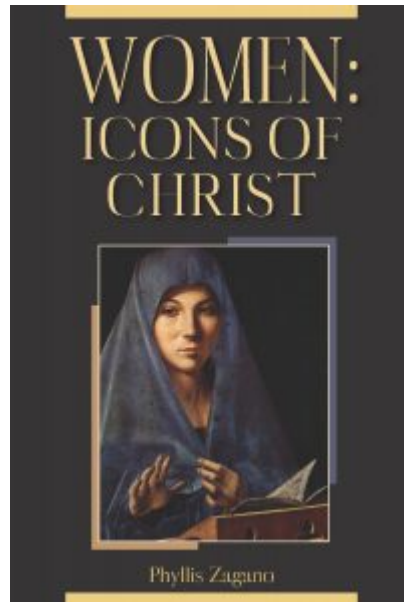


Women: Icons of Christ

Phyllis Zagano



A Teacher's Guide for Secondary and College Instructors **by Cynthia L. Cameron, Ph.D. and Phyllis Zagano, Ph.D.**

This Teacher's Guide presents resources and suggestions to assist teaching tasks. The following plans and questions may be jumping-off points for your own approach discussing the question of women deacons in the Roman Catholic Church.

This guide has several resources you may find helpful:

- Brief chapter outlines, highlighting key concepts and arguments and questions designed to create conversation.
 - Reflection Questions: to help students reflect on their own experiences as a foundation for considering the topic of the chapter.
 - Discussion Questions: to prompt conversation around the themes raised in each chapter.
 - Research Questions: to guide students in preparing research and/or reflection papers.
- In addition, some assignments, suggested classroom activities, and research topics consider the book as a whole. These could be used to ground classroom discussion if the book is to be read and discussed in only one or two sessions (as opposed to one chapter at a time).

- At the end of the guide is a list of additional resources on women deacons and a glossary of theological terms that includes some of the more technical terms used in the book.

The goal of all of these questions and assignment suggestions is to prompt critical thinking and reflection. As Brazilian educator Paulo Freire suggests, at its best, education invites students into a process of “reading the word and reading the world.”¹ If education is meant to make a difference in the lives of students, then an approach that invites students to reflect on their experiences and imagine a better world can transform their lives. Inviting students to reflect on their own experiences alongside the text enables conversations that can move to a critical reflection on how the world is and how it can be.

Inviting students to reflect on their own experiences of leadership, ministry, and women in the Church in conversation with Zagano’s historical, sacramental, and theological reflections on women deacons in the Church can allow them to develop informed opinions on the questions surrounding women in ministry. The goal is not simply to know that there were once women deacons or to understand the argument for the restoration of this ministry. Rather, the goal is to invite students to reflect on larger questions that engage their own experiences of leadership and ministry.

Women: Icons of Christ is well suited for a variety of advanced secondary religion classes and undergraduate theology courses. Some suggestions include:

- At the high school level:
 - In a course on vocations, a unit on deacons, including the history of the diaconate and the needs of the Church as they relate to the permanent diaconate and women deacons.
 - In a course on the early Church, a unit on the role of women in leadership in the first few centuries of Christianity.
 - In a course on sacraments, either as a class on women and sacraments or in the session(s) on ordination.
 - In a course on social justice, a unit on the history of women including the Church’s history of marginalizing women and their eventual exclusion from formal ministry.
- At the college level:
 - In a course on women in Christianity, a unit on historical forms of leadership in the Church.
 - In a course on leadership in Christianity, a unit on women’s leadership.
 - In a course on ecclesiology, a unit on the history of ecclesiological structures and ministries.
 - In a course on ministry, a unit on the diaconate.

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

¹ Paulo Freire, “Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed” in *The Paulo Freire Reader* ed. Ana Maria Araujo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (New York: Continuum, 2001), 238.

Part One: Outlines and Discussion Questions by Chapter

Introduction (pp. xi-xxi)

Chapter Outline:

- I. Women in the contemporary Church
 - A. Theologically, all people, including all women, make up the Body of Christ.
 - B. The Roman Catholic Church's argument against ordaining women can be reduced to the idea that women cannot image Christ, are not icons of Christ. (p. xi)
 - C. Women live in a complex and often unjust world that sees war, religious persecution, misogyny, and rape denying the humanity of women. (pp. xii-xiv)
- II. Ordination of women as deacons
 - A. The Church ordained women deacons in the past, to one diaconate made up of both men and women.
 1. Bishops, both Eastern and Western, ordained women to the diaconate using "virtually identical ceremonies." (p. xiv)
 2. Women deacons ministered primarily to women and children.
 - B. The relationship between the diaconate and the priesthood.
 1. The diaconate and the priesthood are distinct;
 - a. the diaconate does not necessarily imply ordination to the priesthood. (pp. xv-xvi)
 2. The ministerial diaconate predates the sacerdotal priesthood and, in Acts 6, the first deacons were selected by the community and accepted by the Apostles. The diaconate is a creation of the early Church. (pp. xviii-xvix)
 - C. Saint Phoebe (Romans 16), a woman, is the only person named as a deacon (not deaconess) in the New Testament; Paul names several other women as "fellow workers" or assistants in his ministry. 1 Timothy 3:11 includes women in its description of deacons. (pp. xviii-xix)
 - D. The evidence for women deacons "is in the earliest documents, frescos, liturgies, and grave markings of the Church." (p. xx)

Questions:

- Reflection Questions
 - When you attend church services, what do you notice about the roles of women, children, and men in the liturgy? What messages do you think these experiences send to members of the congregation and/or to visitors?
 - Have you witnessed the service of a deacon in your church community? If so, what service was performed and how was it received by the community? If not, do you think that the service of a deacon would enhance the faith life of the community?
 - The Catholic Church describes a sacrament as a way of experiencing God's grace, as a way of experiencing God's love for humanity (both collectively and individually), as a way of being drawn further into the mystery of God. What are

some ways that the women in your life (both in the church community and in your family) have been sources of grace for you?

