

DEACONESSES FOR THE ORTHODOX CHURCH TODAY

November 10-12, 2023
Maliotis Cultural Center of
Hellenic College Holy Cross
Boston

*Celebrating the
10th Anniversary
of the St. Phoebe Center
for the Deaconess
2013-2023*





Dear mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters in Christ,

I warmly welcome you to *Deaconesses for the Orthodox Church Today*, a symposium sponsored by the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess and held at the Maliotis Cultural Center at Hellenic College Holy Cross in Boston.

The order of the deaconess is a part of the history of the Orthodox Church, its reinstatement is dearly needed today, and the Church has frequently and firmly called for the renewal of this ordained order. The St. Phoebe Center will review this history, need, and calls this weekend, but focus on *how* the Orthodox Church might go about ordaining women as deaconesses again.

In 2013, a group of faithful Orthodox Christians led by St. Phoebe Founding Chair Ann Marie Mecera formed a US non-profit in response to the church-wide calls for deaconesses: the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess. The mission of the St. Phoebe Center is to educate and prayerfully advocate for the revival of the ordained female diaconate to help serve the ministerial needs of the Orthodox Church and the world today. In the last decade, the Center has lifted up the history of deaconesses, shining light on the presence and function of deaconesses in the first millennium of the Church. The Center has also elucidated the real need for the revival of this ordained order—not only to align our Church practices with our teachings—but to help overworked priests, offer woman-to-woman ministry for many issues, and generally build up the *entire* Body of Christ. As the largest online resource on the female diaconate and its revival, the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess has been committed to sound scholarship and authentic Orthodox theology. As it enters its second decade beginning in 2023, the St. Phoebe Center intends to build on this foundation and turn its attention to the pragmatic details of how the Orthodox Church might welcome women as deaconesses.

During the keynote on Friday night, we will review the history, need, and calls for deaconesses and also begin to offer a clear vision of how the church might go about reinstating this order. Our Saturday morning sessions will address the calls for deaconesses today and the need for formalizing women's other roles in the Orthodox Church. In the afternoon, we will address the pragmatic steps for ordaining deaconesses today, through a new document from the St. Phoebe Center: "Proposed Guidelines for the Revival of the Ordained Female Diaconate in the Orthodox Church Today." Workshop sessions will also be held for developing concrete steps we can take together to help the Church move through this process. Saturday's sessions will end with a celebration of women in the Orthodox Church and the tenth anniversary year of the St. Phoebe Center. On Sunday we will conclude the weekend with Divine Liturgy, lunch, and a debrief discussion.

The renewal of the ordained order of deaconesses is vital to the future of the Orthodox Church. We can move together with love and hope to see deaconesses once again. The St. Phoebe Center hopes to spark our God-given creativity as a community and to facilitate conversation and action regarding this urgently needed ministry.

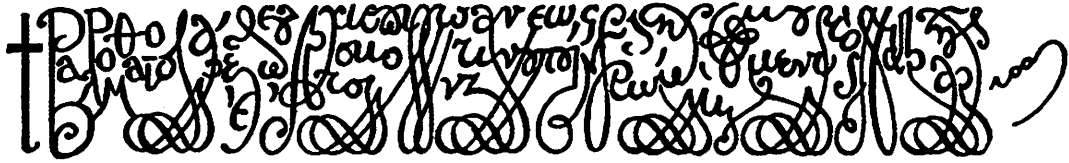
Thank you for being with us this weekend, for your prayers, and your support. I pray we may be blessed and fruitful in our works this day and always, to God's glory.

In Christ,

Carrie Frederick Frost, PhD,

Chair, St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess

stphoebecenter@gmail.com



MESSAGE

To the St. Phoebe Center Anniversary Conference
On "Deaconesses for the Orthodox Church Today"

Holy Cross School of Theology

November 10–12, 2023

Beloved organizers, speakers, and participants,

With sincere appreciation, we extend our heartfelt greetings and best wishes to the gathering convened by the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess, as it marks its significant milestone. This assembly serendipitously coincides with the commemoration of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the historic Pan-Orthodox Consultation, a landmark event held on the beautiful Greek island of Rhodes, convened by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This assembly yielded the pioneering document for our Church, titled, "The Place of Women in the Orthodox Church."

