Survey of Religious Institutes: 
The Sacramental Ordination of Women as Deacons

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Survey of Religious Institutes:  
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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a study conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). The study is based on a survey of major superiors of U.S. religious institutes asking questions about the demographics and composition of religious institutes as well as attitudes about the sacramental ordination of women as deacons. CARA surveyed all religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. Using mailing lists provided by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), CARA sent a questionnaire to each major superior (by email or physical mail). CARA also sent questionnaires and cover letters to superiors of monasteries of contemplative nuns (who do not belong to either LCWR or CMSWR). All communications included instructions for how to respond in multiple ways (on paper/mail, online, and by fax).

Throughout the report, the term “religious institute” includes both religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. CARA mailed surveys to a total of 777 potential respondents. 1 This included:

- 290 women’s units who are members of LCWR
- 117 women’s units who are members of CMSWR
- 137 women’s contemplative units
- 236 men’s units who are members of CMSM

The survey was in the field from the first response on January 26, 2018 to May 30, 2018 when data collection was cut off. Throughout this time, CARA conducted extensive follow-up by mail, e-mail, telephone, and FAX. CARA received completed responses from 385 religious institutes for a response rate of 50%. This results in a margin of sampling error of ± 3.55 percentage points. As the report details, the responding units strongly resemble all units in the population surveyed.

Major Findings

Major attitudinal findings regarding the possibility of sacramentally ordaining women as deacons include:

- Seventy-six percent of responding superiors are aware that the International Union of Superiors General requested that Pope Francis establish the Papal Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women.

1 Three units are members of both LCWR and CMSWR. These units were sent only one invitation to respond and are counted only once.
• Sixty-nine percent are aware that the Papal Commission has formed and has met.

• Seventy-seven percent of superiors believe it is theoretically possible to sacramentally ordain women as deacons.

• Seventy-two percent believe the Church should authorize the sacramental ordination of women as deacons.

• A minority, 45%, believe the Church will authorize sacramental ordination of women as deacons.

• If the Church were to authorize the sacramental ordination of women as deacons, 69% believe the USCCB would implement this. Fewer, 58%, believe their bishop would implement this.

• Sixty-eight percent of responding superiors believe the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would be “somewhat” or “very much” important for the Catholic Church. A minority, 45%, believe this would be “somewhat” or “very much” important for their institute or society.

• Sixty-four percent of responding superiors say they were “somewhat” or “very much” aware of any history of women ordained as deacons.

• Seventy-six percent believe the sacramental ordination of women (religious or not) as deacons would be beneficial to the Catholic Church’s mission.

• Eighty-four percent believe the sacramental ordination of women (religious or not) as deacons would “somewhat” or “very much” create a greater call for women to be ordained as priests.

• Among superiors of women’s institutes or societies, few believe the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would bring more candidates to their institute or society. Four percent said “yes” they think this would happen, 17% said “maybe,” 18% did not know, and 61% said “no” they did not think this would happen. Eleven percent of superiors of men’s institutes said “yes” they think that the sacramental ordination of women would bring more candidates to women’s institutes or societies and 34% said “maybe.” Thirty percent did not know and 25% responded “no.”

• When asked how many members of their institute or society might be interested in being sacramentally ordained as women, the most common response was none. However, on average, respondents indicated 2.7 members (2.6 members under the age of 60).
Introduction

This report presents findings from a study conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). The study is based on a survey of major superiors of U.S. religious institutes asking questions about the demographics and composition of religious institutes as well as attitudes about the sacramental ordination of women as deacons. CARA surveyed all U.S. religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. Using mailing lists provided by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), CARA sent a questionnaire to each major superior (by email or physical mail). CARA also sent questionnaires and cover letters to superiors of monasteries of contemplative nuns (who do not belong to either LCWR or CMSWR). All communications included instructions for how to respond in multiple ways (on paper/mail, online, and by fax).

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- 137 women’s contemplative units
- 236 men’s units who are members of CMSM

The survey was in the field from the first response on January 26, 2018 to May 30, 2018 when data collection was cut off. Throughout this time, CARA conducted extensive follow-up by mail, e-mail, telephone, and FAX. CARA received completed responses from 385 religious institutes for a response rate of 50%. This results in a margin of sampling error of ± 3.55 percentage points. As the report details, the responding units strongly resemble all units in the population surveyed.

Of the 385 who responded, not all chose to answer every question posed to them. Additionally, 54 non-respondents logged into the survey online and looked at the questionnaire, but chose not to answer any of the questions. Twenty-two non-respondents indicated a refusal to complete the survey upon invitation to respond. Among the reasons provided were:

- “Do not have staff to respond”
- “I am sorry but I will not be doing your survey – it is far too time-consuming!”
- “I choose not to participate”

2 Three units are on membership lists for both LCWR and CMSWR. These units were sent only one invitation to respond and are counted only once.

3 Eighty-two women’s units on the contemplative list responded to the survey for a response rate of 60%. Among the women’s institutes identifying as contemplative in the survey, nine indicated they are in institutes/societies with membership in CMSWR, two in LCWR, and two in UISG.

4 The actual response rate is likely somewhat higher due to some units that could not be reached. Although each unit was sent an invitation to respond and multiple reminders, CARA cannot know how many units did not respond due to merger, closure, or incorrect contact information. For comparison, another study in which CARA surveyed the same population the response rate was 60% (Bendyna, Mary E. and Mary L. Gautier. 2009. Recent Vocations to Religious Life: A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.). The nature of the subjects surveyed here presented more challenges than this previous study that sought to understand the dynamics of recent vocations.
“Monastery closed”
“We are going to pass on this one. We will be praying for you and everyone involved. Please remember us in your prayers, too.”
“We are not interested in participating”
“We will respectfully not be participating in the survey at this time”

Approximately 300 reminder calls were made to operational phone numbers available to CARA. These attempts resulted in 37 additional responses to the survey. In some cases the phone number called was operational, however it was not in any way related to a religious institute. Additional refusals resulted from some of these phone call reminders. In only a small number of instances did any refusal refer to questions about the sacramental ordination of women as deacons.

Interpreting Results in this Report
The issue of research accuracy in social science includes, among other things, the question of whether reported results can be generalized to the entire studied population and the question of whether the queries were asked in a valid and reliable manner.

In regard to generalizing the findings from the report to the entire studied population (i.e., external validity), the study is accurate to the extent that the responses of survey participants are representative of the answers all members of the population would have given if they all participated in the same survey. CARA is diligent in creating highly accurate samples, which is possible due to its very long-standing relationships with institutions comprising the studied populations. CARA is also careful to use rigorous and proven sampling methodologies. In many projects, CARA is able to construct virtually complete and current lists of all the members of the studied population. This allows CARA to conduct a census study or a random-sample study, which, in general, is the gold standard in social science research. A representative sample is not always possible. In those cases, CARA uses statistical methods (i.e., survey weights) that increase the representativeness of results.

The reader can examine the random nature of the final sample by comparing reported demographic characteristics of the respondents to other studies of the same population from the same time period. The accuracy of responses to individual questions is the same or lower than the accuracy reported above for the entire survey. To help assess how accurately these findings can be generalized to the entire population, this report provides information about the accuracy of different findings.

