holy Spirit. Preserve her in your Orthodox faith, in blameless conduct, always fulfilling her ministry according to your pleasure; because to You (is due all honor, glory and worship, to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit . . .)

After the "Amen" one of the deacons prays the following:

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace of the whole world, let us pray to the Lord.

For our archbishop N. and for his priesthood, assistance,

²⁵ Theodorou, pp. 55-6. See also: Jacobi Goar, *Euchologion sive rituale Graecorum, complectens ritus et ordines*, editio secunda (Venetiis, 1730), 218ff; and *Women Deacons*, FitzGerald, pp. 202-04.

²⁶ Following an ancient practice, it is also believed that the people responded three times with "Lord have mercy" immediately after this bidding.

maintenance, peace, health, salvation and the work of his hands, let us pray to the Lord.

For she who is now being ordained deaconess and for her salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

That God, who loves humankind, will bestow upon her the grace for a spotless and irreproachable diaconate, let us pray to the Lord.

For our pious and God-favored emperor, (let us pray to the Lord).

For our deliverance (from all tribulation wrath, danger and necessity, let us pray to the Lord).

Help us, save us, (have mercy upon us and keep us, O God, by Your grace).

And while this prayer is being said by the deacon the bishop, still keeping his hand in the same position upon the head of the woman being ordained, prays as follows:

Sovereign Lord, You who do not reject women offering themselves and desiring to minister in your holy houses, in accordance with what is fitting, but rather receive them into an order of ministers; bestow the grace of your Holy Spirit also upon this your servant who desires to offer herself to You, and fill her with the grace of the diaconate, just as You gave the grace of your diaconate to Phoebe, whom You called to the work of ministry. O God, grant that she may persevere blamelessly in your holy temples, to cultivate appropriate conduct, especially, prudence (*sophrosyne*); and make your servant perfect so that she, standing at the judgment seat of your Christ, may receive the worthy reward of her good conduct. Through the mercy and love for humanity of your only-begotten Son, with whom You are blessed (together with your All-holy, Good and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.).

After the "Amen," he places the diaconal orarion around her neck under the maphorion, bringing the two ends forward. The deacon then stands on the ambon and says:

Having commemorated all the saints, etc. . . .

After she has communed of the Holy Body and Holy Blood, the archbishop gives her the holy chalice, which she accepts and replaces on the holy altar.

Prayer for the Ordination of a Deaconess²⁷

«Εὐχή ἐπὶ χειροτονία διακονίσσης»
(Κώδικες Β και Κ – Ευχολόγιον Goar)

«Μετά τό γενέσθαι τήν ἁγίαν ἀναφοράν καί ἀνοιγῆναι τάς θύρας· πρίν ἢ εἰπεῖν τόν διάκονον· Πάντων τῶν ἁγίων, προσφέρεται ἡ μέλλουσα χειροτονεῖσθαι τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ καί ἐκφωνῶν τό, Ἡ θεία Χάρις, κλινούσης αὐτῆς τήν κεφαλὴν, ἐπιτίθησι τήν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τήν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς, καί ποιῶν σταυρούς τρεῖς ἐπεύχεται ταῦτα.

Ὁ Θεός ὁ ἅγιος, ὁ Παντοδύναμος, ὁ διὰ τῆς ἐκ Παρθένου κατὰ σάρκα γεννήσεως τοῦ μονογενοῦς Σου υἱοῦ καί Θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἁγιάσας τό θῆλυ· καί οὐκ ἀνδράσι μόνον ἀλλά καί ταῖς γυναιξὶ δωρησάμενος τήν χάριν καί τήν ἐπιφοίτησιν τοῦ ἁγίου Σου Πνεύματος· Αὐτός καί νῦν, Δέσποτα, ἔπιδε ἐπὶ τήν δούλην Σου ταύτην· καί προσκάλεσον αὐτήν εἰς τό ἔργον τῆς διακονίας Σου, καίκατάπεμψον αὐτῇ τήν πλουσίαν δωρεάν τοῦ ἁγίου Σου Πνεύματος· διαφύλαξον αὐτήν ἐν τῇ ὀρθοδόξῳ Σου πίστει, ἐν ἀμέμπτῳ πολιτείᾳ κατὰ τό Σοί εὐάρεστον τήν ἑαυτῆς λειτουργίαν διὰ παντός ἐκπληροῦσαν. Ὅτι πρέπει Σοι ἀμήν.