In the span of a generation, there has been a noticeable rise in awareness about the imperative of incorporating the laity, including women, into parish life and ministries. This natural progression is driven by a shared recognition that such inclusion enables a more holistic and all-encompassing pastoral response to the spiritual and societal requisites of the faithful. Guided by the longstanding practice of lending an ear to the perspectives of women, as epitomized in the Ecumenical Councils of the Church through Sts. Euphemia, Irene and Theodora, the Ecumenical Patriarchate exemplified this by appointing two women as observers during the Holy and Great Council of Crete in 2016.

The tradition of Deaconesses has never been entirely absent from the fabric of the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, any dialogues concerning the modern-day restoration of this ministry must be approached in a manner that reverently acknowledges the origins of the early apostolic practices. It should simultaneously draw inspiration from the riches of the traditional Byzantine office while delineating the contours of a contemporary life of service.

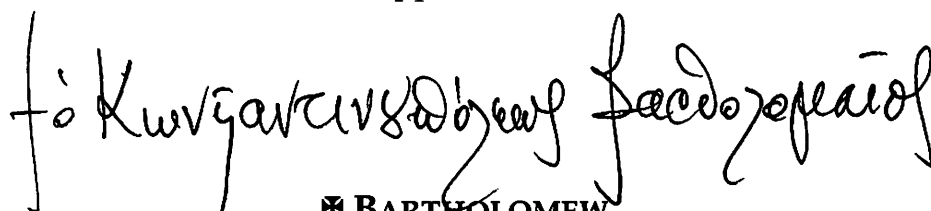
This complex undertaking will undoubtedly necessitate a comprehensive and harmonized strategy that engages both top-down and grassroots efforts, with the aim of utilizing the God-given talents of the entire Body of Christ. Your forthcoming conference holds immense significance within this ecclesiastical journey.

We commend your conscientious approach to engaging a diverse array of participants, including hierarchs, clergy, and monastics, as well as laywomen and laymen. Together, you are called to cultivate appropriate conduct, especially prudence, so that you may conscientiously deliberate upon the pivotal challenges that warrant attention within our broader ecclesial community.

May your discussions bear fruitful outcomes, and we eagerly anticipate the insights and recommendations that shall emanate from your deliberations.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, on the 8th of September 2023

Your fervent supplicant before the Lord,



✠ BARTHOLOMEW

*Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch*



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT

November 1, 2023

*Saint Phoebe Center for the Deaconess
Anniversary Symposium: Deaconesses for the Orthodox Church Today
c/o Carrie Frederick Frost, Ph. D., Chair
Hellenic College/Holy Cross*

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I greet all of you on this happy occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Saint Phoebe Center for the Deaconess, and I extend to the members of the Board and participants in the Symposium: Deaconesses for the Orthodox Church Today, my heartfelt best wishes and blessings for a successful gathering on the grounds of our beloved School, between November 10 and 12 of this month.

The labors of the Saint Phoebe Center for the Deaconess have been replete with outstanding scholarship and insightful presentations, which are bringing the issues surrounding the restoration of the female Diaconate into sharper focus. Your work of clarifying past practices, outlining current conditions, and describing future opportunities is helpful to the hierarchy, clergy, and laity alike. Thus, you are already performing the diakonia for which you advocate. I look forward to the Symposium, and to the papers and dialogue that will issue forth from the sessions.

As ever, I thank you for the energy, devotion, and, above all, the faithfulness that you bring to this important discussion. May Saint Phoebe herself, your heavenly protector, inspire your deliberations and grant that your efforts yield fruit in the life of the Church, even to "a hundredfold." (Luke 8:8)

With paternal love and blessings in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America



St Phoebe Center
FOR THE DEACONESS

Mission Statement

We educate and prayerfully advocate for the revival of the ordained female diaconate to help serve the ministerial needs of the Orthodox Church and the world today.

Become a Supporter

Add your name to the list of supporters! Many faithful around the world—clergy, laity, men, and women—support the St. Phoebe Center’s hopes and prayers that deaconesses will be ordained in the Orthodox Church today. Add your name to the list by scanning the QR code or going to:
<https://orthodoxdeaconess.org/supporters/>



Join the St. Phoebe Network

St. Phoebe Network Members collaborate with the St. Phoebe Center to achieve our mission to restore the female diaconate. We want to build community, refine our educational efforts, and beginning this, our tenth year, develop a way forward as to how this can be fully realized. Become a St. Phoebe Network Member to further contribute your time, talent, and treasure to support the restoration of ordained deaconesses. Scan the QR code or go to:
<https://orthodoxdeaconess.org/network/>



Be a Donor

Carrying out our work takes financial support from donors like you. We would greatly appreciate your help as we enter our second decade of carrying out our mission for the building up of the entire Church today! Scan the QR code to donate or go to: <https://orthodoxdeaconess.org/donate/>





Thank You to our Partners and Supporters

The St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess extends its deep gratitude to Hellenic College Holy Cross and the Maliotis Center for hosting this symposium.

