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REMEMBERING TRADITION: WOMEN'S MONASTIC RITUALS AND THE DIACONATE

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In 2002 the International Theological Commission wrote that "it pertains to the ministry of discernment which the Lord has established in his Church to pronounce authoritatively" on the question of women deacons. This study discusses the ways by which ancient and contemporary ceremonies for women demonstrate the tradition of the ordination of women as deacons. It distinguishes between and among monastic profession, consecration of a virgin, and diaconal ordination, addressing in particular the ceremonials of Carthusian nuns.

WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION (ITC) published its research on the diaconate in 2002, it presented two conclusions: (1) women deacons of history were not precisely identical to male deacons; and (2) the sacrament of orders clearly distinguishes among the priest, bishop, and deacon both in tradition and in the teaching of the magisterium. Therefore, the ITC wrote, "it pertains to the ministry of discernment which the Lord has established in his Church to pronounce authoritatively on this question," i.e., ordaining women as deacons.[1]

The ITC specifically noted distinctions between men and women deacons in the ancient church "evidenced by the rite of institution and the functions they exercised."[2] Depending on limited examination of available texts, the ITC ignored some scholarship that supports the argument that women deacons

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[1] ITC, *From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diakonia of the Apostles* (Mundelein, Ill.: Hillenbrand Books, 2004) 109; translation of the official French document, "*Le Diaconat: Évolution et perspectives*," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_05072004_diaconate_fr.html. This and all other URLs referenced herein were accessed May 16, 2011.

[2] ITC, *Diakonia of Christ* 109.

were indeed considered as belonging to the same order as men deacons in antiquity, but also well after. For example, the ITC implies that the eighth-century ordination liturgies of the Barbarini codex, which are virtually identical for men and women deacons, did not incorporate women into the order of deacon, arguing that the rituals were mainly for monastic women; and the ITC further asserts that the women so ordained exercised no liturgical ministry.[3]

Significant scholarly evaluation of historical evidence, however, combined with worldwide calls for the restoration of the tradition of women deacons, drives contemporary discussion relative to the formalization of ministry by women through ordination to the diaconate. Evaluation of the historical evidence of women deacons has at least two subsets: what did women deacons do? and how were women deacons ritually acknowledged?[4]

This study investigates ritual. It does not enter into arguments about the precise functions of the women deacons of history except to acknowledge the fact that whatever they did was sufficiently "diaconal" in nature for them to be called deacons. Rather, this article evaluates historical and current ceremonies for Cistercian and Carthusian nuns in comparison with known diaconal ordination ceremonies in an effort to recover some of the lost tradition of women deacons, distinguishing between and among monastic profession, diaconal ordination, and consecration of a virgin, which latter brings women into the order of virgins.[5]

Ordination ceremonies for women deacons are known from the early third century.[6] They preserve significant literary and epigraphical evidence

[3] Ibid. 23–24. See Valerie A. Karras, "Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church," *Church History* 73 (2004) 272–316, at 275.

[4] Some of the more recent work demonstrating the fact of women deacons includes Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1976), translation of *Le ministère des femmes dans L'Église ancienne*, Recherches et synthèses, section d'histoire 4 (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1972); Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*, trans. K. D. Whitehead (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), translation of *Les Diaconesses: Essai Historique* (Rome: C.L.V.-Edizioni Liturgiche, 1982); Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2000), translation of *Amsträgerinnen im frühen Christentum: Epigraphische und literarische Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2005); Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (New York: Oxford University, 2007). The debate between Gryson and Martimort centers on whether ordained women received the sacrament of holy orders; the negative interpretation drives the ITC's 2002 document.

[5] Canon 604 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law provides for the "order of virgins."

[6] The third century *Didascalia apostolorum* does not present rituals, but references women deacons as parallel to male deacons: The fourth-century Syriac *Apostolic Constitutions*, dependent on the *Didascalia*, gives the ordination rites for

of women deacons in many regions, often against pressure to end the practice of ordination of women as deacons.[7]

In the sixth century Radegund (ca. 520–586), queen and wife of Frankish King Clothar, insisted on being ordained deacon, and Caesarius of Arles (ca. 468–542) wrote his Rule for Virgins. Subsequently, women deacons existed regionally up to the twelfth century, and as late as the eleventh century popes allowed Western bishops to ordain women as deacons.[8] The orders of women under direct investigation here, the Cistercians and Carthusians, distinguished by adherence to their oldest known rules and usages, were founded in the reformist wave of the eleventh century. [9]

The initial hypothesis for this article is that the tradition of ordaining women to the office of deacon seems to have become connected to or subsumed within other monastic rituals, beginning with the early sixth-century Rule of Caesarius of Arles.[10] My working hypothesis is that where a bishop or priest is needed for a contemporary ceremony, the ceremony

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deaconesses, among others, and the consecration rite for virgins and widows, among others. See A. Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac, I. Syr. 175 and 176* and *II. Syr. 179 and 180*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO) 401–2 and 407–408, trans. A. Vööbus (Louvain: Peeters, 1979), Book 8.3–5, 16–26; *Les constitutions apostoliques*, 3 vols., ed., trans., intro., critical text, and notes Marcel Metzger, Sources Chrétiennes (hereafter SC), vols. 320, 329, and 336 (Paris: Cerf, 1985–1987) 3:138–48, 216–28; Engl. trans. "Apostolic Constitutions," in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. 7, repr. ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 481–83, 491–93. Extant ceremonies include those found in the following mss.: Barberini gr. 336; Grottaferrata gr. Gb1, Vatican gr. 1872, and Coislin gr. 213.

[7] See esp. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity*; Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Catholic Church*; and Macy, *Hidden History of Women's Ordination.*

[8] In 1018 Pope Benedict VIII gave the bishop of Porto the right to ordain women deacons, a right affirmed by Popes John XIX in 1025 and Leo IX in 1049. In addition to the works noted above, document collections regarding women deacons include: Josephine Mayer, *Monumenta de viduis diaconissis virginibusque tractantia*, Florilegium patristicum tam veteris quam medii aevi auctores complectens 42 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1938); Heike Grierser, Rosemarie Nürnberg, and Gisela Muschiol, "Texte aus der kirchlichen Tradition und lehramtliche Dokumente," in *Diakonat: Ein Amt für Frauen in der Kirche—Ein frauengerechtes Amt?*, ed. Peter Hünermann et al. (Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag, 1997).

[9] While Cistercians are a Benedictine reform order, Carthusians are formally *sui generis*, although various women's convents, including some Benedictine convents, joined the order after the first convent of Prébayon joined the Carthusian order.

[10] Caesarius of Arles, *Regula ad virgines* in *Codex regularum monasticarum et canonicarum* . . . , 6 vols., ed. Lucas Holstenius and Marian Brockie (1759; Augsburg: Veith, 1957) 1:354–62 (1759 ed.). See also Maria Caritas McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles: A Translation with a Critical Introduction* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1960).

historically relates to ordination as it developed over centuries. Conversely, if a bishop or priest is not necessary to the ritual, that ritual more clearly relates to the permanent monastic profession to a stable community, which in the oldest traditions and the oldest orders is always made at the hands of the abbess or prioress, paralleling the process of incardination for secular clerics.

Other ceremonies extant today, specifically those for consecration of a virgin, reveal much about older traditions regarding women's service in the church. The Latin church has two rites for the consecration of a virgin: one for consecration lived in the world, and another for consecration combined with monastic profession. A third Carthusian rite for consecration of a virgin is *sui generis*.