Καί μετά τό ἀμήν ποιεῖ εἰς τῶν διακόνων εὐχήν οὕτως·

Ἐν εἰρήνῃ τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ὑπέρ τῆς ἁνωθεν εἰρήνης, καί εὐσταθείας τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου· τοῦ κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ὑπέρ τῆς εἰρήνης τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου· τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ὑπέρ τοῦ ἀρχιεπισκόπου ἡμῶν (τοῦ δεῖνος), ἱερωσύνης, ἀντιλήψεως, διαμονῆς, εἰρήνης, ὑγιείας, σωτηρίας αὐτοῦ καί τοῦ ἔργου τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ· τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ὑπέρ τῆς νῦν προχειριζομένης διακονίσσης (τῆσδε) καί τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῆς· τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ὅπως ὁ φιλόανθρωπος Θεός ἄσπιλον καί ἀμόμητον αὐτῇ τήν διακονίαν χαρίσεται· τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν.

Ὑπέρ τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου καί θεοφιλεστάτου βασιλέως ἡμῶν.

Ὑπέρ τοῦ ῥυσθῆναι ἡμᾶς.

Ἀντιλαβοῦ σῶσον.

²⁷ See: Limouris, pp. 229-30.

Καί ἐν τῷ γενέσθαι ταύτην τήν εὐχήν ὑπό τοῦ διακόνου, ἔχων ὁμοίως τήν χεῖρα ἐπὶ τήν κεφαλὴν τῆς χειροτονουμένης ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος, ἐπεύχεται οὕτως.

Δέσποτα Κύριε, ὁ μηδέ γυναῖκας ἀναθεμένας ἑαυτάς καί βουληθείσας καθ' ὃ προσῆκε λειτουργεῖν τοῖς ἁγίοις οἴκοις Σου ἀποβαλλόμενος, ἀλλά ταύτας ἐν τάξει λειτουργῶν προσδεξάμενος· δώρησαι τήν χάριν τοῦ Ἁγίου Σου Πνεύματος καί τῇ δούλῃ Σου ταύτῃ, βουληθείσῃ ἀναθεῖναι Σοι ἑαυτήν, καί τήν διακονίας ἀποπληρῶσαι χάριν, ὥς ἔδωκας χάριν τῆς διακονίας Σου Φοίβῃ, ἣν ἐκάλεσας εἰς ἔργον τῆς λειτουργίας· παράχου δέ αὐτῇ ὁ Θεός, ἀκατακρίτως προσκαρτερεῖν τοῖς ἁγίοις ναοῖς Σου, ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῆς οἰκείας πολιτείας, σωφροσύνης δέ μάλιστα, καί τελείαν ἀπόδειξον δούλην Σου· ἵνα καί αὐτή, παραστῶσα τῷ βήματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἄξιον τῆς ἀγαθῆς πολιτείας ἀπολήψῃται τὸν μισθόν. Ἐλέει καί φιλανθρωπία τοῦ μονογενοῦς Σου Υἱοῦ, μεθ' οὗ εὐλογητός εἶ· καί τά ἐξῆς.

Καί μετὰ τό ἀμήν, περιτίθῃσι τῷ τραχήλῳ αὐτῆς ὑποκάτωθεν τοῦ μαφωρίου τό διακονικόν ὠράριον, φέρων ἔμπροσθεν τὰς δύο ἀρχάς· καί τότε ὁ ἐν τῷ ἄμβωνι διάκονος λέγει· Πάντων τῶν ἁγίων μνημονεύσαντες καί τά λοιπά.

Μετά (δέ) τό μεταλαβεῖν αὐτήν τοῦ ἁγίου σώματος καί τοῦ ἁγίου αἵματος, ἐπιδίδων αὐτῇ ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος τό ἅγιον ποτήριον· ὅπερ δεχομένη ἀποτίθεται τῇ ἁγίᾳ τραπέζῃ».