Special thanks go to George Cantonis, Markella Patitsas, and Chrysoula Kourkounti.

We are grateful to the parishioners of St. Mary Orthodox Church, Cambridge, MA for their hospitality and generous welcome.

We also thank the donors of the St. Phoebe Center. Your support has made this symposium possible and encourages us in our work. We are grateful to be working in the vineyard together.



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St Phoebe Center
FOR THE DEACONESS

Deaconesses for the Orthodox Church Today
Sponsored by the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess

In honor of St. Phoebe Center's 10th Anniversary

November 10-12, 2023

Maliotis Center, Hellenic College Holy Cross

The history of the deaconess in the Christian East and the need for women in diaconal ministry today have been amply demonstrated through scores of calls, papers, presentations, and theological discussions. In the past two centuries, many sectors of the Orthodox Church, realizing the need for the diaconate to be restored to its original mission of ministry and service, have appealed for a revival of the entire diaconate including the restoration of the ordained order of deaconess.

This symposium will review the history of and need for this order as well as consider the pragmatics of how the Orthodox Church might welcome women—who comprise more than half of the Church—into the diaconate once again to meet the ministerial needs of the Church and world. Attention will be given to ways all Orthodox Christians might constructively urge the Church to move forward on ordaining deaconesses to build up the entire body of Christ today.

Friday, November 10, 2023

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Registration/check-in

7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Deaconesses for the Orthodox Church Today: The History, the Need, and the Future

Welcome: Ann Marie Mecera, Founder and Chair, St. Phoebe Center

Opening Prayer and Remarks: His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago

Welcome from Hellenic College Holy Cross: President George Cantonis

Keynote: Dr. Carrie Frederick Frost

Deaconesses for the Orthodox Church Today: The History, the Need, and the Future

Respondent: Archdeacon John Chryssavgis

This lecture will briefly review the history of deaconesses in the Orthodox Church, the need for them today, St. Phoebe Center's history, and the legacy of the Rhodes Consultation of 1988 and other contemporary calls for deaconesses but will largely focus on how the Orthodox Church might go about restoring this vital order that is so essential for its health and future. All present are invited to attend the events of the next day, when possible processes for ordaining deaconesses once again will be discussed in more depth.

8:30 pm – 9:30 pm: Reception

Saturday, November 11, 2023

8:00 am – 8:30 am

Registration/check-in

Coffee and light breakfast fare provided.

8:30 am – 9:00 am

Morning Prayers, with women's voices

9:00 am – 10:30 am

Calls for Deaconesses and Women's Ministry in the Church

Moderator: Ms. Sara Tsugranis

Panelists:

Dr. Teva Regule

Ms. Sophia Kyrou

Dr. Ioana Popa

The call to revive the female diaconate is not new in the life of the Orthodox Church. This session will present the numerous calls to do so from the modern period. It will also highlight the many ways that lay women are currently serving in diaconal-type capacities. While acknowledging that these ministries are important in and of themselves, this session will further explain why ordination is valuable and necessary to participate more fully in the diaconal ministry of the Church.

10:30 am – 11:00 am

Coffee Break

11:00am – 12:30pm

Can Women go in the Altar?: Addressing the Myths around Ordaining Deaconesses

Moderator: Ms. Kristina Baktis

Panelists:

Dr. Valerie Karras

Rev. Dr. Philip Zymaris

Dr. Paul Ladouceur

This session will directly engage with concerns and incorrect teachings about the revival of the ordained order of deaconesses in the Orthodox Church, addressing such issues as: the unfounded but wide-spread belief that women are not allowed in the altar, lingering and theologically indefensible connections between women's bodies and impurity, and "slippery slope" concerns about deaconesses leading to women priests.

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

Catered lunch

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

How to Restore the Ordained Order of Deaconesses Today: Proposed Guidelines

Moderator: Ms. Ann Marie and Mr. Gust Mecera

Speakers: Rev. Dr. Perry Hamalis and Dr. Carrie Frederick Frost

Respondents: His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago, Dr. James Skedros, and Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou

The St. Phoebe Center will propose and discuss a process by which the Orthodox Church might restore the ordained order of deaconesses today to minister to needs in the church and the world, acknowledging the importance for the renewal of the entire diaconate.