Although the ritual for consecration to a life of virginity lived in the world has similarities to the diaconal ordination ritual, I here focus on three monastic ceremonies: for consecration of a virgin combined with monastic profession (Benedictine), for monastic profession alone (Benedictine, Cistercian, Carthusian), and for consecration of a virgin performed some time after monastic profession (Carthusian).

The similarities and distinctions between Cistercian and Carthusian traditions are illustrative of two major points of investigation: determining, first, whether roots of some Carthusian and Cistercian ceremonial traditions are planted in those for the diaconate and, second, whether monastic profession is wholly within the ceremonial purview of the abbess or prioress. Following on this second point, it appears the abbess or prioress admits the professing nun to what vestigial diaconal functions and rights remain within the abbey or monastery, specifically to liturgical functions and rights proper to a nun of the abbey or monastery (but not proper solely to the abbess or prioress). For example, when the Cistercian nun makes solemn profession with benediction or consecration as a nun, she receives the cowl from the abbess and with it certain liturgical rights. However, when the Carthusian nun receives the consecration of a virgin (typically four years after solemn profession), she receives the stole, maniple, and cross from the presiding cleric, along with certain liturgical rights. In both cases the woman superior presides over the monastic profession, the Cistercian abbess or the Carthusian prioress receiving the individual nun permanently into the monastic community. But the Carthusian consecration of a virgin is performed by a cleric, usually a bishop.

In Cistercian and Carthusian practice, consecration (or benediction) of a virgin or nun and solemn monastic profession are distinct. However, the ceremonies bespeak two, or possibly three, events: (1) solemn monastic profession as member of a stabile monastic community; (2) personal profession of vows within that community; and (3) consecration as a virgin or nun.

I posit that vestiges of the ceremony of ordination as deacon were incorporated into ceremonies of monastic profession, and that personal profession of solemn vows and consecration of a virgin have overcome and displaced diaconal ordination, which remains a well-remembered part of women's monastic life in the Orthodox churches. The following discussion moves from monastic profession and the Rule of Benedict, to the Rule of Caesarius of Arles, to the ordination of women deacons, to the consecration of virgins, to Cistercian ritual and tradition, and finally to Carthusian ritual and tradition. Each section contributes to the supposition that the tradition of women deacons has been lost, but not forgotten, in the Latin church.

MONASTIC PROFESSION AND THE RULE OF BENEDICT

Monastic profession offers a pathway to distinguish among the other ceremonies under investigation. The older tradition of women's monastic profession presents the abbess as chief celebrant of the profession liturgy. Only Benedictine ceremonials that included consecration of a virgin as part of monastic profession required the celebrant to be a cleric, usually a bishop.[11] That the ordinary celebrant for consecration of a virgin is a bishop may indicate that ceremony's relationship to sacrament. When the consecration of a virgin is not included in the profession ceremony, the priest or bishop plays a different role. Benedictines—at least those in Eichstätt, Germany, as Collins reports—dropped the consecration of a virgin at least by the early 19th century; thereafter only the abbess presided at profession ceremonies.

That the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity exists today as separate and distinct from the rite of monastic profession, even though it can be combined with monastic profession, supports the notion of relation of consecration of virgin to the roots of ordination—but not entirely, because Benedictine choir nuns (but not lay sisters) received the cowl at profession, not at consecration of a virgin,[12] and the monastic profession was later joined to the ritual of consecration of a virgin.[13] Hence certain questions arise: Does the cowl have liturgical significance? Is it related to the diaconal stole? Or is it related to the alb, which according to current liturgical instructions is to be worn by all adult ministers at liturgy? Or is it a combination garment, serving as both alb and stole? Or is it neither? In

[11] Mary Collins, "Sisters Professing Sisters: Retrieving a Lost Tradition," *American Benedictine Review* 47 (1996) 284–309.

[12] Mildred Anna Rosalie Tuker and Hope Malleson, *Handbook to Christian and Ecclesiastical Rome*, 4 vols. in 3 (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1900) 3:76.

[13] Ibid. 3:109.

any event, the cowl is presented within the ceremony, after profession is made.

The further question naturally arises: What then comprises monastic profession, and what are its symbols? For Benedictines, the importance of the vows is explained in the *Rule of Benedict* (ca. 530). The novice promises "stability, fidelity to monastic life, and obedience in the oratory in presence of the whole community, and in writing. He states his promise in a document drawn up in the name of the saints whose relics are there, and of the abbot, who is present" (*RB* 58:17-19).[14] The novice lays his or her profession document on the altar, and prostrates at the feet of each member of the community, following which he or she is considered a full member of the monastic community.

The ceremony of monastic profession is understood first and foremost as the ceremonial donation of one's life to God through the aegis of the monastic way of life, as accepted by the abbess or abbot in the name of the community. The details of that monastic life—Benedict's interpretation of the model of the Christian community at the time of Jesus—are continually worked out according to individual times and traditions in which the community exists. The monastic profession presented in the *Rule of Benedict* does not include specific vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but rather promises of obedience, stability, and conversion. The later concept of the evangelical counsels has been subsumed into monastic profession, but the counsels are not specifically stated. Common life assumes poverty in terms of common ownership of temporal goods; obedience to the community as represented by the abbess further supports that life; and conversion is in fact the entire project. But what about chastity? Specifically, although Benedict may have assumed that members would be celibate, why do monastic profession ceremonies—historically at least—include consecration of a virgin for women? Is this ceremony what remains of diaconal ordination and consecration of a virgin from the earliest days of the church? Have the two ceremonials been conflated? If so, why?

THE RULE OF CAESARIUS OF ARLES

Benedict's Rule is preceded by many others, including that for women by Caesarius of Arles, bishop of Arles from 502 until his death in 542; his influence in Gaul was second only to that of Gregory of Tours (ca. 538–595), archbishop of Tours from 573 to 595.

[14] Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, ed. Timothy Fry et al. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1981). This edition is known as *RB 1980*. There is a threefold aspect to the one promise in Benedictine monastic profession, not three separate vows. In fact, "promise," not "vow," is used.

Pope Symmachus (papacy 498–514) accorded Caesarius special approbation of his episcopal authority by awarding him a pallium—at the time worn only by the pope and metropolitans connected to the Holy See—and authorized the wearing of the dalmatic by Caesarius's deacons.[15] Caesarius's particular status—he had deacons, by then an order surviving primarily in Rome and other major sees—would also allow him to create a means of organizing women for his local church, even in the face of growing patriarchal resistance to ministry by women.

The rule Caesarius wrote for women (ca. 512–534), often called a "rule for nuns," is actually entitled *Regula ad virgines*. It follows earlier descriptions of the necessary work of the "wise virgin" in terms remarkably similar to those used to describe the diaconal charism then and now.

Many interpretations of the wise virgin's lamp oil analogy (Mt 25:1–13) preceded Caesarius's writings. For Origen, the oil symbolized piety; for Athanasius, good works; for Basil, virginity; for John Chrysostom, almsgiving; and for Evagrius, charity and mercy.[16] Given the contemporary understanding of the diaconal charism and charge to ministry of the word, the liturgy, and charity, one might assume diaconal roots as in patristic understandings that the "wise virgin" spent her life in piety, good works, virginity, almsgiving, charity, and mercy. Might Caesarius's interpretation be a contraction of these ministries restricted to within the cloister?