- Discussion Questions

- Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that all people are created in God's image (the *imago Dei*). In several of his letters, but especially in 2 Corinthians, Colossians, and Romans, Paul describes Jesus as the perfect image of God and calls Christians to image Christ (the *imago Christi*). Given this, discuss the Catholic Church's claim that only men can stand *in persona Christi servi* (in the person of Christ the servant).
- Zagano notes that women were ordained as deacons in the early Church until the Middle Ages. As you consider the case for a contemporary reestablishment of women deacons, how strongly do you weigh the historical evidence?
- Zagano does not argue for women priests (p. xiv) and demonstrates that the diaconate developed separately from priesthood. Opponents to the ordination of women deacons argue that it is a "slippery slope" from women deacons to women priests and that, if the Church allows women deacons, it would appear that women could also be ordained as priests. Discuss the historical development of the diaconate as a creation of the early Church and whether the ordination of women deacons would necessarily lead to the ordination of women priests.

Chapter One: Baptism (pp. 1-26)

Chapter Outline:

- I. Historical context for the ordained diaconate of women (pp. 2-7)
 - A. Ordinations of women as deacons ended during the Middle Ages, by which time they were limited to abbesses and prioresses, who maintained juridical power.
 - B. Women's vocations to service beyond the diaconate
 1. In third order membership
 2. In the charisms of women religious
 - C. Within the larger contemporary debate about women priests
 1. Unicity of orders (argument that to be ordained in one order one must be eligible for all)
 2. *Cursus honorum*: following tonsure (by which one became a cleric), the former progression of orders – porter, lector, exorcist, acolyte, sub-deacon, deacon, priest, bishop
 - D. In the early Church:
 1. The first ministries were diaconal and episcopal.
 2. Women deacons managed finances and stores; assisted at the baptism of women; catechized women and children; provided testimony, anointed, provided spiritual direction to, and heard confessions of women; and assisted during the liturgy.
- II. Development of the Hierarchy (pp. 8-10)
 - A. Based in territory, this structure provided care for the Church through an arrangement of bishops, later assisted by priests, and deacons.
 - B. Women accompanied Jesus in his ministry, made up a significant portion of new converts to the early Church, were baptized, and assisted in the baptism of other women.
- III. Phoebe of Romans 16:1 (pp. 10-14)
 - A. Paul names Phoebe as a deacon of the church in Cenchreae.
 - B. Early Christian commentators, particularly Origen, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, accepted Phoebe's status as a deacon.
 - C. Other early commentators resisted; Ambrosiaster (pseudo-Ambrose) preferred to understand *ministra* as helper, not minister or deacon.
- IV. The Women of 1 Timothy 3:11 (pp. 14-16)
 - A. Paul notes that women deacons must be qualified similarly to male deacons.
 - B. John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Pelagius all affirm that 1 Timothy 3:11 refers to women deacons.
 - C. Ambrosiaster argues that women were not deacons since women are not ordained.
- V. Acts of the Apostles 6:1-6 (pp. 16-26)
 - A. Key points in the passage:
 1. The assembly put forth candidates for diaconal service; the apostles accepted and laid hands on those candidates.
 2. The original group of seven male deacons is probably symbolic or ideal, rather than historical.

- B. The diaconate is a creation of the Church. (p. 18)
 - 1. Connected to the ministry of the apostles, not the ministry of Jesus.
 - 2. As an invention of the Church, it can be changed.
- C. Baptism: Women deacons would have assisted at the baptism of women to preserve the modesty of the women being baptized.
- D. Pope Benedict XVI
 - 1. Notes the foundation of the diaconate in charity, providing concrete service to those in need.
 - 2. Ignores the Biblical evidence of Phoebe as the only named deacon in the New Testament, the history of women deacons, and the women who have established ministries of charity.
- E. Additional historical evidence of women deacons
 - 1. Epigraphical: tombstone inscriptions from both East and West.
 - 2. In the sixth century, Caesarius, bishop of Arles, founded a monastery for his sister, ordained her a deacon, and wrote a rule for the community.
 - 3. St. Radegund was ordained as a deacon by Bishop Médard in 560.

Questions:

- Reflection Questions
 - Baptism is a sacrament of initiation into the Christian community. Do you recall your own baptism? If not, have you attended the baptisms of friends or family? What words, actions, and images struck you as key to the experience of baptism?
 - Think about the major life transitions you have experienced – moving to a new place, starting high school or college, leaving home, entering or leaving a significant relationship. Who are the people in your life who have helped you prepare for major life transitions? Who are the people who have accompanied you as you experienced these transitions?
- Discussion Questions
 - Zagano summarizes the Biblical evidence of Phoebe (Romans 16:1) and requirements for women deacons (1 Timothy 3:11) and the reactions of the early commentators. What do you find most convincing in this Biblical evidence for the existence of women deacons in the early Church? How would you respond to the ways these passages were interpreted by the commentators? (pp. 10-16)
 - The historical record indicates that the diaconate was formed as a solution to a problem, as described in Acts 6. What problems might women deacons be solving in the Church today?
 - Women deacons in the early Church were tasked with assisting women in the rite of baptism, given that it would have been culturally inappropriate for men to minister to unclothed or partially clothed women. Might this concept be applied to our contemporary Church?
 - Zagano quotes Pope Benedict XVI’s discussion of the foundation of the diaconate: “the social service which they [the first deacons] were meant to provide was absolutely concrete, yet at the same time it was also a spiritual service; theirs was a truly spiritual office which carried out an essential responsibility of the Church, namely a well-ordered love of neighbor” (Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 21). (Zagano p. 21) How are the concrete and the spiritual

natures of the Church's charitable and social justice programs evident today?
How might these commitments be enhanced by women deacons specifically
tasked with coordinating and overseeing these programs?

