

His Grace, The Right Reverend Bishop [Name]  
123 Street  
City, State ZIP

Today's Date

Your Grace,

I ask your blessing. I am writing to ask you to prayerfully consider further dialogue on the revival of the ordained female diaconate in the Orthodox Church. As the historical record attests, this office existed in many of the Eastern Orthodox churches from the Patristic period through much of the Middle Ages, and some of the beloved saints of our church were deaconesses. For the past half century, there has been global interest in reviving this office. Most recently, the Patriarchate of Alexandria in 2017 consecrated several women as deaconesses to serve the needs of the church in the Congo, and I believe deaconesses would be a great asset in addressing the pastoral needs of our own society, to serve the building up of the Church of Christ.

The Orthodox Church is blessed to have many wonderful and dedicated priests, male deacons and lay volunteers in our parishes, but no single person in a parish can address the overwhelming pastoral needs of the modern world. We know that the deaconess in the ancient church was ordained by the bishop, during the Divine Liturgy, at the altar, and that she was presented with a stole and chalice and received communion with the clergy. She carried out a variety of duties depending on local needs. These included assisting with the baptism of women, catechetical instruction, pastoral care, taking communion to the infirm, supervising at liturgy, participating in processions, and serving as an agent of the bishop entrusted with carrying out philanthropic and hospitality tasks. Women still face many issues unique to them, and it can sometimes be awkward and even inappropriate for them to discuss these issues with a priest, simply because of his gender (issues of pregnancy, childbirth, caregiving, domestic abuse, etc.) Properly trained deaconesses could be enormously helpful to women and families, in addition to the many other ways they could serve. Their unique perspectives and experiences could help provide healing, support, and counsel to half of the Church's membership. Ordination for these women would provide proper training, accountability, oversight, and authority, and would help the Church live up to its mission of love, mercy and service.

There is over half a century of outstanding scholarship on the history of female deacons. If you would like to review additional information on this scholarship, or on the many Orthodox groups who have called for revival of the female diaconate, I humbly encourage you to browse the Resources page of the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess at <https://orthodoxdeaconess.org/resources/>. If your busy schedule permits, the St. Phoebe Center also has scholars on its board who would be happy to arrange to speak with you further about this important topic.

Respectfully,  
[Your Name]