Caesarius's Rule depends in large part on Augustine's, as well as on the *Regula monachorum* and *De institutis,* and may have influenced the later *Rule of Benedict* as well as the *Regula Tartensis*.[17] Caesarius's Rule established a means for women who wished to devote their lives to God, in a dangerous age for unmarried women bereft of respected ways for unattached women to earn a living.[18] One can assume that women's diaconal ministry outside the cloister during this period, particularly by

[15] See McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns* 5, citing Caesarius of Arles, *Opera omnia nunc primum in unum collecta*, 2 vols. in 3, ed. Germain Morin (Namur, Belgium: Maredsous Abbey, 1937–1942) 2:9–10, 12–14.

[16] See Rosamond Nugent, *Portrait of the Consecrated Woman in Greek Christian Literature of the First Four Centuries* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1941) 75–77.

[17] The definitive study of Caesarius's Rule is McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns*, which presents the Rule in Latin and English translation. See also, Caesarius, *Regula ad virgines*, in *Codex regularum* 1:354–62, and in Migne, PL 67.1105–20.

[18] "Thus Caesarius very probably built up the body of his cloister regulations in response to the all-too-evident needs of the women of his diocese who, attempting to live a life of virginity, were frequent victims of attack due to the wildness of the times. . . . He saw that he must legislate for economic security for his monastic foundation because the society from which his nuns came provided no means of livelihood for unmarried women" (McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns* 60–61, citing Arthur Malnory, *Saint Césaire, évêque d'Arles,* 503–543 [Paris: Emile Bouillon 1894]).

never-married women or by widows, would be unseemly and unsafe. One can further assume that a married woman would be busy with the affairs of her own household, and, since the church as a whole had moved away from house assemblies, that ministerial avenue for women would have closed.

We know from epigraphical and literary sources that women deacons faded as church structure developed in the West; evidence of their existence diminishes beyond the sixth century even though they are known to have existed as late as the twelfth century.[19] As earlier individual official relationships between bishops and widows, virgins, and women deacons faded into history, monastic life was the only safe means for women's complete self-donation to the things of God and to ministry.

As a sixth-century diocesan bishop, Caesarius had available liturgical formulae both to ordain a woman as deacon and to ratify the virgin's permanent consecration, but he evidently wanted to provide permanently for their livelihoods and security. In today's terms, Caesarius was establishing an institute of consecrated life within his diocese, and he eventually obtained papal sanction for the foundation to be exempt from local episcopal authority.[20] What he did, in fact, was establish an exempt independent monastery of women.

Caesarius's Rule gathers together several different traditions of monastic life: those of the Lérins tradition, of John Cassian, and of the Rule of Saint Augustine.[21] Caesarius accepts in his Rule provision for widows and "those who have left their husbands" to enter the monastery.[22] He also allows young girls—of six or seven years of age—to be admitted,[23] and directs that "all shall learn to read."[24]

We must recall, however, that Caesarius's rule is not called "a rule for nuns" but, rather, "a rule for virgins," its title transformed in historical consciousness to a rule for *monachas*, female monks or nuns. Therein lies the distinction. Neither a life of consecrated virginity, nor a charitable life of widowhood, nor a ministerial life of a woman deacon is identical to monastic life. The commonality of the distinct vocations is that each was lived by women in the early church. Societal limitations would restrict (but

[19] See, e.g., Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity*.

[20] "Diocesan bishops, each in his own territory, can erect institutes of consecrated life by formal decree, provided that the Apostolic See has been consulted" (c. 579, 1983 Code of Canon Law). McCarthy (*Rule for Nuns* 66) references the bull of exemption.

[21] The Abbey of Lérins founded on an island off the coast of southern France in the early fifth century by Saint Honoratus was quite influential in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. See Adalbert de Vogüé, *Les règles des Saints Pères*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Trois règles de Lérins au Ve siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 1982) 21–26.

[22] Rule no. 5, McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns* 172.

[23] Rule no. 7, ibid. 173

[24] Rule no. 18, ibid. 174.

not eliminate) women from entering eremitic life, and anchoretic life for women was rare. Widows of means might still be able to live their charitable lives outside monastic settings with or without ordination as deacons. Somewhat later, some (recall Radegund) might insist on ordination as deacon before establishing monasteries of women.

But in the Arles of Caesarius's time, virgins who sought a life of prayer and service were unprotected. Hence, Caesarius sought to organize women who would live the charism of the "wise virgin" in a monastery headed by his sister. We do not know if he ordained her or any others as deacon, but there would have been ceremonial recognition of her creation as abbess.

Caesarius's Rule could appear to be for never-married women, but he allows the once-married to take up monastic enclosure. In one of his sermons he notes "there are three professions in the holy Catholic Church: there are virgins, widows, and also the married. . . . Good virgins, who want to be such not only in body but also in heart and tongue, are united to holy Mary with the rest of the army of virgins."[25] Like Augustine before him, Caesarius does not elevate virginity above widowhood or marriage and recognizes these three states as ways of living the Christian life in relation to God. That is, the state of virginity is a status, not a job description, any more than is the state of widowhood or the state of marriage. However, recalling the diaconal charisms attached by the Fathers of the church to the "wise virgin," the task of being a "wise virgin" in the widest sense seems more that of the woman deacon.

As noted above, others have demonstrated as probable that women in all three states—virgins, widows, and the married—could have served as deacons. The changing nature of the ecclesial assembly, however, may have restricted the abilities of widows and married women to serve, and the never-married would be in an uncomfortable position without institutional protection of their state, independent of their wish or willingness to serve diaconal functions on behalf of the assembly.[26] In fact, Caesarius's barbarous times offered no safety for women alone or even in groups, and the creation of a monastery was in itself a perilous endeavor.

Therefore, as McCarthy indicates, Caesarius is the first to lay down a concrete plan for organizing women's sheltered lives; he followed John Cassian (ca. 360-435), who had earlier concluded that unmarried women

[25] Caesarius, *Sermo* 6.35, as translated by McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns* 59 n. 51. Caesarius compares virgins to Mary, widows to Anne, and the married woman to Susanna. See *Sermo* 6 in *Caesarius Arelantensis, Sermones*, 2 vols., *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 103–4, ed. D. G. Morin (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953) 1:30–36, at 35.

[26] Caesarius gives 30 as the minimum age for diaconal ordination, and delineates the deacon's eleemosynary duties. See *Sermo* 1, *Sermones* 1:11.

could live a dedicated life only within cloister.[27] Caesarius made their cloister absolute and permanent, endowing the foundation, the monastery of St. John, with property from his diocese.[28] Theoretically, an exempt monastery would be free of financial constraints and episcopal interference, and so Caesarius further ensured the internal integrity of the cloister by forbidding any persons beyond approved clerics from entering the enclosure and oratories, a concept taken from the Lérin tradition's *Rule for Monks*.[29]

If women of Caesarius's monastery were ordained, it is unlikely women not of the monastery were ordained as deacons, especially since local Gallic synods from 396 to the mid-sixth century attempted to outlaw the practice.[30] Caesarius's preferred episcopal status would permit him to do two things: disallow women deacons outside his monastery, and include them within it.

Independent of the internal practices in Caesarius's monastery, ceremonies for consecrations of virgins, deaconesses, and widows existed and survived outside the monasteries well after this time.[31] Since a premise here is that extant diaconal ceremonies followed women into monasteries, I need to examine known ceremonies for the ordination of women deacons before examining monastic ceremonies.

[27] McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns* 60.

[28] Ibid. 59. See also Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons*, 3 vols., trans. and intro. Mary Magdeleine Mueller (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1956 –1973) 1:xi. Caesarius was at first stymied in his attempts to endow the monastery, but he eventually succeeded in circumventing church law, which forbade alienating ecclesiastical property for the purposes of endowing a monastery. See W. E. Klingshirn, "Caesarius's Monastery for Women in Arles and the Composition and Function of the '*Vita Caesarii,*"' *Revue Bénédictine* 100 (1990) 441–81, at 456–59.