- Research Questions
 - Investigate the Biblical roots and historical development of the sacrament of baptism. How were people prepared for the sacrament? How has the celebration of the sacrament changed over the years? What relatives attended baptisms in the past? Who attends baptisms today?
 - Investigate the Biblical roots and historical development of the "churching" of new mothers.

Chapter Two: Catechesis & Catechisms (pp. 27-51)

Chapter Outline

- I. St. Paul on women (pp. 27-31)
 - A. Difficult passages contested by scholars:
 1. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 – women should be silent in church
 2. 1 Corinthians 11:13-16 – women should be veiled (pp. 27-29)
 - B. Customs determined the place of women in society and in the Church. (p. 29)
 - C. And yet, since the earliest days of the Church, women have served as teachers, particularly of women and children; even today, most catechists are women. (p. 30)
- II. Catechisms (pp. 31-35)
 - A. Cyril of Jerusalem and Augustine of Hippo presented catechetical teachings. (pp. 31-32)
 - B. Catechisms were at first collections of teachings, particularly for the formation of the uninitiated. (pp. 31-32)
 - C. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992, in English 1994) is the universal catechism. (pp. 33-34)
- III. Explaining the Catechism (pp. 35-44)
 - A. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger apparently oversaw the creation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium of the Catechism*. (p. 34)
 1. The *Compendium* presents 598 questions and answers keyed to the Catechism and explains holy orders in relation to the “unicity of orders,” arguing that because Jesus chose only male apostles, only men can be ordained to the three grades of holy orders: deacon, priest, and bishop. (pp. 36-37)
 2. The *Compendium* ignores the fact that the diaconate is a creation of the early Church, as affirmed by Pope Francis in 2015. (p. 38)
 3. And yet, Benedict XVI’s modifications to canons 1008 and 1009 distinguish the diaconate and the priesthood. (p. 40)
 - B. Gerhard L. Müller, later cardinal prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, belonged to the International Theological Commission (ITC) sub-committee on the diaconate. (p. 41)
 1. The ITC document *From the Diakonia of Christ to the Diakonia of the Apostles* was published in 2002/2003. (p. 41)
 2. The text argued for an historical distinction between male and female deacons; distinguished between the diaconate and the priesthood; said that the Magisterium could decide on readmitting women to the diaconate.
 3. Cardinal Müller’s “personal manifesto” eliminates women from all grades of order. (pp. 42-43)
- IV. Women Preaching (pp. 44-45)
 - A. There is substantial evidence of preaching by women. (p. 44)
 - B. Deacons are tasked with “the Word, the liturgy, and charity” but all laypeople are barred from preaching the homily during the Mass. (pp. 44-45)

- V. Homilies (pp. 45-51)
- A. The diocesan bishop is responsible for overseeing all preaching in his diocese.
 1. Only a priest or deacon participating in a given Mass may preach the homily. (pp. 45-46)
 2. Bishops may allow another person to speak, although not at the time of the homily. (p. 46)
 3. Masses for Children contain an exception for a lay homilist who can relate better to the children. (pp. 46-47)
 - B. Women have always catechized children.
 1. In the past, women religious were teachers in schools.
 2. Today, women increasingly write and edit catechetical materials. (p. 48)
 - C. *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests* was published in 1997. (p. 48)
 1. Primacy of clergy.
 2. When laypeople administer parishes, theirs is an “exercise of tasks,” not a ministry. (p. 50)
 3. The ministry of the Word includes both preaching and catechesis, but the document on participation of the laity states: “the liturgical homily should hold pride of place.” (pp. 50-51)

Questions:

- Reflection Questions
 - Who were the people who taught you your faith? How and where did you learn about Christianity?
 - What is your experience of homilies preached during the Mass? Recall the best homily you ever heard. What made it good or memorable? What do you wish a preacher would preach about in a homily?
- Discussion Questions
 - Zagano describes several Pauline passages, such as 1 Corinthians 11:13-16 and 14:34-35, that restrict women’s participation in the formal aspects of teaching in the Church (27-29). As you wrestle with these passages and the ways they have been interpreted, what are your concerns? What are your conclusions?
 - What would be the advantages, if any, of having more women formally involved in the process of writing and editing catechisms like the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*?
 - How would future women deacons participate in the teaching ministry of the Church in a way different from catechists?
- Research Questions
 - How and when were women first permitted to matriculate in programs leading toward advanced theological degrees in Catholic universities? What percentage of students in theological programs (in seminaries, in schools of ministry, in doctoral programs) are female?
 - Investigate the life of a woman known for her preaching and/or public teaching. Evaluate the Church’s response to her and consider whether her ministry might be a model for women deacons.

- Zagano notes that the second English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* resulted from the claim that the first translation unnecessarily used “inclusive language.” (p. 35) What is inclusive language? What has been the history of the argument for and against the use of inclusive language in official translations of Vatican documents?

Chapter Three: Altar Service (pp. 52-76)

Chapter Outline:

- I. Service at the altar is often restricted to men and boys. (p. 53)
 - A. Local bishops can allow laymen to be formally installed as lectors and acolytes. (p. 53)
 - B. In 2008, the Synod of Bishops approved a proposition to install women as lectors and acolytes. (p. 53)
 - C. The 2019 Amazon Synod requested that the Church allow women to be installed as lectors and acolytes. (p. 53)
 - D. Historical evidence of women deacons providing altar service is known particularly through complaints, beginning with Pope Gelasius I (early fifth century). (p. 55)
- II. Barred from the Sacred (p. 56)
 - A. In the fourteenth century, Canonist Matthew Blastares wrote that women most probably fulfilled ministerial and altar service, but were barred due to menstruation taboos. (p. 57-58)
 - B. Local legislations (in Turkey, France, Portugal, etc.) soon restricted women from serving during the Mass, preparing for liturgical celebrations, proclaiming the Gospel.
 - C. The terms “blessed and ordained” are used interchangeably; see Canon 21 of the synod of Auxerre. (p. 60)
 - D. Restrictions continued, sometimes citing Pope Gelasius I (pp. 61-62), and demonstrate the fact of the practice of women deacons serving at the altar. (p. 61)
- III. Women Are Unclean (p. 62)
 - A. Council of Paris (829) continued complaints about women at the altar, calling such activities “indecent.” (pp. 62-63)
 - B. Many of the restrictions are rooted in a desire to keep men and women separate, particularly priests and women. (p. 63)
 - C. Restrictions suggest that women are temptresses and render sacred spaces unclean. (p. 64)
- IV. Clerical Celibacy and Misogyny (p. 65-72)
 - A. The practice of clerical celibacy developed slowly in the West and seems focused on maintaining the “cleanliness” of the priests. (p. 66)
 - B. Successive councils affirmed celibacy for clerics in major orders. The association between sexual activity, women, and sin is demonstrated by Peter Damian, who called women the “appetizing flesh of the devil.” (p. 66)
 - C. Thirteenth century documentation demonstrates the continued altar service of women (Pope Innocent IV letter to Odo of Tusculum). (p. 68)
 - D. Repeated legislation of clerical celibacy identifies widespread ignoring of the rule. (pp. 67, 70, 71)
 - E. By the eighteenth century, Pope Benedict XIV called women’s service at the altar an “evil” practice, reflecting the misogyny in both society and the Church. (p. 72)
- V. Modern Misogyny (pp. 72-76)
 - A. The *querelle des femmes*, begun in the sixteenth century, raged in Europe for hundreds of years. (pp. 72-73)

- B. Eastern Churches maintained traditions of women deacons, and in Basque Country (Spain), *seroras* undertook tasks and duties of deacons. (pp. 73-74)
- C. The 1917 *Code of Canon Law*: women cannot serve at Mass and must remain at a distance only offering responses to the prayers (C. 813.1). (p. 75)
- D. Second Vatican Council document *Musicam sacram* (1967) forbids women singing from within the sanctuary. (p. 75)
- E. The 1983 *Code of Canon Law*: local bishops can allow women to serve as lectors and altar servers (C. 230). (pp. 75-76)

Questions:

- Reflection Questions
 - Have you ever been an altar server? If so, what was your experience like? How was your experience of the liturgy different when you were an altar server as opposed to sitting with the rest of the congregation?
 - What are your experiences of cultural taboos surrounding women, particularly menstruating women? Why do you think these cultural taboos are so persistent?
- Discussion Questions
 - Zagano writes: “We know that women served as deacons at the altar in the early Church mainly because there were significant complaints against the practice” (p. 55) and that these complaints suggest that women were thought to contaminate the space and items used during Mass through their unsuitableness (pp. 58-60) and uncleanness. (pp. 64-65) Does this fear persist in today’s world and Church? If yes, what can be done to overcome this?
 - Early opposition to women serving at the altar, particularly from Pope Gelasius in the fifth century and the Council of Paris in 829, seems connected to concerns about whether women would challenge priests’ celibacy. (p. 63) In what ways does the discipline of clerical celibacy continue to influence how men and women are viewed in the contemporary Church?
 - How does altar service look different when it is performed by children or adults? By men or women? By laypeople or deacons? What theological messages are sent by these choices?
- Research Questions
 - Find out more about how your diocese addresses women’s service at the altar. Are girls and women permitted to be altar servers, lectors, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, and cantors? What restrictions, if any, are placed on girls and women by your diocese and parish?

Chapter Four: Spiritual Direction & Confession (pp. 77-100)

Chapter Outline:

- I. Early women deacons often served as confessors and spiritual companions. (p. 77)
 - A. Today, deacons do not receive faculties for confession, and ordination does not confer competence for spiritual direction. (p. 77)
 - B. Spiritual direction is the formal process in which one shares one's life of prayer with another person, with a goal of growing in faith and relationships with God, self, and others. It is:
 1. rooted in the ministry of Jesus; reflected in the ministries of many great founders.
 2. formalized as a profession by Spiritual Directors International (SDI). (pp. 78-79)
 3. exemplified by Ignatian Spirituality. (p. 79)
- II. A Brief History of Spiritual Direction (pp. 80-82)
 - A. Jesus's teachings are the foundation for the spiritual life.
 - B. Spiritual accompaniment is demonstrated by Paul, the desert fathers, and desert mothers. (p. 80)
 - C. Women functioned as spiritual directors throughout history. (pp. 80-82)
 1. Theodora (advised humility). (pp. 80-81)
 2. Early women deacons and deacon-abbesses gave spiritual advice to many. (pp. 81-82)
- III. Contemporary Spiritual Direction (pp. 82-86)
 - A. St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and author of the *Spiritual Exercises*, a program of prayer aimed at freeing the individual to see God in all things. (pp. 82-84)
 - B. Jesuit retreat houses, beginning in the 1970s, began training women religious to offer the *Spiritual Exercises* in both the 30-day and Nineteenth Annotation formats. (p. 84-85)
 - C. Women often prefer women directors and the numbers of women spiritual directors (both seculars and religious) are increasing. (pp. 85-86)
- IV. Confession (pp. 86-93)
 - A. Spiritual direction and confession are distinct; it appears women are less interested in confessing to a man. (p. 86)
 - B. History of the practice of confessing sins (pp. 86-88)
 1. Rooted in the New Testament, particularly James 5:16 ("confess your sins to one another"); John 20:23 ("If you forgive the sins of any...") and Matthew 18:18 ("keys to the kingdom") repeat Jesus's charge to the Apostles. (pp. 86-87)
 2. Public confession, known in the early Church, was gradually replaced by private spiritual direction and then confession, a practice apparently brought to Europe by missionary monks from the East (sixth-seventh centuries). (p. 88)
 3. Spiritual direction and formation for nuns was the responsibility of abbesses, commonly deacon-abbesses, who also heard confessions. (pp. 88-89)