The ability to generalize findings from this report would not be particularly helpful if those findings were biased (i.e., if the findings lacked internal validity). Thus, among other things, another important question in assessing the accuracy of results is whether the queries were asked in a valid and reliable manner. CARA addresses this issue by relying on its intimate understanding of the studied populations, by using questions and items developed over many years of research, and by using proven scales developed by others.

Statistics used to describe responses in numerical form include:
• The mean or average is the sum of all reported values for a single variable, divided by the total number of valid responses to a particular question.
• The **median** is the midpoint in an array of responses to a single question, ordered from lowest to highest. If the array consists of an even number of responses, then the median is the mean of the two middle responses.

In the comparisons, the word **significant** is used to indicate that with high certainty (95 percent confidence) one can reject a claim that there is no difference between the values being compared.
Gender of Institute or Society

Sixty-nine percent of responding superiors are from female religious institutes and 31% from male institutes. Overall, 30% of potential respondents were in men’s institutes or societies and 70% in women’s institutes or societies. Thus, the respondents are reflective of the distribution of the population in terms of gender.
Level of Governance

A majority of responding major superiors are leading congregations or monasteries (54%). Thirty-five percent are leading a province, 4% a region, and 4% a U.S. delegation. Three percent indicate leadership of some other form. These include multi-national regions and areas, “local-level” superiors, vice provinces, and entire societies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For what level of governance do you serve as major superior? Select one:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Delegation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, specify:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation/ Monastery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of Governance by Gender of Institute/Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congregation/ Monastery</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>U.S. Delegation</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Canonical Status of Unit

More than two-thirds of superiors indicate the canonical status of their unit is a religious institute of pontifical right. Sixteen percent indicate their unit is a monastery and 12 percent a religious institute of the diocesan right. Four percent indicate some other status. These include: apostolic religious community, private association of the faithful, and public association of the faithful.

![Pie chart showing the breakdown of canonical status by percentage.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the canonical status of your unit or of the institute/society of which your unit is a part?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Institute of Pontifical Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, specify:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Institute of Diocesan Right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of Governance by Gender of Institute/Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Religious Institute of Diocesan Right</th>
<th>Religious Institute of Pontifical Right</th>
<th>Monastery</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
International Institutes or Societies

About two-thirds of superiors are in a unit that is an international institute or society or part of one of these.

Superiors from units that are an international institute or society or part of one of these most often indicate a global or a very broad reach across multiple continents. Fewer indicate a smaller set of countries with the smallest numbers indicating only one other country (8% of those with a presence in countries outside the U.S.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Institutes/Societies by Gender of Institute/Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Missionary Institutes or Societies

Most responding superiors, 70%, are not in a missionary institute or society.

Missionary Institutes/Societies by Gender of Institute/Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes, missionary</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contemplative Institute or Societies

Nineteen percent of responding superiors are in a contemplative institute or society. For comparison, 18% of the population invited to respond are contemplative units. Thus, the survey is representative of the population.

Contemplative Institute/Society by Gender of Institute/Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes, contemplative</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Societies and Institutes with Members of an Eastern Catholic Church

Twelve percent of responding superiors indicated that some or all their members are part of an Eastern Catholic Church.

Seven superiors indicate their unit includes members from the Byzantine Church. Five indicate members from the Ukrainian Church. Others include Chaldean, Syro-Malabar, Ethiopian, Melkite, Romanian, and Ruthenian members.

| Societies and Institutes with Members of an Eastern Catholic Church by Gender of Institute/Society |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | Yes, entire institute | Yes, some members | No              |
| Female                         | 2%                        | 6%                        | 92%                          |
| Male                           | 3%                        | 16%                       | 81%                          |
Clerical and/or Lay Men’s Institutes or Societies

Among superiors of men’s institutes or societies, 63% report their institute or society is mixed clerical and lay, 26% clerical, and 11% lay.
Men’s Institutes or Societies with Permanent Deacons

Among the men’s institutes or societies, 24% include men who are currently serving as permanent deacons. Of these, the total number of deacons in a unit ranges from one to three. The average number of permanent deacons in these units is 1.4 (median of 1).
Number of Members

The typical unit surveyed reports 77 members who have made their final or perpetual vows (median of 32) and 8.4 members who are in formation (median of 1). Overall, 35% of units report no members in formation. By comparison, a similar study conducted by CARA in 2009 found that 30% of all responding units had no members in formation (22% for men’s institutes and 34% for women’s institutes).

For sub-group analysis, the respondents are separated into quartiles based on their total members who have made their final or perpetual vows. This includes those with 12 or fewer members, 13 to 20 members, 31 to 85 members, and 86 or more members.

---

5 Three respondents report 200 or more members in formation. Excluding these, the average number of members in formation is 4.8 (median of 1). Two of the three are superiors of regional units and one is a superior of a congregation. All three report a broad international presence for their women’s institute/society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Members by Gender of Institute/Society</th>
<th>12 or fewer</th>
<th>13 to 30</th>
<th>31 to 85</th>
<th>86 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Membership by Age

Seventy-two percent of members in responding units are age 65 and older (including both those in formation and perpetually professed). On average, units have 54.6 members who are perpetually professed between the ages of 65 and 84. In all cases, medians are smaller than averages. This occurs when a smaller number of units report disproportionately larger numbers than others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Initial Formation</th>
<th>Perpetually Professed</th>
<th>Avg. Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>1.1 (0)</td>
<td>0.2 (0)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44</td>
<td>3.9 (0)</td>
<td>4.9 (1)</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 64</td>
<td>0.9 (0)</td>
<td>11.6 (5)</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 84</td>
<td>2.3 (0)</td>
<td>37.7 (15)</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 and older</td>
<td>1.0 (0)</td>
<td>16.9 (5)</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate the number of members of your unit in each age category:

Average Number (Median Number)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Average Number</th>
<th>Median Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 64</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 84</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 and older</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Membership (In Formation and Professed) by age and Gender of Institute/Society

Percentage of all members in each age group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 64</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 84</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 and older</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Membership by Education

Fifty-seven percent of members in responding units have a master’s degree or doctorate (including both those in formation and perpetually professed). On average, units have 43.3 members who are perpetually professed who have a master’s degree or doctorate and 0.8 in initial formation with these degrees. The median number of members with graduate degrees in responding units is 13 perpetually professed with no members in formation with this level of education. The typical responding unit has 22.0 perpetually professed members with an advanced degree in a ministry-related field (median of 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate the highest level of education achieved by each member of your unit:</th>
<th>Initial Formation</th>
<th>Perpetually Professed</th>
<th>Avg. Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some college or less</td>
<td>4.0 (0)</td>
<td>6.3 (2)</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>3.2 (0)</td>
<td>20.4 (7)</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>0.7 (0)</td>
<td>38.0 (12)</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>0.1 (0)</td>
<td>5.3 (1)</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced degree in a ministry-related field</td>
<td>0.5 (0)</td>
<td>21.5 (4)</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate the highest level of education achieved by each member of your unit:</th>
<th>Initial Formation</th>
<th>Perpetually Professed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some college or less</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced degree in a ministry-related field</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Membership Education and Gender of Institute/Society

Percentage of all members in each education group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advanced Ministry</th>
<th>Some college</th>
<th>Bachelor’s</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Membership by Compensation

Responding units have 26.4 members, on average, who are receiving compensation for full- or part-time ministries (median of 10). Additionally, they have, on average, 22.2 members in ministry who are not receiving compensation (median of 6). Also, on average, responding units have 22.6 members who are retired to a ministry of prayer and presence (median of 7).