*Appendix II*²⁸

ΑΝΟΙΚΤΗ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ
Τοῦ
ΣΕΒ. ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ ΒΟΡΕΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΝΟΤΙΟΥ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ
ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ
Πρὸς
ΤΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΟΑΜΕΡΙΚΑΝΙΔΑΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΥΣ
ΝΕΑΝΙΔΑΣ

AN OPEN LETTER
of
HIS EMINENCE MICHAEL
Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church in
North and South America
to
YOUNG WOMEN
of the Greek Orthodox Faith

January 1953

²⁸ During the early 1950's, the Church of Greece under the leadership of Archimandrite (later Metropolitan) Barnabas, with Professor Theodorou and his wife, Harikleia, also a skilled theologian, established a school for the training of deaconesses. The Theodorou's served as the first faculty members. Graduates were to serve at first in the local communities without ordination. The timing of Archbishop Michael's *Open Letter* to his flock is by no means a coincidence. *Saint Catherine's Vision* is deeply indebted to Presbyteria Emily (Maniates)

Τέκνα μου ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀγαπητά, εὐσερεῖς Ἑλληνοαμερικανοὶ Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί.
Χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη παρὰ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν
Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι,

Ἀφ' οὗτου ἰδρῦθῃ ἡ Ἐκκλησία κάμνει ἔργον ἱεραποστολικόν.

Τὰ λόγια τοῦ Σωτῆρος μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ πορευθέντες εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα κηρύξατε τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον... ἀπηυθύνοντο πρὸς ὅλους ὅσοι συνεχίζομεν τὸ ἔργον τῶν Ἀποστόλων. Ὁ ἱεραποστολικὸς δὲ χαρακτήρ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι καὶ πρέπει νὰ εἶναι ἐντονώτερος καὶ ἐμφανεστερος εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν μεγάλην χώραν εἰς τὴν ὁποίαν ζῶμεν. Καὶ διότι ἐκτός τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας υπάρχουν καὶ πλεῖστοι ἄλλαι· καὶ διότι τὰ τέκνα τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι διασκορπισμένα ἀνά τὴν ἀχανῆ αὐτὴν χώραν καί, ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον, εἶναι μεμονωμένα μέσα εἰς τὰς μυριάδας τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ μακράν, ἄλλοτε πάρα πολὺ καὶ ἄλλοτε ὀλίγον, πάντοτε ὅμως μακράν, ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγιοπνευματικοῦ κέντρου, τὸν κοινωτικὸν Ναόν.

Διὰ νὰ εὐρίσκηται ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία εἰς παντοεινὴν καὶ πλήρη ἐπαφὴν μὲ τὰ πνευματικὰ τέκνα ἔχει ἀνάγκην βοηθῶν πολλῶν. Ἐχει βεβαίως τοὺς ἱερεῖς τῆς. ὑπάρχει, ὅμως, τόση ἐργασία εἰς κάθε κοινότητα, ὥστε νὰ ἀδυνατῇ νὰ ἐπαρκέσῃ μόνος τοῦ ὁ ἱερεὺς. Ἀν θέλῃ μάλιστα, ὥπως ἄλλωστε καὶ πρέπει, νὰ γνωρίζῃ κατ' ὄνομα τὰ πνευματικὰ τέκνα, καὶ τοῦ καθενὸς τὰ προβλήματα καὶ τὰς πνευματικὰς καὶ ἡθικὰς ἀνάγκας, εἶναι καθ' ὁλοκλήριαν ἀδύνατον νὰ ἐπαρκέσῃ μόνος· ὁσονδήποτε καὶ ἂν θελήσῃ νὰ ἐντείνῃ τὰς σαματικὰς καὶ τὰς ψυχικὰς δυνάμεις του.