4. Juridical authority of bishops over the forgiveness of sins began to be asserted around the seventh century. (p. 90)
 5. Delegation of authority to deacons for receiving confessions and absolving sins is known to the thirteenth century and repeatedly forbidden in the late sixteenth-early seventeenth centuries. (pp. 91-92)
- V. Women's Stories Are Important (pp. 93-96)
- A. The ministry of women to women has historical roots, but as spiritual direction was overtaken by confession as a juridical function of clergy, women became bereft of feminine ministry. (pp. 93-94)
 - B. Spiritual direction ministry of women to women is rarely directly supported by dioceses or parishes. (pp. 94-95)
- VI. Women Deacons and Spiritual Direction (pp. 97-98)
- A. Would it make any difference if a qualified woman spiritual director were a deacon?
 1. Does Jesus's charge in Matt. 16:19, Matt. 18:18, and John 20 apply only to priests and bishops? (p. 97)
 2. Historically, confession as a healing ministry became increasingly rigid, with an emphasis on guilt. (pp. 97-98)
- VII. Indulgences (pp. 99-100)
- A. The Middle Ages saw the development of the practice of granting indulgences, which served to expiate after-life punishment for sin, and in some cases led to abusive practices. Note: Martin Luther complained about indulgences. (p. 99)
 - B. The Council of Trent ruled that Christ gave the Church the authority to grant indulgences. (pp. 99-100)

Questions:

- Reflection Questions
 - Recall a time when you sought out advice, guidance, or support from another person. What qualities and dispositions did you look for in such a person?
 - Recall a time when you provided advice, guidance, or support to another person. What did you learn from this experience? How has it shaped your thinking about the giving and receiving of this kind of assistance?
- Discussion Questions
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of having women available as spiritual directors and confessors?
 - In the early Church, women deacons and abbesses provided spiritual direction to and heard the confessions of women. How might this translate into the contemporary experience in parishes or schools?
 - Zagano, after describing the history of the sacrament of reconciliation and how deacons and abbesses eventually were forbidden to hear confessions, notes that "women were left only the option of speaking with a man about their interior lives, their spiritual relationships with God, self and others... The only option was the perfunctory and juridical experience of the confessional." (p. 93) What difference might it make to have women deacons as confessors?

- Research Questions
 - On pages 82-85, Zagano outlines Ignatian spiritual direction practices. Research more about this approach to spiritual direction and evaluate how well it would meet the needs of contemporary young people, particularly young women.
 - Find out about another spiritual direction style, perhaps one rooted in another spiritual tradition, such as Benedictine, Carmelite, Dominican, or Franciscan. Evaluate how well it would meet the needs of contemporary young people, particularly young women. What do you think this style of spiritual direction offers to people?

Chapter Five: Anointing of the Sick (pp. 101-117)

Chapter Outline:

- I. The practice of anointing the sick is known in the early Church. (pp. 101-102)
 - A. “They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them” (Mark 6:13). (pp. 101-102)
 - B. “Are any among you sick? They should call the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up, and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.” (James 5:14-15) Note: physical healing and spiritual healing. (p. 102)
 - C. Anointing by women. (p. 102)
 1. St. Geneviève (late fifth, early sixth centuries)
 2. Cardinal Jean Daniélou (pp. 103-104)
 - a. Daniélou writes that women deacons anointed ill women: “It is not just a...blessing.” (p. 103)
 - b. Daniélou’s evidence is from: Council of Chalcedon, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, the *Apostolic Canons*. (p. 103)
 - c. Daniélou cites Epiphanius’s *Against Heresies* (fourth century); only women should visit and anoint ill women, which is not a presbyteral task. (p. 104)
- II. Healing and Forgiveness (pp. 104-108)
 - A. Healing and forgiveness are connected in at least one Gospel account: the paralyzed man (Mark 2:1-12). (pp. 104-105)
 - B. The sacrament of the sick evolved from bodily to spiritual healing. (pp. 105-107)
 1. In twelfth century, Peter Abelard and Hugh of St. Victor wrote that anointing has two ends, healing and remission of sins, and only a priest or bishop should anoint due to juridical authority over sin.
 2. Clericalization of the sacrament focused attention on sacramental spiritual healing rather than on pastoral ministry to the sick.
 3. 1917 *Code of Canon Law*: only a priest or bishop can anoint; affirmed in the 1983 *Code*.
 4. However, there are three forms of the sacrament: 1) simple anointing, 2) anointing within Mass, 3) anointing with viaticum (communion). Reconciliation is separate and distinct. (p. 108)
- III. The Sacrament of the Sick (pp. 108-113)
 - A. An effect of baptism and the sacrament of the sick is remission of sins; unlike baptism, only the sacrament of the sick can be repeated. (p. 108)
 1. Anyone can baptize. Can anyone sacramentally anoint, given that the rite of reconciliation is clearly separate? (p. 109)
 - B. While it appears that a deacon (at least) can sacramentally anoint, a relatively recent “Note” from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith says only priests and bishops may anoint and the doctrine is to be held definitively. (pp. 110-112)

- IV. Deacons and Women in Chaplaincy (pp. 113-117)
- A. Lay chaplains, including women chaplains, are increasingly found in various types of healthcare institutions. (p. 113)
 - B. National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) certifies the training of Catholic chaplains. (pp. 113-114)
 - C. Lay chaplains
 - 1. Develop the ministerial relationship with a patient and his or her family, while the priest's participation (anointing) can be ancillary and perfunctory.
 - 2. Often, women prefer the ministry of women rather than that of a male priest. (pp. 115-116)
 - D. In the fifth century, Pope Innocent I wrote that only priests anoint those in danger of death and priests and laypersons may anoint ill persons. (p. 116)

Questions:

- Reflection Questions
 - Recall the last time you were sick, even with just a cold or minor injury. Who took care of you? What kinds of things did this caregiver do for and with you? How did this caregiving make you feel better (or not)?
 - Have you ever sat with, visited with, provided assistance to, or otherwise accompanied a dying person? What was that experience like? What did you learn about yourself and about death and dying?
- Discussion Questions
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of having women deacons who can provide pastoral care for women who are sick and/or dying? How might this look different from current practices surrounding the sacrament of anointing of the sick as administered by a priest?
 - Besides the assurance of forgiveness of sins, what are the outcomes of the sacrament of anointing of the sick? In other words, what would a sick or dying person want to experience in this sacrament? Of these experiences, how might women deacons facilitate them in ways similar to or different from the ways that male deacons and priests do?
 - In what ways might hospital chaplains be more effective if they were ordained deacons? How might their ministry to the sick and dying be better or more effective?
- Research Questions
 - Investigate one of the Catholic female saints known for having had a healing ministry (such as St. Genéviève) or one of the women's religious communities that ministers to the sick and dying today. How was their ministry established?
 - What occurs today in parishes regarding ministry to the sick? Healing services? Special Masses? Prayers during the Sunday Masses?
 - Describe the current practices of anointing the sick (three forms of anointing). Attend a parish liturgy of anointing or view one online.

Conclusions (pp. 118-121)

Chapter Outline:

- I. Review of the history of women deacons
 - A. The existence and sacramental ministries of women deacons are historically documented. (p. 118)
 - B. Women deacons' ministries included: assisting at baptisms, catechizing women and children, limited preaching, altar service, providing reconciliation and spiritual direction, ministering to the sick and dying. (p. 119)
- II. Contemporary objections to women deacons deny that women can image Christ; such objections reinforce cultural taboos and can be seen to deny women's humanity. (pp. 119-120)
- III. The world needs Christian ministry and particularly the ministry of women. (p. 120)
- IV. If the question of women deacons is understood as a legal rather than doctrinal issue, a simple *Motu proprio* can allow the Church to move forward. (pp. 121-122)

Questions:

- Reflection Questions
 - Change is often difficult. Reflect on a time you have been asked to make a major change in your life and were resistant to that change. Why was change hard? How did you cope with the difficulties of adjusting to change?
 - Reflect on a time when you have advocated for the change of a law or rule you thought was unjust. What did you learn from that experience?
- Discussion Questions
 - Throughout the book, Zagano argues that the Catholic Church has, in the past, ordained women deacons, and that in the present, the Church needs the particular witness of women deacons ministering in local communities. Are you convinced? Why or why not?
 - In the book's Conclusions, Zagano says a papal *Motu proprio* modifying the relevant canons of the Code of Canon Law could allow for ordaining women to the diaconate. How might this change be received by the Church, both in the United States and throughout the world?

Part Two: Assignments for the Whole Book

Assignments:

1. Interview someone serving in the permanent diaconate. Find out from him what he does, how he was trained, and how he understands what it means to serve the Church in this way. How does this reflect or differ from what the first deacons in the early Church were called to do?
2. Interview a woman who is serving as a Lay Ecclesial Minister, preferably as a Pastoral Associate or Parish Life Coordinator. Ask what she does, how she was trained, and how she understands what it means to serve the Church in this way. How is this similar to or different from what the first deacons in the early Church were called to in Acts 6?
3. Imagine that the Church now ordains women to the permanent diaconate. Write a job description for what a woman deacon at a parish (or in some other ministerial setting) might do. Be sure to include what training or formation she would need, what personal qualities she would possess, and what kinds of tasks she would be assigned.
4. Write a letter to your diocesan bishop giving your opinion on restoring women to the ordained diaconate.
5. Write a letter to the pope asking him to ordain women as deacons. In your letter, be sure to include historical, theological, and pastoral arguments.

Classroom activities:

1. Have a formal debate on the question of whether the Church should ordain women deacons for service in local parish communities and other Church ministries (such as at hospitals, schools, and universities). Assign (or let students choose) which side of the question they will argue and give them sufficient time to do the additional research and preparation.
2. When speaking about topics that students may perceive as controversial, it is often helpful to start the conversation with the text of the book itself. To prepare, ask students to choose a small section of the book that stands out to them because it resonates with something they already think or believe, or because it challenges them to think in new ways. Then, in an in-class or online discussion, invite students to discuss their choices, using these sections as a springboard for conversation.
3. Invite students to engage in a close reading of the relevant Biblical and early Church texts cited in the book. In an in-person class, students can work in small groups to read and annotate the text; in particular, they should note the questions that come up for them as they read and the ways that they could see this text being interpreted at various historical moments. In an online class, the same task can be accomplished using a shared document (like a Google doc) or a program like Perusall.

For further research:

1. Investigate one of the women deacons of the early Church whom Zagano names in the book, such as Phoebe or St. Radegund.
2. There have been two pontifical commissions established to discuss women deacons. Research them.

3. How have women deacons and/or women ministering to others been portrayed in artwork?
4. Read the documents and news that came out of the October 2019 Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region. In what ways might women deacons meet (or fail to meet) the needs expressed by the people of the Amazon region in the Final Document of the Special Assembly for the Pan-Amazonian Region (para. 102)?
5. Research the formation process for permanent deacons in your diocese.
6. In many dioceses, the wives of married candidates for the permanent diaconate are required to participate in the formation program for the diaconate. Research this point. Consider inviting the wife of a permanent deacon to speak to the class.

Part Three: For Further Reading

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Part Four: Glossary of Theological Terms

Abbess: An abbess is the female head of a monastic house for women; she is elected to this position by her community. An abbess is a major superior with executive, administrative, and spiritual jurisdiction over her abbey or monastery. She receives the vows and directs the work of the nuns, and presides over the Liturgy of the Hours.