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Coffee Break

4:00 pm – 5:15 pm

Ways to Advocate for Deaconesses

Moderator: Dr. Teva Regule

Breakout groups led by St. Phoebe Center Board Members and representatives from Axia Women:

- How to increase roles of women and girls in your parish
- How to address myths and misleading information about Deaconesses
- How to hold an event about Deaconesses
- How to include Deaconesses in Church School curricula

This workshop session will offer practical ways that attendees can help the St. Phoebe Center advocate for deaconesses in the Orthodox Church today.

5:15 pm – 5:30 pm

Break

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Celebration of Women's Ministry in the Orthodox Church

This celebration will not be explanatory like the above sessions, but a joyful and hopeful opportunity for attendees to pray together, honoring women's service to the church today and looking to a future of the Orthodox Church in which women's ministries are more fully expressed. The St. Phoebe Award will be presented to Ms. Marilyn Rouvelas.

Light appetizer reception to follow.

Sunday, November 12

10:00 am – 1:30 pm: Liturgy followed by luncheon and debrief of the symposium. (Luncheon hosted by parish.)

St. Mary Orthodox Church, Liturgy at 10am
8 Inman St
Cambridge, MA 02139

SPEAKER BIOS



Mr. George Cantonis is a native of Chicago, a longtime resident of Florida, and he is the President and Director of the Cantonis Company, Inc.; Executive VP and Director of Acme Sponge and Chamois, Inc.; and President of MGC Hotel Group. Mr. Cantonis received his bachelor's degree from Princeton University and his MBA from the University of Chicago. Mr. Cantonis has served the Church in many capacities over the years, including various leadership positions at the local parish level as well as on the national level through the Archdiocesan Council and Leadership 100. He is an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Archon Ex-archos). Having served previously on the HCHC Board of Trustees, he was appointed president of Holy Cross in December 2019.



Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, Archdeacon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, studied at the Universities of Athens (Greece) and Oxford (UK). He co-founded St. Andrew's Theological College in Sydney, where he also taught at the University of Sydney. In 1995, he was appointed Professor at Holy Cross School of Theology, where he taught until 2002. Since then, he has served as senior theological advisor to the Department of Ecumenical Affairs in the GOA and as theological advisor to the Ecumenical Patriarch. In 2023, he was appointed Professor of Theology at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, where he is the inaugural Executive Director of the Huffington Ecumenical Institute.



Dr. Carrie Frederick Frost is an Orthodox Christian theologian who teaches at Western Washington University and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. She is the author of the recent book on women in the Orthodox Church, *Church of Our Granddaughters* (Cascade, 2023), and is Book Reviews Editor for the Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies. She lives in the Pacific Northwest and is the mother of five and the grandmother of one. She is Chair of the Board of the St. Phoebe Center for the Diaconess.



Rev. Dr. Perry Hamalis is a deacon and the Cecelia Schneller Mueller Professor of Religion at North Central College (Naperville, IL). He earned a B.A. in Philosophy from Boston College, an M.Div. from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (valedictorian), and a Ph.D. in Religious Ethics from the University of Chicago. In 2015, he was awarded a Fulbright Senior Research Fellowship and was appointed as Visiting Professor of Theology at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea. During his year in Korea, he was ordained a

SPEAKER BIOS continued

deacon by His Eminence Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea. He has over 40 publications and has lectured internationally on Orthodox theology, ethics, and social thought. Deacon Perry is on the St. Phoebe Center's Advisory Board.



Dr. Valerie Karras is a professor of religion and has taught at Lindenwood University, Southern Methodist University, Saint Louis University, and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. She earned doctorates in patristic theology from the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki and in church history from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. She also holds a Master of Theological Studies degree from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. Her areas of research interest include women in early and Byzantine Christianity, gender in early church theology; and Orthodox Christianity in ecumenical, interreligious, and feminist conversations. Her article “Female Deacons in the Orthodox Church” is one of the definitive pieces of scholarship on the issue. She is currently the Vice-President of the Interfaith Partnership of Greater St. Louis and is on the St. Phoebe Center's Advisory Board.



Ms. Sophia Kyrou is a graduate of Trinity College in Hartford, CT. She double-majored in Political Science and Human Rights, and completed an honors thesis on the intersection of nationalist ideology and cultural heritage policy. She works in management consulting and is an Associate at Longview Global Advisors. She is a tonsured Byzantine chanter and is fluent in Greek, Italian, and French.