Αἱ μεγάλοι, αἱ τεράστιαι αὐταὶ ἀνάγκαι τῆς ἐν Ἀμερικῇ Ἑλληνικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας, μᾶς ἔκαμαν νὰ σκεφθῶμεν ὅτι θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ ζητήσαμεν καὶ τὴν βοήθειαν τῶν πνευματικῶν μας θυγατέρων, τῶν Ἑλληνίδων τῆς Ἀμερικῆς. Ἐσκέφθημεν ὅτι θὰ ἔπρεπε χάριν τοῦ μέλλοντος καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῆς Ὁμογενείας νὰ ἰδρύσαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ γ μ α δ ι α κ ο ν ι σ σ ῶ ν. Χάριτι Θεοῦ χάριτος κατὰλληλος καὶ ἀφθονος ὑπάρχει. Εἶναι ἡ Ακαδημία τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου. Κτίρια καὶ ἐγκαταστάσεις διὰ τὸν σκοπὸν αὐτὸν ἐπίσης ὑπάρχουν. Μὲ ὀλίγας ἐπιδιορθώσεις, πού θὰ ἀπαιτήσουν ὄχι μεγάλας δαπάνας θὰ ἐγκατασταθοῦν ἐκεῖ ὥς 25 πρόσωπα τοῦλάχιστον ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος.

Χρειαζόμεθα ὅμως ὀλίγον ἀνθρώπινον. Αὐτὸ δὲ εἶναι καὶ τὸ σπουδαιότερον. Ἄν δὲ δὲν ἔχομεν ἐπιτυχίαν εἰς αὐτὸ ἢ προσπάθεια ἐν τῇ γενέσει τῆς θά ναυαγήσῃ. Πιστεύομεν ὅμως εἰς τὴν ἱερότητα τοῦ σκοποῦ τούτου· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πιστεύομεν, ἐπίσης, ὅτι ὁ μεταξὺ μας διαμένων Σωτὴρ μας Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, θὰ φωτίσῃ φρικμένους Ἑλληνοαμερικανίδας Ὁρθοδόξους νὰ ἀκολουθήσουν συστηματικώτερα τὸν δρόμον του, νὰ ἀρνηθοῦν τὸν κόσμον διὰ νὰ βοηθήσουν τὸν κόσμον, πού ἔχει πρὸ πάντων σήμερον τὴν μεγαλειτέραν ἀνάγκην βοήθειας. Ἡ πραγματικὴ ζωὴ δὲν εἶναι ἡ ἀπόλαυσις, ἀλλ' ἡ θυσία. Ἀπόδειξις τούτου τρανωτάτη εἶναι ὅτι ἡ ἱστορία ἔδωκε τὸ μεγαλειότερον καὶ σημαντικώτερον τόπον εἰς τὰς σελίδας τῆς, εἰς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους πού προσέφεραν τὰς περισσοτέρας θυσίας εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν κόσμον. Δεσπόζει δὲ καὶ κυριαρεῖ εἰς ὁλόκληρον τὴν ἱστορίαν Ἐκεῖνος πού ὑπῆρξεν Ὀλόκληρος θυσία, παρ' ὅλον τὸ θεῖόν του μεγαλεῖον, ὁ Θεάνθρωπος Σωτὴρ μας, ὁ Χριστός.

Συνεχίζει ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ ἔργον Του. Συνεχίζει τὴν θυσίαν Του. Καὶ θὰ τὴν συνεχί-
ζῃ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων ἐφόσον ἔστω καὶ εἰς ἄνθρωπος θὰ μένῃ ἀλύτρωτος ἀπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Ζητεῖ δὲ τὴν συνεργασίαν μας. Ζητεῖ τὴν συνεργασίαν ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν. Ζητεῖ καὶ σήμερον τὴν συνεργασίαν ὄχι μόνον ἱεραποστολικῶν ἀνδρῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἱεραποστολικῶν γυναικῶν. Αἱ ἑτερόδοξοι Ἐκκλησίαι πρὸ πολλοῦ ἔχουν τὰ γυναικεῖα τμήματά των. Ὅπως ὅλοι ὁμολογοῦν αὐτὰ ἀποτελοῦν τὴν ἄφαντῃ τους δύναμιν. Εἶναι καιρὸς νὰ ἀποκτήσαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ ἰδικά μας.

Προσκαλοῦμεν, ὅθεν, τὰς Ἑλληνοαμερικανίδας Ὁρθοδόξους, πού θὰ ἠθελον νὰ ἀφιερῶσιν ἑαυτὰς εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ τὴν σωτηρίαν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου νὰ μᾶς γράψουν.

