

Women Deacons: Past Present Future

Study Questions for Part 2 - Women Deacons: Present Possibilities by Gary William T. Ditewig

1. Ditewig notes that ministries are often discussed in comparison to the priesthood: “the laity are described as ‘non-ordained’” and “deacons are described as men who ‘do not say Mass’” (41). How have you experienced this paradigm in your own experience or in the teaching of the Church?
2. Ditewig moves on to argue that “This method of negative identification must be overcome if the diaconate is to develop into the proper and permanent’ order described by the [Second Vatican] Council” (41). What role might lay persons play in overcoming this “negative identification” of the diaconate?
3. Ditewig points that there are three categories of documents written on ordained ministry: those that deal with the presbyterate, those that deal with the diaconate, and those that do not distinguish clearly between the two. What do you make of his argument that “questions of whether or not women may, or should, be ordained as deacons need to be dealt with separately from the ministerial priesthood”(51)?
4. Directing his attention to proposals to renew the diaconate at the Second Vatican Council, Ditewig identifies “four major influences leading up to the consideration of the question at the Council ” – all responding to particular pastoral needs of the time. What pastoral needs existing today ought to influence the conversation of the women deacons today?
5. Ditewig cites two arguments made by Council Fathers that won out at the council:
 - a. that there were men who were already serving the Church in the diaconal role and should not be denied the grace of the sacrament (56)
 - b. that the Church has the right to the benefit of all the graces given to it by God, including the graces of the diaconate (58)

How do these important arguments then factor into the Church’s discussion of women deacons today?

6. Ditewig argues, “Just as the council fathers at the Second Vatican Council...challenged the imagination of their brothers to the possibility of an expanded and renewed diaconate based on the needs of the Church and the the multiple gifts of the Holy Spirit, so too would the ordination of women as deacons continue this process.”
In what ways would restoring women deacons expand the renewal of the diaconate as a whole? In what ways would opening the diaconate to women make the gifts of the Holy Spirit more present to the Church and the world?