Please indicate the number of professed members in each category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>With Compensation</th>
<th>Without Compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active in full-time ministry</td>
<td>19.8 (8)</td>
<td>12.3 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active in part-time ministry</td>
<td>6.6 (2)</td>
<td>9.9 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired to a ministry of prayer and presence</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>22.6 (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate the number of members of your unit in each category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>With Compensation</th>
<th>Without Compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active in full-time ministry</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active in part-time ministry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired to a ministry of prayer and presence</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ministry, Compensation, and Gender of Institute/Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Retired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensated</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompensated</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensated</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompensated</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Membership by Type of Ministry

The most common ministries that members of responding units are involved in full-time are education (average of 5.4 members), social service/justice (4.6 members), religious institute administration (3.4 members), parish administration (3.4 members), and religious institute ministry (3.3 members).

Please indicate the number of members of your unit currently active in full-time and part-time ministry (with or without compensation) in each area and the number of members you believe interested in serving in each ministry (or would have, if such a ministry were available to them). This second, educated guess on your part is only to gauge the level of interest in these ministries. Please respond only for active full members of your unit – not those in initial formation or those who are retired to a ministry of prayer and presence (e.g., no longer active in ministry):

Average Number (Median Number)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry Description</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education ministry (e.g., professor, teacher)</td>
<td>5.4 (1)</td>
<td>2.6 (0)</td>
<td>1.9 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service/justice ministry (e.g., direct services, advocacy)</td>
<td>4.6 (0)</td>
<td>0.8 (0)</td>
<td>0.8 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institute administration (e.g., superior/prior or prioress. Leadership team)</td>
<td>3.4 (2)</td>
<td>1.5 (0)</td>
<td>1.4 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish administration (e.g., pastor, associate, parish life coordinator, administrator)</td>
<td>3.4 (0)</td>
<td>0.7 (0)</td>
<td>1.1 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institute ministry (e.g., vocations/formation, retreats, spiritual direction)</td>
<td>3.3 (1)</td>
<td>2.4 (1)</td>
<td>1.5 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education institute administration (e.g., college president, dean, principal, school administrator)</td>
<td>2.7 (0)</td>
<td>0.2 (0)</td>
<td>0.4 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care ministry (e.g., physician, nurse technician)</td>
<td>2.5 (0)</td>
<td>1.0 (0)</td>
<td>1.1 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish ministry (e.g., DRE, liturgist, catechist)</td>
<td>1.6 (0)</td>
<td>1.5 (0)</td>
<td>0.7 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincy (e.g., hospital, nursing home, college, school)</td>
<td>1.0 (0)</td>
<td>0.6 (0)</td>
<td>0.7 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service administration (e.g., director, program administrator)</td>
<td>0.9 (0)</td>
<td>0.4 (0)</td>
<td>0.6 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital/health care administration (e.g., presidents or vice presidents of a hospital, nursing home, clinic)</td>
<td>0.7 (0)</td>
<td>0.1 (0)</td>
<td>0.2 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan administration (chancellor, vicar, department head, canon lawyer/judge)</td>
<td>0.5 (0)</td>
<td>0.1 (0)</td>
<td>0.2 (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Number of members of your unit currently active in full-time ministry (with or without compensation) in each area:

**Average Number**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social service/justice ministry</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education ministry</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institute administration</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care ministry</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institute ministry</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education institute administration</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish ministry</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service administration</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish administration</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital/health care administration</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincy</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan administration</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Number of members of your unit currently active in part-time ministry (with or without compensation) in each area:

**Average Number**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education ministry</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institute ministry</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish ministry</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care ministry</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institute administration</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service/justice ministry</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincy</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service administration</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish administration</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education institute administration</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan administration</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital/health care administration</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Number of members of your unit interested in each area:**

Average Number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education ministry</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institute administration</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care ministry</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institute ministry</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service administration</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service/justice ministry</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish ministry</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincy</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish administration</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education institute administration</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital/health care administration</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan administration</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institute or Society Memberships and Affiliations

Among responding superiors, 43% report membership in the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), 28% in the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), 23% in the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), 17% in the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), and 36% are in some other federation or association.

This question is used for sub-group analysis and is also related to unit size (also a sub-group comparison variable). The median number of members in a unit with membership in:

- CMSM is 26 (average of 50)
- CMSWR is 22 (average of 76)
- LCWR is 57 (average of 105)
- UISG is 82 (average of 156)
- Other national or international organizations is 45 (average of 84)

7 In all there were 407 units contacted and invited to participate from LCWR and CMSWR lists. Some 290 were from LCWR (71%) and 117 from CMSWR (29%). Three units are members of both lists. Among respondents, the ratio of LCWR and CMSWR members is identical (43% + 17% / 60% = a ratio of 72% for LCWR and 28% for CMSWR). Thus, among respondents, LCWR and CMSWR are in nearly perfect proportion to their presence in the population of possible participants. Note that not all respondents indicated membership in an organization that they were listed with. Among those members of CMSWR, 14 respondents indicated their institute/society has membership in UISG. Among those members of LCWR, 71 respondents indicated their institute/society has membership in UISG. Among those members of CMSM, 19 respondents indicated their institute/society has membership in UISG.
Awareness of Papal Commission Request

Three in four responding superiors were aware that the International Union of Superiors General had requested that Pope Francis establish the Papal Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women prior to being surveyed.

There are no statistically significant sub-group differences by the size of units (i.e., number of members) or gender (78% of respondents from women’s units are aware compared to 71% of men’s units). Superiors from institutes with membership in CMSM and CMSWR are less likely than others to have an awareness of the commission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Percent Aware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMSM</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSWR</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCWR</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UISG</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national or international organizations</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Awareness of Papal Commission Formation and Meeting

Nearly seven in ten superiors were aware that the Papal Commission had formed and had meetings (69%).

There are no statistically significant sub-group differences by the size of units (i.e., number of members). Superiors from institutes with membership in CMSM and CMSWR are less likely than others to have an awareness of the commission having been formed and already met. Those from women’s institutes are more aware than those from men’s institutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Aware of Commission Formed and Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMSM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSWR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCWR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UISG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national or international organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formed and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Possibility of Sacramentally Ordaining Women as Deacons

More than three in four responding superiors believe it is theoretically possible to sacramentally ordain women as deacons (77%).

As shown below, superiors from larger units are more likely than those from units with fewer members to believe it is theoretically possible to sacramentally ordain women as deacons. No matter what size the unit, a majority believe this to be possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Believing it is Theoretically Possible to Ordain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 or fewer members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 to 30 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 85 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86 or more members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Superiors from institutes with membership in CMSWR are significantly less likely than others to believe it is theoretically possible to sacramentally ordain women as deacons. Only 36% of those from units with membership in CMSWR believe this is possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Believing it is Theoretically Possible to Ordain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMSM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSWR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCWR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UISG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national or international organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no statistically significant differences by gender (77% of respondents from women’s units believe it is possible compared to 76% of men’s units).
Belief that Church Should Authorize Sacramental Ordination of Women as Deacons

Seventy-two percent of responding superiors believe the Church should authorize the sacramental ordination of women as deacons.

