

**Conclusions of the Inter-Orthodox Consultation:
“The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church
and the Question of the Ordination of Women”
(Rhodes, Greece – 30 October. – 7 Nov. 1988)**

The week-long consultation, convened by the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I, included delegates from twelve autocephalous churches and speakers from various Orthodox jurisdictions. Section VIII of the published report gives the conclusions reached on the ordination of women deacons.

Section VIII.

The Diaconate and “Minor Orders”

32. The apostolic order of deaconesses 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.
33. The revival of this ancient order should be envisaged on the basis of the ancient prototypes testified to in many sources (cf. the references quoted in the works on this subject of modern Orthodox scholars) and with the prayers found in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the ancient Byzantine liturgical books.
34. Such revival would represent a positive response to many of the needs and demands of the contemporary world in many spheres. 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 (diakonia), with extension in the social sphere, in the spirit of 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.
35. The revival of women deacons in the Orthodox Church would emphasize in a special way the dignity of woman and give recognition to her contribution to the work of the Church as a whole.
36. Furthermore, would it not be possible and desirable to allow women to enter into the “lower orders” through a blessing of the Church (Cheirothesia): sub-deacon, reader, cantor, teacher . . . without excluding new orders that the Church might consider to be necessary. This matter deserves further study since there is no definite tradition of this sort.

CHURCH DELEGATES AND CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

CHURCH DELEGATES

Ecumenical Patriarchate	H.E. Met. Prof Dr. Chrysostomos of Myra
Patriarchate of Alexandria	Prof. Constantin Patelos
Patriarchate of Moscow	Protopresbyter Prof. Vitaly Borovoy
Patriarchate of Serbia	H. E. Bishop Daniel of Boudimion
Patriarchate of Rumania	Rev. Prof. Dr. Constantine Galeriu
Patriarchate of Bulgaria	H.E. Bishop Kyrillos of Stobi
Church of Cyprus	H. E. Bishop Barnabas of Salamis
Church of Greece	H.E. Met. Meletios of Nikopolis and Preveza
Church of Poland	Dr. Mikolaj Kozlowski
Church of Georgia	H. E. Met. David of Sukhumi and Abkhazeti
Church of Czechoslovakia	H. E. Bishop Dr. Christoforos of Moravia
Church of Finland	Rev. Prof. Jarmo Hakkarainen

SPEAKERS

V. Rev. Prof. Irenej Bulovic (Theological Academy, Belgrade, Yugoslavia), Rev. Prof. Dr. Constantin Galeriu (Theological Academy, Bucharest, Rumania), Prof. Christos Voulgaris (University of Athens, Faculty of Theology), Prof. John Erickson (St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, NY/USA), Met. Prof. Dr. Chrysostomos of Myra (Theological School of Halki, Istanbul), Ass. Prof. Françoise Jeanlin (St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute, Paris), Prof. Vlassios Pheidas (University of Athens, Faculty of Theology), Prof. Ioannis Fountoulis (University of Thessaloniki, Faculty of Theology), Prof. Evangelos Theodorou (University of Athens, Faculty of Theology), Ass. Prof. Frieda Haddad (St. John of Damascus Theological Academy Tripoli, Lebanon), Mother Superior Nazaria Nita (Rumanian Orthodox Church), V. Rev. Prof. Dr. Gennadios Limouris (University of Strasbourg, France), and Prof. Dr. Kyriaki FitzGerald (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA/USA).

Prof. Evangelos Theodorou made the major presentation on women deacons, which can be accessed at www.orthodoxdeaconess.com "Resources" at "The Institution of Deaconesses in the Orthodox Church and the Possibility of its Restoration."

Excerpt, delegate, and speaker information from *Ecumenical Patriarchate, Inter-Orthodox Theological Consultation, The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women, Rhodes, Greece 30 October - 7 November 1988* (The Ecumenical Patriarchate: Istanbul Turkey), December 1988.