Μὲ τὴν βοήθειαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀποκλειστικῶς καὶ μόνον διὰ τὸ μέλλον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τὸ καλὸν τῆς Ὁμογενείας μας, ἀνοίγομεν τὸ νέον αὐτὸ κεφάλαιον τῆς ἱστορίας τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ Ἀμερικῆς.

Μετὰ βαθείας πατρικῆς ἀγάπης καὶ διαπύρων εὐχῶν

Ἁγίου Ἀμερικῆς Μαχαίλ

To my beloved spiritual children,
the devout Greek-American Orthodox Christians.

May the Grace and Peace of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
be upon you!

From the very days when the Church was founded, it has pursued a missionary task. And our Savior Jesus Christ addressed these words to all of those who have continued the sacred work of the Apostles:

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." and "Go ye into all
the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

The missionary character of our Church should be even stronger and more obvious in this great land in which we live, because here besides the Orthodox Church there are many others; because the members of the Greek Orthodox Church are widely scattered throughout this vast country; because in most instances our brethren are rather isolated in the sea of America's millions, frequently living far from their religious centers, their local churches.

In order, therefore, that the Greek Orthodox Church be always in complete communion with its members it needs substantial assistance. While it has, of course, its priests, there is so much to be done in each community that the endeavors of these priests alone do not suffice. For should the priest wish to know, as he must, his spiritual children by name, their problems and their spiritual and moral needs, this would certainly be beyond his physical and spiritual resources.

These tremendous needs of our Greek Orthodox Church in America have urged us to make a fervent appeal such as this to our daughters-in Christ, the young women of Greek descent in America. With the future welfare of our Church and its membership at heart, we are considering the establishment in this country of an order of deaconesses. By the grace of God, there are available adequate and plentiful facilities for such a project on the grounds of St. Basil's Academy at Garrison, N.Y. When certain minor inexpensive alterations have been made at Garrison, we would for the present be able to accommodate there up to 25 young ladies.

However, what we do need urgently are human resources, people to dedicate themselves fully and earnestly to the sacred mission. If in this all-important human aspect we fail, our project will founder in its very infancy. Yet we believe firmly in the holiness of the cause at hand, and for this reason we also believe that Christ the Savior Who remains in our very midst will inspire a number of our young women to dedicate themselves more formally to His way, that they would thus wish to renounce the world so as to help the world which today more than ever needs to be helped.

The real life, the life in Christ, is not the life of pleasure but the life of sacrifice. Formidable proof of this is that history's brightest, most splendid pages are those which tell of people who sacrificed their all for the world. And He Who reigns majestically through every page in history, He Who Himself is the epitome of sacrifice, is the Savior Jesus Christ.

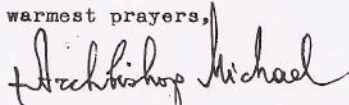
Christ continues His work. Christ continues His sacrifice, as He will in the ages to come, so long as there remains even one soul to be saved from sin. He seeks our help. He seeks the cooperation not only of men as missionaries, but of women also.

Other religious denominations in this country have many religious orders for women, which are admittedly an invaluable treasure of strength.

It is high time, indeed, for our Church to act. We therefore earnestly appeal to our young women of the Greek Orthodox faith who would wish to dedicate their selves to Christ and to the salvation of mankind through Him. Please write to us if you are interested.

With the help of Christ and especially for the sake of the future of our wondrous Orthodox Church and of our incomparable Greek heritage, we open this new and vital chapter in the history of Hellenism in America.

With my deep and fatherly love and warmest prayers,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Archbishop Michael". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Archbishop" and "Michael" being capitalized and prominent.

Michael,
Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church
in North and South America

GREEK ARCHDIOCESE OF N. & S. AMERICA
Office of Public Relations
10 E. 79th Street, N.Y. 21, N.Y.

Appendix III
Chambesy, Switzerland, 1986 Third Pre-Conciliar Conference;
Rhodes, Greece, 1988 Rhode Consultation

The Inter-Orthodox Theological Consultation held in Rhodes, Greece from October 30 to November 7, 1988, convened by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. This symposium brought together official representatives from all the Orthodox Churches to study the topic: *“The Place of Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women”*. This Consultation was organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate under the leadership of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I, of blessed memory, in response to a request coming from the Third Pre-Conciliar Conference held October 28 to November 6, 1986 at Chambesy, Switzerland. The Conference proposed a study of “the issue of the ordination of women in order to promote the relevant Orthodox doctrine in all her dialogues with Christian Churches and confessions proceeding with the ordination of women”. The Autocephalous Churches were invited to send official delegates to this important Consultation. In addition to these, there were nearly fifty other theologians invited to participate in the Consultation. This historic conference is the most authoritative Orthodox gathering to date engaging this issue.