As shown below, superiors from larger units are more likely than those from units with fewer members to believe the Church should authorize the sacramental ordination of women as deacons. No matter what size the unit, a majority believe this should be authorized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Believing the Church Should Authorize</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 or fewer members</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 to 30 members</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 85 members</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86 or more members</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Superiors from institutes with membership in CMSWR are significantly less likely than others to believe the Church should authorize the sacramental ordination of women as deacons. Only 21% of those from units with membership in CMSWR believe this should occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Believing the Church Should Authorize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMSM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSWR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCWR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UISG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national or international organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no statistically significant differences by gender (74% of respondents from women’s units believe the Church should authorize compared to 69% of men’s units).
Belief that the Church Will Authorize Sacramental Ordination of Women as Deacons

While many superiors believe it is theoretically possible for the Church to sacramentally ordain women as deacons and personally believe the Church should do so, a minority, 45%, believe the Church will authorize this.

There are no statistically significant sub-group differences by the size of units (i.e., number of members). As shown below, superiors from institutes with membership in CMSM and CMSWR are significantly less likely than others to believe the Church will authorize the sacramental ordination of women as deacons. Those from women’s units are more likely than those from men’s units to believe the Church will authorize this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Percent Believing Church Will Authorize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMSM</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSWR</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCWR</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UISG</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national or international organizations</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Percent Believing the Church Will Authorize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belief that the USCCB Would Implement the Sacramental Ordination of Women as Deacons if Authorized by the Holy See

While most superiors do not believe the Church will authorize the sacramental ordination of women as deacons, if the Church were to do so, seven in ten believe the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) would implement this (69%).

![Pie chart showing beliefs about the implementation of deacon ordination]

There are no statistically significant sub-group differences by the size of units (i.e., number of members) or by gender (67% of women’s units compared to 73% of men’s). Majorities of those with memberships in all organizations believe the USCCB would implement the sacramental ordination of women as deacons if this was authorized by the Holy See.

### Percent Believing the Church Will Authorize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMSM</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSWR</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCWR</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UISG</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national or international organizations</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belief that Your Bishop Would Implement the Sacramental Ordination of Women as Deacons if Authorized by the Holy See

Nearly six in ten believe their diocesan bishop would implement the sacramental ordination of female deacons if the Church authorizes this (58%).

There are no statistically significant sub-group differences by the size of units (i.e., number of members) or by gender (55% of women’s units compared to 63% of men’s). Unlike others, a minority of superiors from institutes with membership in CMSWR do not believe their diocesan bishop (or the bishops in the dioceses where they minister) would implement the sacramental ordination of women as deacons if this were authorized by the Holy See.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Percent Believing their Bishop Would Implement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMSM</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSWR</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCWR</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UISG</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national or international organizations</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Importance of Sacramental Ordination of Women as Deacons for the Church

A majority of responding superiors, 53%, believe that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would be “very much” important for the Catholic Church. Twenty-five percent believe this would be “somewhat” important for the Church. Seven percent believe it would be “a little” important for the Church and 15% said it would be “not at all” important.

As shown in the figure on the next page, the larger the unit from which a superior responds, the more likely they are to believe it is would be “somewhat” or “very much” important for the Catholic Church to sacramentally ordain women as deacons. In the page that follows, a figure also shows that superiors from institutes with membership in CMSWR are significantly less likely than other respondents to believe it would be “somewhat” or “very much” important for the Catholic Church to sacramentally ordain women as deacons. There are no statistically significant differences by gender.
In your opinion, how important would the sacramental ordination of women as deacons be for the Catholic Church?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Very much

### Number of Members in Unit

- **85 or more**
  - Not at all: 4%
  - A little: 6%
  - Somewhat: 36%
  - Very much: 54%

- **31 to 85**
  - Not at all: 9%
  - A little: 8%
  - Somewhat: 26%
  - Very much: 57%

- **13 to 30**
  - Not at all: 18%
  - A little: 11%
  - Somewhat: 26%
  - Very much: 46%

- **12 or fewer**
  - Not at all: 30%
  - A little: 5%
  - Somewhat: 12%
  - Very much: 53%
In your opinion, how important would the sacramental ordination of women as deacons be for the Catholic Church?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Very much

Membership in...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMSM</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSWR</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCWR</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UISG</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other orgs</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In your opinion, how important would the sacramental ordination of women as deacons be for the Catholic Church?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Very much

**Male**
- 15% Not at all
- 12% A little
- 22% Somewhat
- 52% Very much

**Female**
- 16% Not at all
- 5% A little
- 26% Somewhat
- 54% Very much
Perceived Importance of Sacramental Ordination of
Women as Deacons for Institute or Society

Only 16%, believe the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would be “very much” important for their institute or society. Twenty-nine percent believe this would be “somewhat” important. Nineteen percent believe it would be “a little” important for their institute or society and 36% said it would be “not at all” important.

As shown in the figure on the next page, units with more than 30 members are more likely than those with fewer members to believe that sacramentally ordaining women as deacons would be at least “a little” important for their institute or society. In the page that follows, a figure also shows that superiors from institutes with membership in CMSWR and CMSM are significantly less likely than other respondents to believe that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would be at least “a little” important for their institute or society. Finally a figure shows that those from women’s units are more likely than those from men’s institutes to think it would be at least “a little important” for their institute or society if the sacramental ordination of women as deacons were approved.
In your opinion, how important would the sacramental ordination of women as deacons be for your institute/society?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Very much

Number of Members in Unit

- 86 or more: 26% Not at all, 28% A little, 29% Somewhat, 17% Very much
- 31 to 85: 22% Not at all, 20% A little, 40% Somewhat, 18% Very much
- 13 to 30: 50% Not at all, 17% A little, 21% Somewhat, 11% Very much
- 12 or fewer: 51% Not at all, 14% A little, 23% Somewhat, 12% Very much
In your opinion, how important would the sacramental ordination of women as deacons be for your institute/society?

- CMSM:
  - Not at all: 51%
  - A little: 13%
  - Somewhat: 29%
  - Very much: 8%

- CMSWR:
  - Not at all: 73%
  - A little: 13%
  - Somewhat: 13%
  - Very much: 2%

- LCWR:
  - Not at all: 8%
  - A little: 28%
  - Somewhat: 36%
  - Very much: 28%

- UISG:
  - Not at all: 23%
  - A little: 28%
  - Somewhat: 30%
  - Very much: 20%

- Other organizations:
  - Not at all: 24%
  - A little: 26%
  - Somewhat: 28%
  - Very much: 23%
In your opinion, how important would the sacramental ordination of women as deacons be for your institute/society?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Very much

Male
- Not at all: 53%
- A little: 12%
- Somewhat: 28%
- Very much: 8%

Female
- Not at all: 29%
- A little: 22%
- Somewhat: 29%
- Very much: 19%
Awareness of History of Women Ordained as Deacons

A majority of responding superiors, 64%, say they are either “very much” (25%) or “somewhat” (39%) aware of any history of women ordained as deacons. Fewer, 23% are “a little” aware of this and 13% say they are “not at all” aware of any history of women ordained as deacons.