[29] Rules 36–37, McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns* 182–83. Caesarius founded his convent in either 512 or 513, recapitulating his Rule and affixing his signature to it. Various scholars calculate the dates differently. The first known printed edition of Caesarius's Rule was published in 1621 by E. Moquot, S.J., as an appendix to a life of St. Radegund who, we must recall, received ordination as deacon before she founded her own monastery at Poitiers between 552 and 560, using Caesarius's Rule. "Abbandona il marito, si fa ordinare diaconessa, forzando con autorità di regina le resistenze del vescovo Medardo" (Baudonivia and Paola Santorelli, *La vita Radegundis di Baudonivia* [Naples: M. D'Auria, 1999] 34).

[30] Eisen (*Women Office Holders in Early Christianity* 184–85) notes that the 396 Synod of Nîmes forbade a "*ministerium faeminae leviticum*," and several later synods—Orange (441), Epaon (517), and Orléans (533)—forbade the ordination of women as deacons.

[31] Cassian Folsom relates that Roman, Gallicanized-Roman, and pure Gallican ceremonies are found in the Romano-Germanic Pontifical composed between 950 and 962 in the Benedictine abbey of Mainz. See Folsom, "Liturgical Books of the Roman Rite," in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, 5 vols., ed. Anscar J. Chupungco (Collegeville, Minn.: 1998) 1:245–318, at 298.

ORDINATION OF WOMEN DEACONS

Many of the extant liturgies for the ordination of a woman as deacon are from the Eastern church, which maintains a more complete official memory of the tradition than does the Western church. To this day, women—typically monastic women—are ordained or may be ordained to the diaconate in a few Eastern churches that are recovering their traditions.[32] There is substantial evidence of ancient ordination rituals for women deacons, including manuscripts in the Vatican Library.[33] Overall, the earliest significant manuscript evidence of the ordination of women as deacons is from the fourth-century Apostolic Constitutions, which, for all their difficulties, give evidence of liturgical practices of the early church.[34] The prayer for the ordination of a woman as deacon from the Apostolic Constitutions, like the later ritual from the Barbarini codex, is nearly identical to that for a male deacon:

8.19. *Concerning a deaconess, I Bartholomew make this constitution: O bishop, thou shall lay thy hands on her in the presence of the presbytery and of the deacons and deaconesses, and say:*

8.20. Eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of man and woman, who filled with the Spirit Miriam and Deborah and Anna and Hulda; who did not disdain that your only-begotten Son should be born of a woman; who also in the tent of the testimony, and in the temple appointed women to be guardians of your holy gates: now look upon this your servant who is being appointed for ministry, and give her the Holy Spirit and cleanse her from every defilement of body and spirit so that she may worthily complete the work committed to her, to your glory

[32] See Phyllis Zagano, "Catholic Women's Ordination: The Ecumenical Implications of Women Deacons in the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Church of Greece, and Union of Utrecht Old Catholic Churches," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 43 (2008) 124–37; Zagano, "Grant Her Your Spirit: The Restoration of the Female Diaconate in the Orthodox Church of Greece," *America* 192.4 (February 7, 2005) 18–21.

[33] For example, the eighth-century Barberini gr. 336 manuscript, also known as the Nicolai Manuscript, or as the Euchologion of St. Mark, published in a definitive Greek/Italian version by Stefano Parenti and Elena Velkovska, eds., *L'Eucologio Barberini Gr. 336*, 2nd ed., (Rome: C.L.V.-Edizioni Liturgiche, 2000); the eleventh-century Bessarion Manuscript, also known as Grotta Ferrata, gr. Gb1, the Patriarchal *Euchologion*, or as the George Varus Manuscript, a definitive version of which is in Miguel Arranz, *L'Eucologio constantinopolitano agli inizi del secolo XI* . . . (Rome: Gregorian University, 1996) 153–60. There are other manuscripts, some of which appear to have been copied from one or both of these manuscript sources, such as Vatican Manuscript gr. 1872, translated into Latin by Jean Morin, in *Commentarius de sacris ecclesiae ordinationibus* (1695; Farnborough: Gregg, 1969) 78–81. This work includes several other manuscripts, including Barberini gr. 336.

[34] In fact, the Apostolic Constitutions, book 8, includes the Clementine Liturgy, the most ancient extant complete order of the rites for celebrating the Eucharist.

and the praise of your Christ, through whom [be] glory and worship to you in the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen.[35]

Other manuscripts present other evidence. In the Byzantine tradition, for example, the woman to be ordained is presented to the bishop, who lays his hands on her head and recites a prayer similar to the one above, further asking God: "Bestow the grace of your Holy Spirit also on this your servant who wishes to offer herself to you, and fill her with the grace of the diaconate, as you gave the grace of your diaconate to Phoebe whom you called to the work of ministry."[36] Prayers specifically for women deacons from still other manuscripts follow similar patterns within the ordination ceremony. Three prayers for the benediction of a woman as deacon (there is no gender in the Georgian language) refer to her as "maidservant," a term more ordinarily connected with virginity.[37]

The point here is not to referee the long-standing disagreement between those who argue that women were sacramentally ordained and those who disagree, but rather to evaluate the similarities between and among rituals for women, including those used for the ordination (or appointment) of a woman as deacon, and those used for men. There are indeed distinctions in the liturgies for men and for women. For example, in the East the male ordinand touches the altar with his forehead; the woman stands upright; the man receives the *Rhipidion*—a sacred fan—as symbol of his office, but the woman does not. Also in the East, the male distributes communion, and the woman does not, although she self-communicates from the chalice. (It is generally understood that it was a duty of the woman deacon to bring communion and otherwise minister to ill women.)[38] While the majority of these examples are from Eastern liturgies, they demonstrate how women deacons were understood locally and represent the common tradition of the whole church, East and West.

[35] Paul F. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of East and West,* (New York: Pueblo, 1990) 116. See Apostolic Constitutions 8.17 and 8.18 (Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites* 115) for the prayer for the ordination of a deacon. The 2002 ITC document, *Le diaconate: Evolution et perspectives* (see n. 1 above), clearly recognizes that the prayer and imposition of hands mark admission to the diaconate. "Deaconesses took up their functions through an *epithesis cheriôn* or imposition of hands that conferred the Holy Spirit, as did the lectors" (ITC, *Diakonia of Christ* 22).

[36] Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites* 137–38, translating the Barberini gr. 336 manuscript (in *Commentarius de sacris ecclesiae ordinationibus* 52–58).

[37] Ibid. 168–69, adapted from the tenth-eleventh-century manuscript Tiflis A86, in F. C. Conybeare and Oliver Waldrop, "The Georgian Version of the Liturgy of St. James," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 19 (1914) 162–73.

[38] See Martimort, *Deaconesses* 150–55.

In the West, from at least the third through the sixth centuries, there was significant discussion on the place and status of women in the church; whether widows, virgins, or deacons, and sources reveal confusion as to who held what status and for what reason. At the end of the fourth century, Ambrosiaster vociferously complained about the possibility of women having liturgical ministry and authority, whereas Pelagius seems to have favored it. However, both Ambrosiaster and Pelagius see women deacons referred to in 1 Timothy 5:3–16, differing only on whether they are widows or virgins.[39]

Eastern rituals for ordaining men and women deacons are both termed "ordinations" (*cheirotonia*) and are performed in the presence of the assembly by the local bishop through the imposition of hands. The bishop declares his intent by asking for "Divine Grace," the ordinands are led to the altar, and both ordinations (of men and of women) take place within the sanctuary during the Eucharist. Further, the bishop invokes the Holy Spirit, recites two prayers (proper to major orders), and presents stoles (also proper to major orders) to both male and female *ordinandi*, who each self-communicate from the cup.

