

## Women Deacons: Past Present Future

### Study Questions for Part 1 - Women Deacons: History by Gary Macy

1. What are your thoughts on the mention of women deacons in scripture, and the way these passages were interpreted by many early Church Fathers?
2. There are many shifts in the Church's attitude toward women deacons. Some church councils such as the Council of Orange in 533 "attempted to abolish the office of women deacon, justifying this decision on the basis of the fragility of women" (14) while "in 1018, Benedict VIII conferred on the cardinal bishop of Porto the right to ordain bishops, priests, **male or female deacons**, subdeacons, churches, and altars" (17). How do you feel about the long and complex history of women deacons?
3. The role of a deacon looked different in its earliest form. "They took care of the poor, visited the sick and those in prison, and generally looked to the upkeep of the fabric of the Church. [...] These were the people chosen by the community to handle what we might call 'social services'" (23). What are your reactions to role of early deacons? How is this different from how we think about deacons today?
4. What do you think about the historical idea that women deacons would specifically serve women?
5. From 12th century onward women were not ordained with the primary argument being that the menstruation of women would interfere with their role. What thoughts do you have on this historical development?
6. Around the 12th century there was a shift in the understanding of what it meant to be ordained. Originally, "ordination did not give a person, for instance, the irrevocable and portable power of consecrating the bread and wine, or of leading the liturgy; rather a particular community charged a person or persons to play a leadership role within that community [...] and that person or persons would lead the liturgy because of the leadership role they played within the community" (33). What do you think about the shift from more localized ordination to a more institutional model? How does this relate to our current Church culture?