There are no statistically significant sub-group differences by the size of units (i.e., number of members) or by gender. As shown in the figure on the next page, superiors from institutes with membership in CMSWR are significantly less likely than other respondents to be “very much” aware of any history of women ordained as deacons.
How aware are you of any history of women ordained as deacons?

- CMSM:
  - Not at all: 12%
  - A little: 28%
  - Somewhat: 35%
  - Very much: 25%

- CMSWR:
  - Not at all: 17%
  - A little: 37%
  - Somewhat: 35%
  - Very much: 11%

- LCWR:
  - Not at all: 5%
  - A little: 18%
  - Somewhat: 43%
  - Very much: 33%

- UISG:
  - Not at all: 7%
  - A little: 16%
  - Somewhat: 43%
  - Very much: 34%

- Other organizations:
  - Not at all: 10%
  - A little: 17%
  - Somewhat: 43%
  - Very much: 30%
How aware are you of any history of women ordained as deacons?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Very much

Male
- 13% Not at all
- 26% A little
- 37% Somewhat
- 24% Very much

Female
- 12% Not at all
- 22% A little
- 40% Somewhat
- 26% Very much
Perception of How Beneficial the Ordination of Women as Deacons Would be to the Church

About three in four superiors believe that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would be “very much” (60%) or somewhat” (16%) beneficial to the Catholic Church’s mission. Nine percent say this would be “a little” beneficial and 15% say it would “not at all” be beneficial to the Church’s mission.

As shown in the figure on the next page, units with more than 30 members are more likely than those with fewer members to believe that sacramentally ordaining women as deacons would be “somewhat” or “very much” beneficial to the Catholic Church’s mission. In the page that follows, a figure also shows that superiors from institutes with membership in CMSWR are significantly less likely than other respondents to believe that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would be at least “a little” beneficial to the Church’s mission. Finally, those from women’s institutes are more likely than those from men’s institutes to think ordination of female deacons would be “very much” beneficial for the Church.
Do you think the ordination of women (religious or not) as deacons would be beneficial to the Catholic Church's mission?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Very much

**Membership in...**

- CMSM: 11% Not at all, 11% A little, 24% Somewhat, 54% Very much
- CMSWR: 52% Not at all, 17% A little, 15% Somewhat, 15% Very much
- LCWR: 4% Not at all, 13% A little, 82% Somewhat
- UISG: 11% Not at all, 9% A little, 9% Somewhat, 72% Very much
- Other organizations: 10% Not at all, 4% A little, 16% Somewhat, 70% Very much
Do you think the ordination of women (religious or not) as deacons would be beneficial to the Catholic Church?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Very much

Male:
- Not at all: 11%
- A little: 11%
- Somewhat: 24%
- Very much: 53%

Female:
- Not at all: 17%
- A little: 8%
- Somewhat: 13%
- Very much: 63%
Perception of Ordination of Women as Deacons Creating a Greater Call for Women to be Ordained as Priests

More than eight in ten superiors believe that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would “very much” (47%) or “somewhat” (37%) create a greater call for women to be ordained as priests. Eight percent say this would create “a little” greater call and 8% say it would “not at all” create a greater call for women to be ordained as priests.

There are no statistically significant sub-group differences by the size of units (i.e., number of members), by membership in organizations or associations, or by gender.
Do you think the ordination of women (religious or not) as deacons would create a greater call for women to be ordained as priests?

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Women’s Institutes: Perception of Ordination of Women as Deacons Bringing More Candidates to Institute or Society

Sixty-one percent of responding superiors from women’s institutes do not think that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons will bring more candidates to their institute or society. Seventeen percent believe that “maybe” this would lead to more candidates, 18% don’t know, and 4% say “yes” this would likely lead to more candidates.

As shown below, all respondents are unlikely to say “yes” that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would bring more candidates to their institutes/societies.

| Percent Believing Sacramental Ordination of Women as Deacons Would Bring More Candidates to Institute/Society |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|-----------|
| CMSWR                          | Yes 2%   | No 80% | Maybe/ DK 18% |
| LCWR                           | 5        | 50     | 45        |
| UISG                           | 3        | 54     | 43        |
| Other national or international organizations | 1        | 63     | 36        |
Women’s Institutes: Potential Number of Interested Members

Superiors of women’s institutes or societies were asked how many of their members they thought might be interested in being sacramentally ordained as deacons. As shown below, the most common response was none. On average, respondents reported 2.7 members they thought might be interested and 2.6 members under the age of 60.

Superiors from units with membership in CMSWR were least likely to indicate members might be interested in being sacramentally ordained as deacons. On average, they indicated less than one member interested compared to 3.2 possibly interested members in units with membership in LCWR and 3.9 interested members in units with membership in UISG.
Men’s Institutes: Perception of Ordination of Women as Deacons Bringing More Candidates to Women’s Institutes or Societies

Twenty-five percent of responding superiors from men’s institutes do not think that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons will bring more candidates to women’s institutes or societies. More, 34%, believe that “maybe” this would lead to more candidates, 30% don’t know, and 11% say “yes” this would likely lead to more candidates.
Men’s Institutes: Perception of Ordination of Women as Deacons Leading to Recommending More Women to Women’s Institutes or Societies

Thirty-six percent of responding superiors from men’s institutes do not think that the sacramental ordination of women as deacons would cause them to recommend women to women’s institutes or societies. Twenty-nine percent believe that “maybe” this would lead to them to recommend women, 19% don’t know, and 16% say “yes” this would lead them to recommend women to women’s institutes or societies.
Influences on the Topic of Women Deacons

Respondents were asked if their responses to the survey were influenced by the writing or speaking of particular authors and speakers. Those most often noted are Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB (38%) and Sr. Sandra Schneiders, IHM (36%).

Are your answers influenced by the writing and/or speaking of the following of the topic of women deacons? Check all that apply:

- Joan Chittister, OSB: 38%
- Sandra Schneiders, IHM: 36%
- Phyllis Zagano: 15%
- International Theological Commission 2002/2003 report: 13%
- Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ: 12%
- Sara Butler, MSBT: 6%
- Gloria Marie Jones, OP: 4%
- Gerhard L. Muller: 3%
- K. K. Fitzgerald: 2%
- William Ditewig: 2%
- Kevin Madigan: 2%
- Aimé-Georges Martimort: 1%
- Gary Macy: 1%
- Roger Gryson: 1%
- Brian Bucher: 0%
- Other, specify: 8%
Among the “other” authors, speakers, and materials noted as having an influence on superiors’ responses were: Barbara Reid, OP, Canon Law, Catholic periodicals, Cathy Hilkert, OP, Constance Fitzgerald, OCD, Edwina Gately, Ilia Delio, Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, Father Carroll Stuhlmueller, Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, my beliefs, my thoughts, Pope Francis, Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, Scripture, Theresa Kane, RSM.
Open-ended Questions

I. Definition of Diaconate and Deacon

Major superiors were invited to write in a response to the question: How would you define the diaconate? What is a deacon? In total, 198 respondents provided a written response. Responding superiors mentioned many aspects of the diaconate. Some, for example included a discussion of gender in their responses, while others emphasized an aspect of a deacon’s ministry. It is noteworthy that very few (14 of respondents here) mentioned the distinction between the permanent and the transitional role of deacon.