Abbot: An abbot is the elected head of a monastic house for men. He has rights and duties identical to those of an abbess.

Acolyte: One of the now suppressed minor orders (along with porter, exorcist, and lector) once required for a man seeking ordination to the priesthood. Acolytes provide altar service, attending to and assisting the priest during the Mass. Individuals are now installed to the lay ministry of acolyte. Any layperson may perform the ministry of acolyte.

Amma/Abba: From the Aramaic for mother (*amma*) and father (*abba*), these terms most often refer to the desert mothers (*Ammas*) and desert fathers (*Abbas*). These early Christians retreated to the deserts of the Eastern Mediterranean region in search of deeper relationship with God. Known for their eremitic lives and ascetic practices, particularly of fasting, prayer, and solitary contemplation, they were sought out by aspiring disciples for their spiritual wisdom. Their sayings and teachings were collected into the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*).

Apostolic Canons: Also called the *Ecclesiastical Canons of the Same Holy Apostles*, a fourth century Syrian Christian document comprising 85 canons and describing sacraments, the duties of a bishop, and the qualifications and conduct of clergy, including women deacons.

Baptizandae: Latin term for “females to be baptized.”

Bishop: In the New Testament and following the deaths of the first Apostles, the early Christians were led by “overseers” (in Greek, *episkopoi*). Traditionally, bishops were the pastors of a geographical area called a diocese. As the Christian Church grew, priests were assigned parishes within a diocese; then and today, priests administer their parishes and provide care to their congregations on behalf of the bishop. This structure of bishops and priests, along with deacons, forms the core of the hierarchical leadership of the Roman Catholic Church.

Canon: From the Greek *kanon* (a straight rod used for measuring), canon means a rule or a norm. The individual laws in the Code of Canon Law are called *canons*; similarly, individual rulings of a council or in an official document are also referred to as canons.

Canon Law: The Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church comprises the laws and legal principles that regulate the Church’s government and hierarchy and that direct the activities of Catholics towards the Church’s mission in the world. It is the oldest continuously functioning legal system in the West. Prior to the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law in 1917, canon law was not formally collected into any one document; rather, it referred to the laws and rulings

found in the accumulated documents of the Church. The 1983 Code of Canon Law is the current revision of the 1917 Code and has been modified several times since its promulgation. The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, promulgated in 1991, has been similarly amended.

Cardinal: Men, usually bishops, appointed to the College of Cardinals as Cardinal Deacons, Cardinal Priests, or Cardinal Bishops. Since 1983, only priests may be appointed, although they may decline ordination as bishops. Generally, cardinals function as advisors to the pope and often lead Vatican dicasteries (departments) or head major archdioceses. Cardinals under the age of 80 participate in the election of a new pope following the death or resignation of a reigning pope.

Catechism/Catechesis: From a Greek word meaning “to teach orally,” a catechism is a summary of doctrine. The Church has produced printed catechisms as a way of ensuring uniformity in teaching the faith; some written for use in a particular locality, such as the *Baltimore Catechism* (in use in the United States between 1885 and the late 1960s), and others written for use by the whole Church, such as the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Catechesis is the process by which the faith is taught to another person; a contemporary synonym for catechesis is religious education or faith formation.

Celibacy: In the Roman Catholic Church, celibacy refers to the decision to not marry and implies refraining from sexual relations. Celibacy is not the same as chastity, which is the right use of sexuality. Obligatory priestly celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church developed slowly in the first millennium; today, celibacy is promised at ordination to the transitional diaconate (Canon 277.1; 1037). It is generally a requirement for priesthood in the Latin Church; many Eastern Catholic Churches do not require celibacy for priests. All Latin and Eastern Catholic Churches and Orthodox Churches require bishops to be celibate. Candidates for the permanent diaconate may be married prior to ordination, and would require special dispensation to remarry in the case of the death of a spouse.

Chaplain/Chaplaincy: The title “chaplain” is reserved to priests assigned to ministry in convents, schools, hospitals, military services, and prisons. In the United States, laypersons can receive the title chaplain by exception. Chaplaincy refers to the ministry of being a chaplain.

Cleric: A cleric is a person who is a member of the clergy: deacon, priest, or bishop. The adjective, clerical, refers to those things that have to do with clergy, for example, clerical dress. Today, the ordinary means of entering the clerical state is by ordination to the diaconate.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE): A training process for providing spiritual care in clinical settings, such as hospitals, nursing homes, and hospices. CPE is a program for clergy and laypeople from all religious backgrounds.

Convent: A community of religious men or women who live together and/or the building in which they live.

Cursus Honorum: Latin for “course of honor,” the former progression of minor and major ordinations: porter, lector, exorcist, acolyte, sub-deacon, deacon, priest, and bishop. The first

four are the minor orders and the last four are the major orders. After the Second Vatican Council, the major order of sub-deacon was suppressed (officially discontinued) and the minor orders were replaced by the lay ministries of lector and acolyte. Typically, only men destined for diaconal ordination are installed as lector and acolyte.

Deacon: Deacons are ordained to the Word, the liturgy, and charity. There is only one order of deacon; men destined for priesthood are called transitional deacons. The diaconate was restored as a permanent vocation following the Second Vatican Council.

Deaconess: The feminine form of the word deacon. Some argue that historically deaconesses were not women deacons, but members of a lesser non-ordained ministry.

Didache (First Century CE): Also known as “The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” the *Didache* describes the early Church’s ethical teachings, liturgical celebrations, and communal organization.

Didascalia Apostolorum (Third Century CE): Like the *Didache*, this document provides an ancient window into the practices of the early Church and is particularly focused on the ordering of Church officials (bishops, priests, and deacons) and on rules for liturgies and other Christian disciplines such as fasting.

Eastern Catholic Churches: The 23 Churches that historically originated in Eastern Christianity and are in communion with the Roman Catholic Church. They have different liturgical norms and different disciplines regarding clerical celibacy and are governed by the Code of Canon Law for the Eastern Churches.

