

CANNOUNCEMENT

In the last few days, there was talk about the actions of the His Eminence Seraphim Metropolitan of Zimbabwe and Angola, who, this past Holy Thursday, on 2nd May 2024, ordained a Deaconess for the missionary needs of his Holy Metropolis. The event caused many reactions, and gave rise to the free expression of various opinions and approaches.

To avoid confusion, therefore, the following clarifications are made:

– The mission in Africa needs Deaconesses, mainly for pastoral work and for the baptisms of adult women, as well as in special cases, such as widowhood, in stricter male-dominated environments, where for a long time the widowed woman is cut off from social and church life.

– The Church is well aware of the position, the order and the terms-conditions of the status of a Deaconess, as they are described in the Prayer Books, the Rules of the Apostolic Orders and the Synod in Trullo. It is particularly pointed out that Deaconesses were never established in the history of the Church as women-ministers of the Holy Sacraments, but as dedicated women-helpers of the general pastoral, liturgical and sanctifying work of the Church, addressing only women, where local conditions and customs excluded them from church life. The first Church was faced with this pastoral problem and found the solution through Deaconesses. When, of course, societies progressed spiritually, matured, and recognized women's rights, the institution of Deaconesses fell into disuse. But it is documented that the institution existed and certainly remains in the "spiritual arsenal" of the Church to deal with similar situations even today, under special local conditions.

– In the face of the continuous spread of the Gospel word in Africa and the continuous influx of native brothers and sisters to Orthodoxy, pastoral issues concerning African women were raised, exactly similar to those faced by the Church of the early Christian years. The Holy Synod of the Supreme Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa took the decision in principle to revive and activate the institution of Deaconesses within its pastoral jurisdiction. However, this Decision is deferred for further study in order to finalize the individual details, such as the vestments, the way of ministry and the However, His Eminence Seraphim, Metropolitan of Zimbabwe, for many years a missionary in Africa, went ahead with the implementation of the initial decision of the Holy Synod, which, however, to this day, has not become active, since the study on the subject to take the final Synodal Decision has not been completed.

Let us have confidence in our Church and especially in the Supreme Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa, which sacrificially, quietly and selflessly proclaims Christ, and Him Crucified, to the ends of the African land, based on the tradition and practice of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. May the same sensitivity be shown, which now appears in the case of the intention to properly revive an ancient pastoral act of our Holy Church and in the matters of staffing the holy clergy of the Patriarchal Throne of Saint Mark, of the systematic and practical support of the Apostolic work in Africa, or to the major issue of the illegal insurgence of another Autocephalous Church into the jurisdictional limits of the Ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria and the blasphemous attempt to split its indigenous flock, which came to know Christ through the intense sacrificial ministry and even the death of humble Greek missionaries, to the glory of God and the illumination of our African brothers and sisters who are "in darkness and the shadow of death".

*From the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa
Alexandria, 11th May 2024*