It seems strange to cite identical ceremonies as sacramental for men but not sacramental for women. Even without arguing for or against the sacramental character of these diaconal ordinations of women, we must recognize that they who were so ordained were either widows or virgins, or married women who practiced continence (had, in Caesarius's terms, "left" their husbands).[40] That is, they were already practicing continence required for ordination and would not be permitted to remarry. That the female diaconate remained a characteristic of the church in the East and remains so predominantly as a monastic female diaconate in Orthodoxy to this day specifically for assisting at liturgy and ministering to sick nuns of the monastery, further suggests that, as it was suppressed into female monastic life in the West, its ceremonies were combined with other monastic ceremonies or eliminated entirely.[41] It makes sense to retain women deacons in the East. The major distinction between the eucharistic liturgies East and West is that the East must have a deacon, not always easily available to a woman's monastery, while the West allows diaconal functions to be assumed by the priest-celebrant.

If we look at the characteristics of contemporary diaconal ordination ceremonies, we find great continuity in the tradition, perhaps most obviously

[39] See Gryson, *Ministry of Women* 92–99.

[40] Ibid. 110.

[41] See Kyriaki Karidoyanes Fitzgerald**,** *Women Deacons in the Orthodox Church: Called to Holiness and Ministry* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox, 1998).

the inclusion of the litany of the saints, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the public nature of the ordinations, and the required participation of the diocesan bishop. In fact, today the deacon is properly ordained only by the diocesan bishop, who alone imposes hands on the deacon.[42]

CONSECRATION OF A VIRGIN

As in ancient times, today the proper presider at the consecration of a virgin is the diocesan bishop.[43] The status of a consecrated virgin does not immediately appear to be equal to the ministerial status of a deacon, although the ceremony appears to have the same roots as ceremonies for the ordination of deacons and priests.

While the consecrated virgin aspires to live as a spouse of Christ and not as a public minister of the church, her consecration places her in a particular relationship with the diocesan bishop. There are two current ceremonials for the Consecration to a Life of Virginity, one for such a life to be lived in the world, the other to be lived within monastic profession. The introduction to each rite states:

> The custom of consecrating women to a life of virginity flourished even in the early Church. It led to the formation of a solemn rite constituting the candidate a sacred person, a surpassing sign of the Church's love for Christ, and an eschatological image of the world to come and the glory of the heavenly Bride of Christ.[44]

Hence, the eschatological witness of celibacy is here recalled as independent of membership within a given monastic community. When lived in the world, however, such contemporary consecrated virginity appears to be very much like the contemporary diaconate. The contemporary ritual describes a life reminiscent of the words of Origen, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, and Evagrius mentioned earlier: "They are to spend their time in works of penance and of mercy, in apostolic activity, and in prayer. . . . They are strongly advised to recite the liturgy of the hours each day, especially morning prayer and evening prayer."[45]

Are contemporary consecrated virgins living the diaconal charge and charism?[46] Were the consecrated virgins discussed by the Church Fathers

[42] See c. 1016, *Code of Canon Law*.

[43] See René Metz, *La consécration des vierges: Hier, aujourd'hui, demain* (Paris: Cerf, 2001) 87–89.

[44] "Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity," in *The Rites of the Catholic Church: The Roman Ritual Revised by the Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council . . .* , 2 vols. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1991) 2:157.

[45] Ibid.

[46] The U.S. Association of Consecrated Virgins reports approximately 200 members included in a total of 3,000 consecrated virgins worldwide. See http://www.consecratedvirgins.org/default.asp.

also deacons? Were the women who lived Caesarius's *Rule for Virgins* also deacons? The problematic distinctions between various commentaries, rituals, and historical substantiations regarding those for whom the rituals were used creates the conundrum under study here. History has retained evidence of widows, virgins, and women deacons. How can these women be distinguished in their distinct states and ministries? The broad brush might paint the picture thus: widows and virgins, including those who lived in monasteries, may also have been deacons, or not.

Widows were typically appointed to a life of prayer, although they engaged in some social services as well. Women deacons were also expected to lead lives of prayer as well as engage in ecclesial social services, catechesis, and especially ministry to women. Widows living in the world often included women of means who knew how to run large households and who (especially if they were also deacons, or able to become deacons) were those best prepared to head a monastery.[47]

In seeking the first historical evidence of women as deacons, however, we find references to their more direct ministries within ecclesial communities—assisting at baptisms, anointing the sick, catechizing the young, keeping order in the assembly, and carrying the sacrament to ill and homebound women—all of which point to a public ministry more directly connected, ultimately, to the diocesan bishop.[48] This is not to say that no widows were deacons, but rather to distinguish between their respective charisms: the one to prayer, the other to a more public ministry.

Similarly, consecrated virgins seem to have been of two modes, the one consecrated to a life of virginity with an emphasis on prayer, particularly liturgical prayer, and the other consecrated to a life of virginity that included public ministry, termed "apostolic activity" in the contemporary ritual. The former might be understood in today's terms as hermit, anchorite, or cloistered nun, whereas the latter might be understood in terms of apostolic religious life or secular lay ecclesial ministry.

In any event, we can infer from the very language used in its Introduction that the contemporary ritual for the consecration of a virgin has at least some roots in the rituals for the creation of women deacons. Contemporary consecrated virgins are expected "to spend their time in works of penance and of mercy, in apostolic activity, and in prayer." And their prayer is to include what is normally recommended for deacons today: daily recitation of the liturgy of the hours, especially morning and evening prayer.

[47] Gryson (*Ministry of Women* 110) finds the order of widows somewhat akin to a contemporary secular institute.

[48] Jean Daniélou, citing Epiphanius, includes anointing the sick: *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Faith, 1974) 29; "Le ministère des femmes," *Maison-Dieu* 61 (1960) 94.

In fact, the life of consecrated virginity lived in the world appears remarkably similar to that of the deacon. The consecrated virgin is admonished to a life spent with the word, the liturgy, and charity. She is bound to the diocesan bishop, who presides at her consecration and who either in person or by his delegate is to meet with her annually. The obvious distinction between the contemporary consecrated virgin and the deacon is that the consecrated virgin has no public liturgical ministry other than those she may otherwise perform in her parish, i.e., serving as lector or as extraordinary minister of the Eucharist. She may not be granted faculties for either preaching or presiding at baptism or marriage, all typically within the deacon's mandate. She is not a cleric.[49]

It must be emphasized that the question of status (consecrated virgin or widow) should not be confused with that of mandate for ministry (diaconate). That is, although the current rite for the consecration of a virgin indicates a certain expectation of "ministry," it is not direct commissioning to ministry, and neither includes nor implies appointment to office or a granting of faculties. The rite for consecration of a virgin is primarily one of conferring status, of ratifying a state in life. The rite of ordination to the diaconate imparts a mandate for ministry.

It is clearly possible that ancient rites for consecrating virgins and for ordaining deacons were conflated to form the single rite extant in the West that can be used in two circumstances, alone or together with religious profession for nuns. It is important to note that specific language of the rite points to both the monastic profession and diaconal ordination rituals.

By returning to monastic ritual we can observe the possibility that several distinct events are conflated into one ceremony.