The ultimate purpose of the 1988 Consultation was to reflect upon a number of issues and to provide the Church with a statement which would reflect in a theological and pastoral manner the consensus of Orthodox theologians with regard to the place of women in the Church and questions associated with the ordination of women. The published report was meant to be a document which could serve the regional Orthodox Churches and their theologians. At the same time, the report could provide some guidance for those Orthodox who were involved in multilateral and bilateral dialogues with other Christians. Among its numerous conclusions, the 1988 Consultation also formally and unanimously advocated for the restoration of the order of the women deacons (deaconesses). The participants stressed unequivocally that women have not been ordained as presbyters or bishops in the Orthodox Church in the past; they did affirm, however, that women had been ordained to the diaconate. The official statement says:

The apostolic order of the deaconess should be revived. It was never altogether abandoned in the Orthodox Church though it has tended to fall into disuse. There is ample evidence from apostolic times, from the patristic, canonical and liturgical tradition, well into the Byzantine period (and even in our own day) that this order was held in high honour. The deaconess was ordained within the sanctuary during the Divine Liturgy with two prayers, she received the Orarion (the deacon's stole) and received Holy Communion at the Altar . . . The revival of this ancient order should be envisaged on the basis of the ancient prototypes testified to in many sources (cf. the reference quoted in the works on the subject of modern Orthodox scholars) and with the prayers found in the Apostolic Constitutions and the ancient Byzantine liturgical books.

The Consultation continues to strengthen its recommendations by stating that the recovery of the order of women deacons:

*. . . would represent a positive response to many of the needs and demands of the contemporary world. This would be all the more true if the diaconate in general (male as well as female) were restored in all places in its original, manifold services (diakoniai) with extension into the social sphere, in the spirit of the ancient tradition and in response to the increasing specific needs of our time.*²⁹

²⁹ See: Limouris, p. 10; See also: FitzGerald, “The Inter-Orthodox Theological Consultation . . .”, pp. 33-34; and Idem., *Women Deacons*, pp. 160-167.

Appendix IV
Saint Catherine's Vision:
Cultivating a Charism of Education, Dialogue and Service

Saint Catherine's Vision (saintcatherinesvision.org or SCV) is an international, Pan-Orthodox, non-profit organization of women theologians and other lay servant-leaders addressing contemporary concerns from an Orthodox Christian perspective. Founded in 2001, with our hierarchs' blessing, we are an endorsed organization of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. SCV is a fellowship that is guided by a board of directors who govern general affairs and a larger advisory board (or advisory council), who, together comprise the bulk of our "prayer-based think tank." Through our books, writings, conferences, consultations, colloquia, retreats, social media outreach and other expressions of education and spiritually-based relationship building, our efforts have been an on-going labor of love. It has taken many years to earn trust and credibility, receive hierarchical endorsement, as well as to discern and promote our growing commitment to cultivating the Orthodox Christian understanding for "***A Theology of Divine Compassion (theion eleos) for Today***". We believe the world needs this now, perhaps more than ever. Spiritually speaking, from our earliest personal memories reaching back to the 1980's, we are striving to receive and cultivate a charism that will outlive us in order to benefit many others for the glory of God. As our focus concerns the Lord's will for His Church and not our own, we believe that we are still at an early stage in this process. Practically speaking, our overall commitment is:

- I. To develop and implement initiatives especially supporting women's ministries in the Orthodox Church through prayer, education, research, training, mentoring, and other related programming related to theology and ministry.
- II. To promote spiritually and theologically sound approaches that facilitate the education, witness and service of men and women in a manner which fully supports the participation of women.
- III. To create and direct endeavors serving Orthodox Christian theology and ministry (*or orthopraxis*) "for the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12) which is His Church and share the light of Christ in today's world.