The analysis below presents some of the aspects of diaconal ministry highlighted by a significant proportion of respondents.

Deacons as Liturgical and Sacramental Ministers

Just under half (48%) of the respondents defined the diaconate and or a deacon as one who performs Mass-related duties as well as baptisms, marriages, and funerals.

A deacon is one who receives major orders in the Catholic Church and can preach, bless marriages, perform baptisms and funerals.

A deacon is ordained by the imposition of hands by the Bishop to serve in his diocese. The primary work of a deacon is to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, to proclaim the Gospel at Mass and give a homily. Other works of a deacon are to assist at and bless marriages, to preside over funerals and bring the Eucharist to the home bound or those in hospitals.

A person of faith, who studies God’s Word, preaches on it, baptizes, blesses, marries couples, instructs in the Sacraments, etc. I also believe that Deacons are not currently used to their full potential.

A person ordained called to service to God’s people: Gives pastoral service, is authorized to administer sacraments, proclaims the Gospel, preaches, comforts, counsels those in distress, serves in healthcare situations, ministry to the dying, involved in worship, social justice, faith formation, care for parish.

An ordained minister who is able to give homilies, preside at the sacraments of baptism and matrimony, and assist the pastors of parishes as requested.

Deacons are ordained ministers of the Catholic Church who can proclaim the Gospel, preach and teach in the name of the Church, baptize, witness marriage and conduct funerals and are involved in works of charity. Deacons can be transitional or permanent.

I am answering this from my time as a parish/administrator/ministry. I think and believe that a deacon is an ordained minister of the Church with privileges that minister to the people of God when there is no resident pastor with facilities to preach, teach, celebrate the sacraments, (Eucharist -Word and Communion), and counsel those who are seeking help. Sadly, some pastors are not comfortable with the facilities that deacons have.
A baptized Catholic who has been theologically, scripturally, morally and doctrinally educated to serve the Church as presider, preacher and sacramental minister of Baptism and Last Rites. A deacon also needs to be a faithful follower of Jesus with a compassionate and listening heart.

The Canonical Status of the Diaconate
About four in ten (43%) responding major superiors make note of the canonical status of deacons. They explicitly mention that deacons are ordained ministers.

The term deacon comes from the Greek word diákonos meaning servant or minister. An ordained minister of an order ranking below that of priest.

The diaconate is the first in rank of ordained ministry. (deacon, priest, bishop) A deacon is one who serves the Church in many ways including preaching, presiding at baptisms, witnessing weddings, assisting at the altar and other duties assigned by the Pastor.

The diaconate is an ordained ministry of service to the Church. A deacon is an ordained minister.

The diaconate is a program of the ordained with sacramental abilities within the Church and called to witness in the workplace and community. A deacon is ordained to the diaconate with special sacramental gifts and special ministries in the Church. He/she is called to be a witness to others and to evangelize.

I would say the diaconate is a church ordained office below that of a priest. A deacon is one who is ordained to a special service in the Church.

A deacon is an ordained cleric who can perform limited sacramental ministry (perform baptisms, officiate at weddings and preach). He can also participate in other ministries within the Church.

Deacons as Ministers of Charity
About three in ten (28 percent) mention how part of the role of a deacon is to serve the marginalized, needy, sick and dying.

They are ordained members of the Church who are called to serve the people of God and to reach out to the margins - the widowed, the orphaned, sick and poor.

Someone who carries out the works of mercy in the name of the church.

Service to and organizing in support of the marginalized.

Preacher of God’s word, Minister of charity (coordinator of charity activities in Parish).

In my opinion, the word diaconate is a term that collectively categorizes those called and chosen to be of service to the Church. A deacon is one chosen and ordained to serve the widows and orphans, to be of service to the needs of all God’s people.

I would say that the diaconate is a ministry of service to the most poor and those who are often marginalized by society. The diaconate is found in the Acts of the Apostles when the Greeks complain that their widows and orphans are being left out of charitable outreach that did get to the Jewish widows and orphans. The apostle’s call to evangelize and preach was seen as so important that they “shouldn’t wait on tables,” so the
Diakone was begun. In addition to their ministry of service, deacons also preach, baptize, witness marriages and perform burials.

**Deacons as Assistants to Priests and Bishops**
While about one in ten (9%) responding superiors describe deacons as those who serve priests and bishops in their ministry, one explicitly mentioned that deacons should not be seen just as a “priest’s helper.”

The Ministry of Deacon is a ministry of service assisting the Bishop in his ministry of service to the people of God: e.g. in prison ministry, sick, social justice, education (preaching).

The diaconate is the ordination of a person to serve in the ministry as a deacon. A deacon can assist a priest in the administration of the sacrament of Baptism, Eucharist, blessing of marriages, proclamation of the gospel, preaching of the word, presiding over funerals and any other duties which the priest request for him to assist.

Someone who is able to perform certain sacraments as well as give homilies. I think of them as doing some duties of the priest to alleviate the priest to do what only he may do.

Diaconate is a ministry of service that aids the priests in compassionately reaching out to the people in faith and love.

**Woman or man in the Catholic Church ordained as a deacon. Very specific role, specific ministry & service, administer certain sacraments, preach, and teach. Not a "helper" for the priest.**

**The Gender of the Diaconate**
Although the gender of deacons was not mentioned in the question posed, one in 20 responding superiors took up the issue in their response.

A deacon is one who serves. When speaking of sacramental ordination as the questions in this survey state, tradition holds from the time of Jesus and the Twelve that only men were and are called to sacramental ordination/Holy Orders. There is a history in the Church where women have "served" as "deaconesses" but it was not a call to Holy Orders/sacramental ordination. The question has absolutely nothing to do (0.0%) whether women possess all of the same faculties as men. Women and men are equal even though sadly, many societies do not recognize that. Equal, but not the same, which is why beginning with Jesus and the Twelve, the Church will only sacramentally ordained men to the diaconate and priesthood.

A deacon is an ordained minister needed to supplement the role of the priest. In the early Church, they were those who did missionary work, catechized, lead services and counseled especially women. The early church traces St. Paul’s letter to female deacons - Phoebe is mentioned by name. Therefore, the diaconate for women would be a revitalization not an innovation.

Basically a person who feels called by God to serve the Church in a more formal way...serving the poor and assisting liturgically. I am open to offering women who feel this calling a more formal way to serve in the Church but I do not believe it should be with sacramental ordination.
II. Internal Benefits, Concerns, and Challenges of Women Deacons

Major superiors were also invited to write a response to this question: “If the diaconate were opened to women as an ordained ministry, what would be the internal benefits, concerns, and challenges of ordained members for our institute or society?” In total 122 major superiors of women provided a written response. Nearly half mentioned an internal benefit and slightly more than a third identified a concern or a challenge. Just under two in ten said that having women deacons would have no effect on their religious institute internally.

Internal Benefits

Three in ten respondents mentioned at least some internal benefit to their religious institute if the diaconate was opened to women. The primary benefits mentioned are the ability for members to perform some liturgical and sacramental duties internally for their fellow members, the wider Church acknowledging the gifts of women and benefiting from their talents, expansion of the scope of the ministries a religious institute can offer, and women exerting a greater influence on the local leaders of the church.

Capacity to Perform Liturgical and Sacramental Duties

Just over a quarter of the responding superiors mentioned the benefit of giving their members the ability to fulfill liturgical and sacramental functions internally.

A woman deacon could proclaim the Gospel and preach legally (sisters who are professionally qualified do give homilies in our motherhouse chapel now). As [religious institute], we recognize our oneness and mutual obedience. Deacons would bring a clerical state to a congregation of non-clerics. We would need to attend to that fact.

Increased sacramental options.

Internal benefits: women could preach and reach out in sacramental pastoral care. It would provide a feminine aspect to church ministry. Challenges: Obstacles women face in having a place in the institutional church; tension between prophetic call of religious life and Church hierarchy call to be keepers of tradition.

The benefit would be that the person would be able to proclaim the gospel and preach the Word at Mass. Some women religious are very good theologians and speakers. Preside over funerals when a priest is not available. Assist on the altar for Community celebrations. No concerns, the challenge would be the priest’s acceptance of a woman deacon.

The major internal benefit would be the presence of sacraments without the reliance on priests to come for some of the sacraments. It may also open some pathways for vocations.

Greater Acceptance of Women and their Gifts in the Church

One in six responding superiors state that the internal benefit would be a sign of the acceptance of women and their gifts in the Church.

Acknowledgement of the gifts of women!
If the diaconate were opened to women, the primary benefit for our institute would be the official affirmation of the rightful place of women in the church. I would not anticipate anyone in our current membership aspiring - or being called - to the diaconate.

The internal benefits would be mostly psychological. We would feel that women are less marginalized by the male church hierarchy.

The largest benefit would be the reality that women’s gifts and perspectives count more in this Church. Another benefit would be the service to the community of the retirement center when a priest is no longer available for daily service.

**Continuation of Current Ministries but with a Higher Status**

Just under one in ten of the respondents feel their members are already performing much of the pastoral and sacramental work currently.

Many of our sisters already perform the tasks listed above for our community and in some cases for parishes. We have had sisters be pastoral assistants. Ordaining them would give them more status among other clergy and give them a more positive feeling about their role in the Church.

For some members of our religious institute, having the opportunity to be ordained a deacon would enable some women to not feel excluded and to be more involved in the life of the church. Some of our women are ministering in remote areas and, in meeting the spiritual needs of the people, are functioning as deacons.

Our apostolate is institutional in nature and deacons are usually assigned to ministries by the diocese. That would be a conflict. Our sisters would be able to do what they are already doing but on a deeper level.

Deaconess in our midst would not change us very much. We unofficially extend many of the ministries already that a deaconess brings -- especially pastoral ones.

**Internal Concerns and Challenges**

About one in three major superiors mentioned at least some internal concerns and challenges to opening the diaconate to women. The primary concerns and challenges mentioned were that their women deacons would be accountable to both the local bishop and the institute's leadership, leading to possible conflict and confusion; the challenge of persuading the hierarchy, laity, and other institute members to accept and respect the new role of women; the new role making for two tiers in the institutes, thereby undermining the collegiality they presently possess; and women deacons reifying and reinforcing the clericalism already present in the wider Church;

**Confusion over Who the Deacon is Accountable to**

A quarter (26%) of the responding major superiors are concerned about the confusion that would result since a women deacon would be accountable to both the bishop and to her religious superior.

As long as deacons are subject to Bishops, members of my congregation would not be able to be sent to missions by me as religious superior. Discernment for ministry would always have to take the Bishop’s wishes/needs into consideration. It would limit my sisters to a particular diocese and that could be inhibiting because we are pontifical and do not want to be serving in a particular diocese under a particular bishop.
Challenge: Vowed religious who is accountable to both the local Bishop and the Superior of the Religious Order could be a conflict.

The benefit would be broadening the scope of our ministries -- challenges would be having to respond to the bishops in the various areas. Not all are accepting of women.

Some questions: Who is the authority of this deacon? Should she obey the bishop? This can create some conflicts. I don’t see any benefit, it is another way of serving in the Church.

I sincerely doubt that having Sisters ordained into the diaconate would make any significant changes to what our Sisters already do. Since deacons are currently directly responsible to the local bishops, having Sisters ordained deacons should cause a tension between congregational leadership and the local bishop if he believes his need for deacons trumps the needs of the congregation.

Concern over the Acceptance of Women Deacons by Clergy and Other Religious

Just over one in ten major superiors are concerned that acceptance of women may be an issue not only for clergy but also for some within their own communities.

The RC Church would have changed its position and this opens the door to dialogue, co-ministering in living the Gospel message Concerns: would women be appointed to positions of authority in the church where their gifts could be fully utilized? Proper education must be given; would women be welcomed and accepted by the 'hierarchy'?

The door to inclusion within the Church would be opened in such a way to provide both women and men a deeper social and theological reflection upon their roles in the ministerial life of the Church. Naturally, acceptance by a male-dominated institution would be the most difficult obstacle as sharing ministry with women has been, for the most part, threatening to most clergy.

Benefits: Having our members of our institute recognized as authorized to preach the Gospel and preside at ceremonies such as funerals and other services. Concerns: Making sure there is no "hierarchy" in membership; that no one out-ranks any other and that religious life does not take a back seat the role of deacon. Challenges: Some members might not easily accept this new role for themselves or others; some bishops might not accept women in this role, causing challenges for ministry in some places.

Benefit - Minister service to spiritual needs of God's people. Liturgies in our chapels. Concerns - How ordained priests (Male) would treat ordained women. Challenge - acceptance by male clergy and other sisters.

I am doubtful that members of our Institute would be drawn to the diaconate, if it were opened. If any were, it would be a challenge in that this most likely would not be supported by a majority of the members.

Concern of a Two-tiered Membership

One in ten superiors have concerns regarding a hierarchical structure within their own community.

There could be a “class” issue -- those in diaconate come from the upper class, and everyone else, the lower. There also could be a conflict regarding the work of the community -- if some are too busy as deacons, who would take up the slack of their work in the community? Internal benefit of having a person available for liturgical needs of the community.
Would allow women to more fully participate in one's gospel call of discipleship; enhances a theological presence, provides a female presence and perspective on scripture, needs. Challenges: Could create a hierarchy setting, we have eliminated with our practice of collegiality and subsidiarity. Working through and re-educating people about openness to women fulfilling this ministry in our church.

I don't see a direct internal benefit. The challenges would be the relationship with the local ordinary and the possible creation of a two-tiered membership.

Complex question! Probably few benefits other than personal/congregational visibility at some public liturgical events. Bishop and diocesan clergy are very conservative and acceptance would be a problem. I doubt our having a deacon would cause jealousy but our eldest members might struggle to accept the idea.

Clericalism

One in ten say they are concerned that extending a clerical status to women would only reinforce the clericalism already present in the Church.