[49] The ordinary means for entering the clerical state is through ordination to the diaconate. While lay persons, including women, can be delegated to perform formal baptisms and witness marriages, they may never preach homilies at the Eucharist. Bishops cannot delegate preaching authority to nonclerics, except for masses for children. Canon 767 restricts the homily to "*sacerdoti aut diacono*," that is, to bishops, priests, and deacons. "The homily . . . must be reserved to the sacred minister, Priest or Deacon . . . , to the exclusion of the non-ordained faithful, even if these should have responsibilities as 'pastoral assistants' or catechists in whatever type of community or group. This exclusion is not based on the preaching ability of sacred ministers nor their theological preparation, but on that function which is reserved to them in virtue of having received the Sacrament of Holy Orders" (Vatican Congregation for the Clergy, On Some Questions Regarding Collaboration of Nonordained Faithful in Priests' Sacred Ministry [August 15, 1997], http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/documents/rc_con_interdic_doc_15081997_en.html).

CISTERCIAN RITUAL AND TRADITION

The Cistercians were founded in 1098 by Robert of Molesme at Citeaux Abbey near Dijon, France, as a return to the original monastic Rule of Saint Benedict. Two canonically distinct orders follow the tradition of the Cistercian Order (O. Cist.) and the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (O.C.S.O.). Here I limit my study to the nuns of the latter order, which is also known since 1892 as the Trappistines, referring to the reform begun by Armand de Rancé (1626–1700) at LaTrappe, Orne, France.

A great deal of scholarship has developed in the Benedictine tradition regarding Chapter 58 of the *Rule of Benedict*, which understands monastic profession to include the affirmation of stability, conversion of life, and obedience according to the Rule. For my purposes, the operative question is whether monastic profession is a vow made to God or a promise made to the monastic community. Scholars—notably including Benedictine Richard Yeo—find monastic profession is the latter; that is, monastic profession is a solemn and absolutely binding promise to live according to monastic practices and the virtues of fraternal charity, patience, humility, poverty, and gentleness, made in God's presence and solidified by the self-surrender expressed by the placing of the written document (*petitio*) on the altar.[50] In Yeo's view, "monastic profession is properly seen as a species of religious profession,"[51] and the later singing of the *Suscipe* expresses the personal profession within the community.[52]

In Cistercian practice, the individual makes monastic profession in the hands of the abbot or abbess in chapter, where that tradition is preserved, as follows: "The Abbot/Abbess sits and receives his/her (miter and) staff. The one making profession stands before the Abbot/Abbess and reads the profession formula . . . goes to the altar to place on it the formula of profession, and to sign it upon the altar itself." A solemn profession that includes the solemn blessing or consecration of the monk/nun, however, takes place during a mass celebrated by the abbot (for monks) or father immediate (for nuns), or his delegate, the diocesan bishop.[53] The nun to be

[50] Richard Yeo, *The Structure and Content of Monastic Profession: A Juridical Study, with Particular Regard to the Practice of the English Benedictine Congregation since the French Revolution* (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1982) 329–31. Yeo, tenth Abbot President of the English Benedictine Congregation, writes that the petition expresses a vow, but it is "anachronistic rather than incorrect to say that this vow includes vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience" (331).

[51] Ibid. 341.

[52] Yeo writes that the *Suscipe* ritualizes "the acceptance of the candidate by God [and] is linked up with incorporation into the community" (ibid. 333).

[53] The dual terms "blessing or consecration" could signify their ancient interchangeability.

professed stands before the abbess, as above, and makes her petition. Following the homily, the abbess interrogates her, inquiring as to her resolve. Then follows the prayer of the faithful and the litany of the saints. The litany of the saints marks the ceremony's relationship of the blessing/consecration within ancient (and contemporary) ordination ritual. After the litany, "the one making profession stands before the abbess and reads the profession formula written herself, as found in the Constitutions of the Order, or the Congregation, or the Monastery . . . goes to the altar to place on it the formula of profession, and to sign it upon the altar itself."[54] Following the rite of profession, the abbess invokes the triune God's blessing on the professed member, who lies prostrate.[55] It is only after these blessing/consecratory prayers that the cowl and black veil are presented to Cistercian nuns.

Which of these events is rooted in monastic membership? Clearly, the placing of the schedule (profession document) upon the altar and the profession at the hands of the abbess involve the stability, conversion of life, and obedience as expressed in Chapter 58 of the *Rule of Benedict*, and as understood by Cistercians. But which of these is/are rooted in consecration of a virgin? Which may be rooted in ordination of a deacon, or perhaps subdeacon?

The key to searching out roots of diaconal ordination within Cistercian tradition is two-pronged: the abbess's blessing and invocations, and her presentation of the cowl. The cowl, while it is a uniquely monastic garment, is also a uniquely liturgical garment. Both options for the prayer read by the abbess at its imparting demonstrate the cowl's relationship to both the self-immolation of profession and to liturgical ministry:

> May the Lord clothe you in the new self created according to God in justice and holiness of truth: and may the ministry which we outwardly perform be realized inwardly through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Or:

> Our brother/sister is now being clothed in the garment which the holy Fathers appointed to be worn by those who renounce the world as a sign of innocence and humility. May the Son of God who in his goodness put on the garment of our mortal nature, himself grant our brother/sister to be clothed in his very self.[56]

[54] "The Rite of Solemn Profession and the Blessing or Consecration of a Monk/Nun," *Cistercian Ritual*, trans. Carol Dvorak (privately printed, 2004) 84–85, available at http://www.ocso.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=54&Itemid=86&lang=en.

[55] "Rite of Solemn Profession" 85.

[56] Ibid.

The cowl is worn only by those perpetually professed in the abbey. Temporarily professed nuns wear a cloak during liturgies. Perpetually professed nuns do not obtain the liturgical authority of the abbess, which includes imparting a blessing (at least at the conclusion of Vespers), reading the Gospel during Sunday Vigils, and imparting the blessing or invocation upon the newly professed member, but they are full members of the chapter and may ordinarily serve as hebdomadary for the Liturgy of the Hours.

While the cowl is worn only by those fully professed, and only those fully professed have certain liturgical authority, another level of liturgical authority—that of the abbess—is simultaneously evident. The abbess presides at the Liturgy of the Hours, and, as mentioned above, imparts a formal blessing at the conclusion of Vespers. Does this reflect her ancestral history of deacon-abbess? In the West the tradition of deacon-abbesses was reflected, if not preserved, in Benedictine and Cistercian abbeys of Catalonia, whose abbesses wore the stole at liturgy.[57]

The ritual of presenting the stole to a woman and the circumstances of its wearing have long been the subject of scholarly debate. Aimé Georges Martimort's penultimate chapter in his *Deaconesses: An Historical Study* (1982, 1986) is entitled "The Case of Carthusian Nuns." His comments are nearly an appendix to his long and detailed response to Roger Gryson's *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (1972, 1976), in which Gryson concluded:

> From a doctrinal point of view, since for several centuries a large portion of the Church followed this practice [of ordaining women as deacons] without raising a theoretical problem, it is perfectly conceivable to confer on women a diaconal type of ministry. Women deacons then receive a true ordination, with nothing distinguishing it formally from the ordination of their male colleagues.[58]

Again, even without attempting to referee the "ordination" debate, or determine it one way or the other, it is obvious that rituals conferring status and implying ministry existed outside monasteries and were brought into them. No clear and perfect timeline or documentary history exists in any individual monastery or order from the ancient church to the present, but clues to the ways women handed down their rituals are sufficient to point toward their provenance. Carthusian nuns may provide the clearest link to the tradition.

[57] Martimort, *Deaconesses* 240 n. 36.
[58] Gryson, *Ministry of Women* 113.

CARTHUSIAN RITUAL AND TRADITION

The Carthusians were founded by St. Bruno of Cologne, who began the first charterhouse in 1084 in the valley of the Chartreuse Mountains in the French Alps. Carthusians are hermits who share daily liturgical worship and have weekly communal meals and recreation. In 1145, nuns of Prébayon in Provence, France, asked to be received into the order, becoming the first Carthusian nuns. It was thought that women could not live as strict an eremitic life as men, and so women Carthusians lived a more coenobitical life until 1970 or so. Carthusian nuns now live a life nearly identical to that of the monks. There are currently two women's charterhouses in France, two in Italy, one in Spain, and a new foundation in South Korea.[59]

When Carthusian nuns receive the consecration of virgin, in a ceremony led by a priest or bishop, they are presented with the stole, maniple, and cross as well as the veil, ring, and crown.[60] Some scholars, including Daniel Le Blévec, argue that there is no connection between the Carthusian rite of consecration of a virgin and the ancient practice of ordaining women as deacons.[61] However, any position depends on minimal historical evidence.

Unlike Cistercians, Carthusians are not within the Benedictine family.[62] Although Carmelite and Benedictine monasteries of women did join the Carthusian order, of interest for my study is their provenance from Poitiers and the *Rule* of Cesarius of Arles. One tradition is that Prébayon, the first woman's monastery to join the Carthusian order, was founded in 611 by Radegund's niece, Germilie.[63] Between 552 and 560, Radegund had

[59] See http://www.chartreux.org/en/frame.html.

[60] One Carthusian nun wrote to me to say that they receive the stole and maniple not as an ordination ceremonial but as a connection with "the tradition." Current usage provides for ceremonial presentation of the black veil, the run, the stole, and the book of the divine office. See Nathalie Nabert, *Les moniales chartreuses* (Geneva: Ad Solem, 2009) 54–55.

[61] See Daniel Le Blévec, "La consécration des moniales cartusiennes d'après un pontifical romain conservé à Avignon" (Bibl. mun. 205), in *Die Geschichte des Kartäuserordens*, 2 vols., ed. James Lester Hogg (Salzburg: Salzburg Insititut fűr Anglistik und Amerikanistic, 1991-1992) 1:203–19. Martimort (*Deaconesses* 235–40) notes that others support the connection between the Carthusian rite and diaconal ordination: Y. Gourdel, "Chartreux," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualitié* . . . , vol. 2 (1953) col. 721; M. de Fontette, "*Recherches sur les origins de moniales chartreuses*," in *Études d'histoire et de droit canoniques dediées à Gabriel Le Bras*, 2 vols. (Paris, Sirey, 1963) 2:1150–51; L. Ray and Pierre Mouton, "*Chartreuses (Règle des moniales)*," in *Dictionnaire de droit canoniques* . . . , vol. 3 (1942) cols. 630–32.

[62] Camaldolese, Vallombrosans, Sylvestrines, Celestines, and Olivetans use or used the *Rule of Benedict.*

[63] Dom Augustin Devaux, "Premier chapitre pour une histoire des moniales chartreuses," in *Études et documents pour l'histoire des Chartreux*, *Analecta cartusiana* 208 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2003) 1–42, at 4.

founded and completed the construction of a convent near Poitiers, of which Prébayon appears to have been a daughter monastery.

Even though the Second Council of Orleans in 533 had ruled that henceforth no women would "receive diaconal benediction due to the frailty of her sex,"[64] it is generally agreed that Radegund—perhaps a virgin, or at the very least the uncooperative queen and wife of Frankish King Clothar—insisted on diaconal ordination for herself and obtained the same privilege for nuns of her monastery.[65]

Historical records on the Abbey of Prébayon are sparse, since it was destroyed by the Saracens in the ninth century, and successive waves of destruction resulted in more losses. It has long been believed, however, that Radegund's niece Germilie brought the tradition of diaconal ordination with her to Prébayon, where it remained. Hence the ceremony of giving the stole, maniple, and cross to the Carthusian nun during the consecration of a virgin would have come into the Carthusian order with the practices of the convent at Prébayon.[66] Since other local practices appear to mirror those of Prébayon,[67] the uneven pattern of convents joining the Carthusian order and others being founded anew supports both the maintenance of the older tradition and the confusion regarding its provenance. The pattern also supports the notion that the practice of ordaining nuns as deacons was widespread.

Like Benedictines, Carthusians receive a cowl, theirs signifying reception of a minor order. Nathalie Nabert writes that "*cuculle*" is the proper name within Chartres for the distinctive Carthusian scapular attached by bands of cloth on either side. Since 1291, Nabert writes, women Carthusians, just as men, received the minor order of porter, the two bands on the cowl signifing that order.[68]

Hence the ceremony within the ceremony of consecration of a virgin at which the Carthusian nun receives the stole, maniple, and cross may provide the clearest contemporary window to the past. Each item—stole, maniple, and cross—signifies the clerical order of deacon.

The stole, a band of cloth worn by Carthusian nuns around the neck and hanging freely at the front, in the manner of Eastern women deacons, is

[64] Canon no. 18 seems directed at women outside the cloister, since its preceding lines declare excommunication for women deacons who "indulged again in marriage" (Gryson, *Ministry of Women* 107).

[65] "D'ailleurs, les vierges et les autres chrétiennes vouées à la vie religieuse se retiraient dans les monastères, dont les abbesses recevaient parfois, telle sainte Radegonde, l'ordination des diaconnesses" (Fortunat, *Vita S. Radigundis* n. 12, Migne, PL 88.502), quoted in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 696.

[66] Le Blévec, "Consecration des moniales cartusiennes" 205.

[67] Devaux, "Premier chapitre pour une histoire" 40.

[68] Nabert, *Moniales chartreuses* 29.

today a distinctly liturgical garment of the deacon, priest, and bishop. However, in the East the deacon's stole finds earlier reference than those of priest and bishop; it is known in the fourth and fifth centuries.[69]

The maniple, a band of cloth worn on the left arm during mass, dates to sixth-century Rome as an item given at ordination to the subdeacon—at that time a major order. It was solely a mark of major orders worn only during the celebration of mass.[70]

The cross placed on the shoulder of the Carthusian nun as part of the consecration liturgy has its historical echoes in the present. The introduction to the ancient ceremony of the blessing and consecration of virgins in the Roman Pontifical of 1839 speaks of the great symbolism of the cross.[71] Perhaps echoing the tradition, the Sisters of the Assumption, founded in France in 1839 and whose apostolic ministry brought them into contact with "the world," once wore a white mantle with a violet cross on the shoulder in chapel.[72]

The ritual for the conferral of the stole, maniple, and cross to Carthusian nuns appears to be a ceremony within a ceremony, one that includes the litany of the saints common to ordinations. That is, the ordinary ritual for the consecration of a virgin begins and proceeds, but is interrupted by a uniquely Carthusian ritual of the presenting of the stole, maniple, and cross. The 17th-century Roman Pontifical at Avignon[73] clearly states that what follows is the old usage and custom of Carthusian women: first, the maniple is placed on the right arm of the woman, then the cross on her right shoulder, and finally the stole around her neck.[74] The stole is not worn over one shoulder and tied at the side; rather, it hangs around the neck to the front in the fashion of a Western priest.

After communion in the mass for the consecration of a virgin, the bishop invests those consecrated in their liturgical responsibilities, presenting them the breviary in a manner similar to the presentation of the book of Gospels to a deacon: "Accipite librum, ut incipiatatis horas canonicas, et legatis officium in ecclesia."[75]

Several manuscripts, particularly those from the 13th to the 17th centuries, attest to the historicity of the Carthusian ceremony as it is celebrated

[69] Joseph Braun, "Stole," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14 (1912) 301–2.