Dr. Paul Ladouceur teaches at the Orthodox School of Theology at Trinity College, University of Toronto, and at Université Laval. He has published books and articles in English and French on modern Orthodox theology, ecclesiology, ecumenism and spirituality. His most recent books are *Modern Orthodox Theology* (T&T Clark, 2019) and, with Brandon Gallaher as co-editor, *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Theological Writings* (T&T Clark, 2019). In several articles he considers the ordination of women in the pastoral context of the Orthodox Church.

SPEAKER BIOS continued



Dr. Ioana Popa is a Christian Spiritual Formation Life Coach & Trainer and founder of Team For The Soul®. In this capacity, Dr. Popa coaches professional Christian women to regenerate on-the-go, move from burn-out to joy, from grief to hope and to grow psychologically and spiritually in Christ, so that they can use and multiply their gifts to impact the world for the glory of God. She is trained as a physician-psychiatrist, therapist, educator, nationally board-certified leadership and life coach, spiritual care provider and theologian, bringing a unique, holistic and integrated perspective of science, psychology, spiritual care, and Christian Faith.

She is the medical coordinator for the Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology and Religion (OCAMPR). Her parish is St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church, Cambridge, MA. She loves to spend time with her husband and their four children, family and friends; and to read, garden, pray, exercise, and practice contemplation.



Dr. Elizabeth H. Prodromou is a faculty member in the International Studies Program at Boston College. Her research interests and policy work concentrate on the intersections of geopolitics, religion, and human rights, with particular focus on the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. She held a diplomatic appointment on the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, and consults to international organizations on diplomacy and religious literacy. A member of the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Holy and Great Council of Crete, she currently sits on the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Task Force on Modern Slavery. She serves

on the St. Phoebe Advisory Board.



Dr. Teva Regule was raised in the Orthodox Church and has been an active member all of her life. For the past thirty years, her work has focused on the ministry of women in the Church. Previously she served as Managing Editor of the St. Nina Quarterly, and she is now a member of the St. Phoebe Center board. Teva completed her Master of Divinity degree at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and received her Ph.D. in systematics, focusing on liturgical theology and history, from Boston College. She is the current president of the Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA) and serves as a board member of the St. Phoebe Center.

SPEAKER BIOS continued



Dr. James C. Skedros is the Michael G. and Anastasia Cantonis Professor of Byzantine Studies and Professor of Early Christianity at Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and currently serves as Interim Dean. A graduate of Holy Cross, Dr. Skedros received his Th.D. from Harvard Divinity School in the History of Christianity. His teaching and research areas include popular religious practices in Late Antiquity, Byzantine Christianity, the lives of early Christian and Byzantine saints, and Christian-Muslim relations. He has been the HCHC backbone of the Diaconate Program since its approval by the Holy Eparchial Synod of Bishops and its start in 2006.



Rev. Dr. Philip Zymaris obtained his Th.D. from the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki in the year 2000. Fr. Zymaris joined the faculty of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in 2005. Since then, he has been teaching in the areas of Liturgics, Sacramental Theology, Rubrics, and Canon Law. His main interests center around how liturgical practice, church architecture, and iconography reflect a specific liturgical vision. Most recently he has been concentrating on the anthropology reflected in the long history of our liturgical texts, and how this concurs or not with the official theology of the Church as expressed in the councils.

The St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess
Presents the St. Phoebe Award to
Ms. Marilyn Rouvelas



Marilyn Rouvelas is a freelance writer and editor. Her writing includes *A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America*; her editing includes *Bartholomew: Apostle and Visionary*, a biography of His All-Holiness Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia* by John Chryssavgis, and *Deaconesses: A Tradition for Today and Tomorrow* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2023) along with John Chryssavgis, Niki Papageorgiou, and Petros Vassiliadis. Previous media experience included work for public television and The Atlantic Monthly.

She has served the national Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in various capacities: member of its Archdiocesan Council, its board representative on Churches for Middle East Peace and advisor to the Archdiocesan Center for Family Care, in addition to various board positions at St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Bethesda, Maryland. She currently attends St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Washington, DC.

She created a now defunct website years ago dedicated to educating about male and female deacons in the Orthodox Church. Much of the website's material is now available on the St. Phoebe Center's website. She is a tireless supporter of the revival of the ordained order of deaconesses and a worthy recipient of the St. Phoebe Award.

The St. Phoebe Award is an occasional honor bestowed on those who have offered exceptional energy and talent towards the reinstatement of deaconesses in the Orthodox Church. It was first awarded to Founding President Ann Marie Mecera for her valiant efforts in establishing and leading the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess.