

TROPARION to St. Phoebe
Commemorated September 3

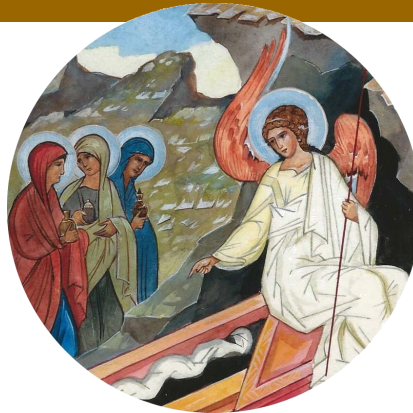
*Enlightened by grace and
taught the Faith by the
Chosen vessel of Christ,
You were found worthy of the diaconate;
And you carried Paul's words to Rome.
O Deaconess Phoebe, pray to Christ God
That his Spirit may enlighten our souls!*



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 female deacons for the building up the body of Christ and the glory of God.

Christ's Example

In a time & 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 revealed His Resurrection first to the Myrrh-Bearing Women who are called 'Apostles to the Apostles.'



St. Phoebe Vision

- **Sharing the history of the female diaconate**, the importance of the broader order of the diaconate male and female, the service ministries of women in the Church, and the deep need for deaconesses today through conferences, presentations, person-to-person connections, and the creation and dissemination of online and print resources.
- **Building relationships** with our hierarchs and all clergy, seminaries, parishes and the faithful of all ages through clarity about our mission, cultivation of personal relationships, and our commitment to work of the highest caliber.
- **Acknowledging in humility that the Holy Spirit is at work** and we are not alone in our efforts, and keeping at the forefront of our work the belief that the revival of the female diaconate will benefit the health and spiritual wellbeing of Christ's Church

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Deaconesses

IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH



The Early Church ordained women in the altar as female deacons, and entrusted them with numerous duties. *Restoration of this ordained role can help build up Christ's Church & His people.*

St. Phoebe Center

FOR THE DEACONESS

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Why Restore the Female Diaconate?

Female deacons did more than help with female baptisms. Thirteen different historical duties of the deaconess are listed in *The Study of Liturgy*, Oxford, 1978 and *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of East and West*, 1990. Her duties 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 he can meet all of his parish's needs. Male and female deacones can help him carry out his pastoral and ministerial roles, which can result in a more spiritually healthy parish. The responsibilities of the male deacon have unfortunately fallen away over time, 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 deacon is critical to the health and well-being of the Orthodox faithful.

Benefits to the Church

Limiting the diaconate to men ignores the gifts, talents, perspectives, and experiences of half of our faithful. Woman-to-woman counseling is critical for the well-being, health, and salvation of the *entire* Church. Counseling and support can include marital relations, motherhood, abortion, miscarriage, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, care-giving, and other issues. What's more, there are instances when it is awkward and even inappropriate for a woman to confide in the priest regarding sensitive matters because of his gender.



The female diaconate could strengthen the pastoral care of the faithful and connect them to the sacramental life of the Church; recapture the philanthropic dimension of the Liturgy; focus on the Word of God; and more fully integrate the pastoral, social, and liturgical dimensions of the diaconate. **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, ordination allows her ministry to be recognized by the entire Church.

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Please pray for our work!

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