[70] Joseph Braun,"Maniple," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 9 (1910) 601–2. In the Greek rite the corresponding vestment is worn only by the bishop.

[71] Nabert, *Moniales chartreuses* 95.

[72] F. M. Rudge, "Sisters of the Assumption," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (1907) 6.

[73] In the Bibliothèque Municipale d'Avignon (ms. 205, chartreuse de Salettes, 1696–1697).

[74] Le Blévec, "Consecration des moniales cartusiennes" 213.

[75] Ibid. 215

today.[76] An interesting affirmation of the rite is contained in the decision of Philippe Howard, Cardinal of Norfolk, who in 1687 decided on behalf of the Sacred Congregation for Rites that, while the ritual may have the appurtenances of the ordination of deacon, it was not such. Therefore, he wrote, the ritual could continue to be used, as it imperiled neither dogma nor discipline.[77] (Determining that it was not a diaconal ordination in the 17th century, however, does not deny its roots in such.)

Two contemporary writers, Dom Augustin Devaux and Daniel Le Blévec, argue against the relationship between the ceremonial presentation of the stole, maniple, cross, and breviary to Carthusian nuns within their ceremony of consecration of a virgin and any historical diaconal ordination. Devaux labors to disconnect Caesarius of Arles from Radegund and Radegund from Prébayon, citing lack of sources. However, if the continuity of the tradition cannot be proven with manuscript evidence, then neither can its discontinuity. Devaux admits the dearth of sources and the repeated destructions of monasteries of nuns but attempts to prove a negative from the small number of known manuscripts. We do not know if there are undiscovered others, but we can be certain there were some—if not many—manuscripts destroyed. In fact, given the ingrained traction against the tradition of ordaining women, it is not difficult to speculate that certain manuscripts were purposefully "lost." In any event, extant manuscripts clearly demonstrate a ritual within a ritual that invests the newly consecrated virgin in stole, maniple, and cross.

Following Devaux, the later analysis by Le Blévec of the 17th-century Avignon manuscript of the Carthusian nuns' ceremonial is aimed at solving what he deems "a difficult liturgical problem" because many historians connect Carthusian practice with the ordination of women as deacons.[78]

[76] See manuscripts in the following libraries: Bibliothèque municipale de Grenoble (ms. 324, chartreuse de Bertaud, XIIe siècle); Stadtbibliothek Darmstadt (ms. [H] 710, chartreuse de Bruges, 1450ca); Bibliothèque royale de Bruxelles (ms. 8245, chartreuse de Bruges, 1450ca); Bibliothèque nationale de France – Richelieu (ms. Latin 1437 et 1438, chartreuse de Gosnay, fin XVe-début XVIe siècles); Bibliothèque municipale de Douai (ms. 569, chartreuse de Gosnay, 2ème moitié du XVIe siècle); Bibliothèque municipale d'Avignon (ms. 205, chartreuse de Salettes, 1696–1697); Bibliothèque municipale de Charleville-Mezières (ms. 420, chartreuse de Gosnay, fin XVIIe siècle); Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon (site Part-Dieu) (ms. 861, chartreuse de Prémol, fin XVIIe siècle); and Archives départmentales du Nord, Lille (62 H 17, chartreuse de Gosnay, fin XVIe siècle).

[77] "Le maintien de l'usage cartusien ne mettait en péril ni le dogme ni la discipline" (Devaux, "*Premier chapitre*" 31), citing *Analecta Juris Pontificii* 8.1286. : *Rapport de Philippe Howard, Cardinal de Norfolk, sur le rit de la consécration des vierges chez les moniales chartreuses* (chartreuse de Prémol, 1687).

[78] "L'usage de conférer aux moniales de 'l'ordre des chartreux, à l'occasion de leur consécration, l'étoile et le manipule pose quant à lui un difficile problème de tradition liturgique sur lequel se sont penchés depuis longtemps de nombreux

That the ceremony of conferring the stole, maniple, and cross is unrelated to diaconal ordination Le Blévec aims to prove by arguing in part that the ceremony does not seem to have been identical in every Carthusian house in history. But it is already known that other traditions—notably Benedictine and Carmelite—joined Chartreuse, bringing their own customs and usages into the order. These, especially the Carmelites, may not have had the diaconal ceremony in the first place. What Le Blévec does not address is the question he begins with. If the ceremony of conferring the stole, maniple, cross, and, later, breviary is not related to diaconal ordination, where did it come from and to what is it related?

CONCLUSIONS

Given the distinctions between and among monastic profession, personal vows, consecration of a virgin, and diaconal ordination, what do the historical and current ceremonies under evaluation here tell about the lost tradition of women deacons? We know that women were ordained and served as deacons, and that their ordination and service faded in the West. If we could pinpoint a time when the female diaconate disappeared in the West, or at least in France, we might choose the mid-sixth century, around the time Caesarius's Rule was gaining sway, and various local synods in Gaul were routinely ruling against further creation of women deacons.[79]

Is the tradition of women deacons lost, or merely misplaced? As recently as 1942, the *Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique* forthrightly stated that Carthusian nuns' ritual was distinct from that of Benedictines and Cistercians and could be called a *consecration virginali-diaconissale*, related to the ritual for women deacons of the early church.[80]

It appears that contemporary discussion on the restoration of the female diaconate, and concurrent (theologically unrelated) discussion about the possibility of women priests, has raised significant disagreement regarding the historical facts as they have traditionally been received. The fact that Carthusian nuns to this day retain a ritual that includes investiture with

historiens. La thèse traditionnelle fait remonter cet usage aux diaconesses de l'Eglise des premiers temps" (Le Blévec, "Consécration des moniales cartusiennes" 104–5).

[79] This despite the fact that other local churches seem to have retained women deacons. Macy notes, for example, that "in 1018, Benedict VIII conferred on the Cardinal Bishop of Porto the right to ordain bishops, priests, male or female deacons (*diaconibus vel diaconissis*)," a privilege repeated by John XIX in 1025 and by Leo IX in 1049. Macy cites the following papal documents: Benedict VIII, *Quotiens illa* (August 1, 1018); John XIX, "Quoniam semper" (May 1025); and Leo IX, "Supplicantium desideriis" (April 22, 1049) (*Hidden History* 35 and 172–73 nn. 78, 79, 80).

[80] Ray and Mouton, "*Chartreuses (regle des moniales)*."

appurtenances of diaconal status, and do so with the clear approbation of Rome, speaks deeply to a tradition of a ministerial diaconate lived by women before the time of Caesarius of Arles, echoed in the life of Radegund, and brought forward outside the monastery by secular and religious women today.

What that tradition has to say to the future is unclear. It is, however, a tradition that should be remembered because (or perhaps in spite of) the extensive discussion and commentary on the ordination of women in general and the ordination of women to the diaconate in particular. Even though the distinct roles of deacon and priest have been codified,[81] confusion as to their relationship remains, giving rise to the argument that ordination of a woman as deacon presages ordination of a woman as priest. Such opposition ignores the fact that the diaconate has been restored as a permanent (as opposed to "transitional") order in the church. For the tradition to be fully remembered, it must include women.

[81] Following the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Pope Benedict XVI issued the *motu proprio, Omnium in mentem* (October 26, 2009) clarifying canon law regarding the distinction: priests are ordained to act in the person of Christ, the head of the Church; deacons are ordained to serve the people of God in and through the Word, the liturgy and charity.