Eastern/Western Christianity: In the early Church as Christianity spread through the Mediterranean, patriarchates (major dioceses in important cities) developed. Of the five key patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Rome), four were in the Eastern and Greek-speaking part of the Mediterranean; only Rome was in the Western and Latin-speaking part. Various differences led to misunderstandings and disputes culminating in 1054 in a mutual excommunication and formal schism between most of the Eastern Churches, now called Eastern Orthodox, and Rome. In 1965, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenogoras I of Constantinople lifted these mutual excommunications.

Exorcism/Exorcist: Exorcism is the expulsion of evil spirit(s) from a person or place. Exorcist is one of the former minor orders (along with porter, lector, and acolyte). Today, only priests are appointed as exorcists (Canon 1172.2).

Hierarchy: The pope, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Icon: From the Greek *eikon*, which means “image,” a religious work of art (most often a painting) used in religious devotion; icons are often made of the saints, angels, Jesus, and Mary. More than simple paintings, however, icons are understood as windows to the divine, as real experiences of God and God’s presence. The word *eikon* is also the word used in Greek

translations of Genesis 1:26-27, which describes the creation of humanity in the image/icon of God. So, as a theological term, an icon is something that lets us see God.

Imago Dei/Imago Christi: Genesis 1:26-27 describes the creation of humanity, both male and female, as being in the “image of God” (in Latin, *imago Dei*); theologians have come to understand this as meaning that there is something of the divine in humanity and that humanity participates in God’s creative work in the world. St. Paul describes Jesus as the perfect image of God and calls Christians to imitate Christ and to become images of Christ (in Latin, *imago Christi*); see particularly Colossians 1:15-20.

Laitiy/Layperson: The “lay faithful” are the non-ordained people in the Church. Non-ordained men religious (brothers and monks) and women religious (sisters and nuns) are technically lay. A person who is not ordained is called a layperson (or laywoman or layman).

Lay Ecclesial Minister: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops identifies Lay Ecclesial Ministers as non-ordained people who minister in the Church. Often highly trained and holding advanced theological degrees, lay ecclesial ministers are co-workers with bishops, priests, and deacons.

Lector: Now an installed lay ministry; during the Mass, lectors read the Biblical texts other than the Gospel, which is always read by the deacon or priest. Both men and women may serve as lectors where the diocesan bishop allows. Formerly one of the minor orders (along with porter, exorcist, and acolyte). Any layperson may perform the ministry of lector.

Liturgy of the Hours: Also called the Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours is the daily prayer of the Church celebrated by religious and clerics and encouraged for all Christians. Since the Second Vatican Council, the offices of the Liturgy of the Hours are: the Office of Readings or Matins; Morning Prayer or Lauds; the minor hours of Midmorning Prayer, Midday Prayer, and Afternoon Prayer; Evening Prayer or Vespers; and Night Prayer or Compline.

Magisterium: From the Latin *magister* (teacher), the Magisterium of the Church is its teaching authority. The Ordinary Magisterium is the accumulated body of teachings of the Church – what is always and everywhere taught – and this teaching responsibility is vested primarily in the bishops. The Extraordinary Magisterium refers to the decrees of Councils and formal papal pronouncements.

Major Orders: Traditionally, the four major orders were sub-deacon, deacon, priest, and bishop; men seeking ordination in the major orders progressed through the minor orders of porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte. After the Second Vatican Council, the major order of sub-deacon was suppressed (officially discontinued) and the minor orders were replaced by the installed lay ministries of lector and acolyte. (Porter and exorcist were discontinued.)

Minor Orders: The four minor orders were porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte. Until 1972, men seeking priestly ordination progressed through these four ministries before receiving the major orders of sub-deacon, deacon, priest, and bishop.

Monastery: The place where a community of monks or nuns live.

Motu proprio: Latin for “on his own impulse,” a document addressing Church law or discipline promulgated by the pope on his own authority as Supreme Pontiff.

Nazarenes: Referring to Jesus’ hometown, Nazareth in Galilee, this is a contemporary Arabic slur for “Christians,” used particularly in Iraq.

Parish Life Coordinators: Deacons or laypersons appointed by diocesan bishops to administer and coordinate the life of a parish (Canon 517.2).

Pastor: A pastor is the leader of a Christian congregation; in the Roman Catholic Church, only priests may be appointed by a diocesan bishop to serve as a pastor. Deacons and laypersons may be appointed to lead parishes as Parish Life Coordinators (Canon 517.2).

Porter: A former minor order (along with lector, exorcist, and acolyte) for men seeking ordination to the priesthood. In the early Church, porters were responsible for opening, closing, and guarding the church building and ensuring that only the baptized received Communion. Historically, women deacons served to guard the women’s entrances to churches.

Power of the Keys: A reference to Matthew 16:19 (“I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”), understood as Jesus’s giving the Apostles the power to forgive sins.

Priest/Presbyter: Priests are ordained men who administer sacraments, preach the Gospel during Mass, and can be appointed as pastors or chaplains. Ordination to the priesthood is reserved primarily to celibate men, although many Eastern Catholic Churches ordain married men as priests. Priests are also referred to as presbyters, from the Greek word for elder.

Prioress: The head of a monastic house of nuns or the assistant to an abbess. Also, the head of a group of women religious.

Roman Catholic Women Priests: An independent organization that advocates for the priestly ordination of women and includes its own priests and bishops.

Sacrament: Formally defined as an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. The seven sacraments are baptism, Eucharist, confirmation, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, matrimony, and holy orders.

Sub-deacon: The order of sub-deacon was the first of the major orders (along with deacon, priest, and bishop); it was formally suppressed or discontinued by Paul VI after the Second Vatican Council.

Viaticum: A Latin word connoting “provisions for a journey,” *viaticum* is Holy Communion given to a dying person.