

RESOLUTION RE ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE DIACONATE

SUBMITTED BY ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH, WESTCHESTER, NY

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THIS DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY RESPECTFULLY PETITION HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP KHAJAG BARSAMIAN, PRIMATE OF THE DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA, IN THE DISCRETIONARY EXERCISE OF HIS HIERARCHICAL AUTHORITY, TO ORDAIN QUALIFIED WOMEN TO THE DIACONATE.

Rationale

1. Men and women being equal in the eyes of God (a) both are called to serve Him. Consider the number of sainted women who have faithfully served the Lord through the church, and the power of their religious faith. The adoption of Christianity by the Armenian nation is closely associated with the names of Saints Hripsime and Gayane, showing that ever since the beginning of the Armenian church the faithful have acknowledged women for their service with the same principle of equality, regardless of their gender.

2. The diaconate has been a ministry of service since apostolic times. Canon Law of the Armenian church does not prohibit women from serving as deacons. The ordination of women to the diaconate would reinstate a centuries-old tradition which has allowed the first Holy Order in the hierarchy of the church to women. (b)

3. For women who have the calling to serve as deacons with the hierarchical duties accompanying this order, ordination would validate their vocation, acknowledge their commitment, and make their task more effective.

(a) "In Christ there is neither male nor female..." (Gal.3.28)

(b) "I commend you to our sister Phoebe, a deaconess..." (Rms.16.1)

Historical note; A similar resolution was submitted (by the Diocesan Council) to the Diocesan Assembly in 1986. The vote was 96 to 22 in favor. Also, Archbishop Shnork Kalustian ordained Sister Hripsime Sasoonian to the diaconate in Istanbul in 1982. She has served as Dean, Director and Purser of the Kalfavan Orphanage, Accountant of the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey, and served on the altar every Sunday.