I don't believe there would be many internal benefits. Challenges might be to avoid clericalism and any sense of entitlement coming from the ordained position.

The internal benefits would open up the Church to matriarchy - presently a patriarchal church in leadership leaves out half of the female constituents. Like Pope Francis, by nature women tend to look out for the neglected, the poor, the children etc. The concerns include the fact that women's courage, women's resilience is unrecognized and undervalued, the hierarchy needs to overcome clericalism and start partnering with women. Women, as peacemakers, need to contribute on war and peace issues a theology of non-violence. The Church still has many fears about women deacons.

Concerns - religious life is a prophetic vocation in the church. Diaconate falls into clerical structure of the church - difficulties belonging to both roles.

No Effect Internally

One is six major superiors mentioned that if the diaconate were open to women it would have no effect on their religious institute. The primary reasons were the age of their members and their type of religious institute, which would preclude them from ordination to the diaconate. Cloistered and contemplative communities do not engage in public ministry outside of their monastery.

When our members were younger, many of them might have become ordained deacons. Many of our sisters worked in parish and hospital ministry as parish directors and chaplains. Where being a deacon could have contributed to their work. Today those members are all retired. We have only four members under the age of 75 the youngest is 68. I don't think any of them, or the older members, would pursue the diaconate.

None. We are too old to consider any of this.
None, since we are a cloistered contemplative community and not engaged in public ministry. We already perform service within the community such as leading prayer and services.

With our age, I don’t think anyone will seek to be ordained a deacon.

This would be hard to define for a small monastic community.

The needs we have can be taken care of by the Abbess, who is a Eucharistic Minister. The other functions of a deacon has is not needed in our cloistered contemplative situation.

I don’t think it would [have] a significant impact on our institute either way.
III. External Benefits, Concerns and Challenges of Women Deacons

Respondents were also invited to write a response to this question: “If the diaconate were opened to women as an ordained ministry, what would be the external benefits, concerns, challenges of ordained members for our institute or society?” In total 109 Major superiors of women provided a written response. Responses were broken down and slightly more than six in ten major superiors mentioned an external benefit, while four in ten identified a concern or a challenge. Just over one in ten said that having women deacons would have no affect or influence externally.

External Benefits

Six in ten respondents mentioned at least some external benefit if a member of their institute were to be ordained in the diaconate. Three primary benefits are mentioned: The ability to serve and minister to the Church, especially where there is a lack of available priests; the acceptance, recognition and perspective a women deacon would bring to the greater Church and to increase sacramental ministries by their member for the greater Church.

Service and Ministry to the Church

A quarter of the responding superiors commented that the Church would benefit greatly from ordained women deacons especially where there may be a shortage of available priest.

At a time, when there seems to be a shortage of priests to serve in ministry, it would provide additional workers for the vineyard, besides providing a different perspective on breaking open the work, for example.

Benefit: keeping parishes open; a different style of leading and presiding challenge: providing just salaries and benefits.

Benefit: Would expand the pastoral service and reach of the Church to underrepresented people and underserved areas.

Benefits: especially in mission territories where there is lack of ordained ministers, the ability to officially Baptize, lead prayers services involving Gospel proclamation and preaching and serve as witnesses to marriages. Concern and Challenge: The formation of the faithful and having to then distinguish between sisters that are ordained and have the faculties and sisters that do not.

External benefits: Sisters would be able to help in many parishes where there is no priest assigned due to the lack of priests in most dioceses. Challenges would come from some ordained priests.

For women, the opportunity for ordination as deacons would bring about greater participation in the life of the Church. In some dioceses, the administration of the parishes is restricted to priests of deacons. Having women ordained as deacons would help to staff the parishes in the case of the declining numbers being ordained to the priesthood. One of the challenges, for some deacons and priests, might be feeling threatened by women having a similar role as the men.

The external benefit would be great. With the lack of priests, it would avail more people of visits to their homes by ordained deacons as there would be more deacons to send out. It would also help in areas where priests are few in that more services could be performed by ordained women deacons. Many women religious have a strong background in theology and ministry and they could easily continue their studies to be ordained.
deacons. It would vastly expand the Church's mission. Many women are also excellent at preaching the Word of God and would provide deep insights in their reflections on scripture at liturgies.

See above and Sisters, and ordained women, presently working in pastoral settings could better meet more of the spiritual needs of the people, especially in rural and urban settings where the number of male clerics is few. Also helps to place Catholic women in ecumenical settings with churches that already ordain women.

Greater Acceptance of Women and their Gifts to the Church

Over one in five respondents wrote that the acceptance of women and their many gifts would be a benefit to the Church.

Yes. Finally, the other half of humanity would be almost recognized.

Would open a new ministry for women in the church and enrich the lives of congregations; allows women who feel called to this ministry the possibility of responding to the call to share the gifts God gave them. May be some non-acceptance by some members of parishes or congregations; time away from religious community; breaking down the barriers and resistance to women's active participation in the role of an ordained minister.

Women deacons could meet many needs of the people of God in terms of sacraments and sacramental presence. The ordination of women as deacons would send a clear message to the world about the affirmation of women by the church and could lead the way to a greater reverence for women and women’s rights universally.

Challenges: concern about entrance into the predominately-male hierarchical system.

We would be modeling Paul's statement in Galatians 3, 28: "in Christ there is neither male nor female...for you are all one in Christ. Women would be encouraged to recognize their equally important role in salvation history. Seeing a woman at the altar assisting at liturgy could be a visual message against domestic violence.

Until this ministry of the church becomes valued and encouraged by those currently holding position/power in the church, those who seek ordination and function in this capacity will have to hold the tension of serving without everyone's support. The external benefits are legion; first and foremost, the People of God will have the perspective of woman and the sacramental support and compassionate care of a woman. These ministries of preaching the Good News, offering forgiveness and extending other care will be a blessing because of this diversity.

Our members have worked for the expansion of the roles of women in the church and society for many years. The main benefit to our institute would be the joy of seeing the elimination of another barrier to the full participation of women in the Church.

It would be an answer to prayer and make us proud as women that the Church finally ordained women to the diaconate. It would model equality within the Church, and the Church would benefit in ways not yet imagined. We would share in the joy of that decision of the Church.

I’m sure some Catholics would not accept women deacons. A benefit would be a more feminine face to the Church and the viewpoints of women being respected more.

Capacity to Perform Liturgical and Sacramental Duties Externally

One in six (16%) respondents believe that the ability to carry out liturgical and sacramental functions outside their own communities would benefit the Church.
Administering sacraments that only ordained can do today.

Being able to preach.

Benefit: greater acceptance of sisters’ pastoral role among conservative Catholics. Concern: Greater control of ministerial activity.

In our ministry to the aged, having an ordained deacon in the house would again have an ordained presider for communion services. In the absence of a priest and availability of the sacrament of the sick, an ordained deacon could at least give a blessing to someone in danger of death.

Increased sacramental ministry.

She would be able to perform baptisms, proclaim and preach the Word, bless marriages for family and friends. Also, in rural areas where a priest may be divided into 3 or more parishes and there is a conflict in scheduling, she can provide the services that are approved by the church.

As missionaries, the ordained woman of our institute will administer sacraments in places where priests are scarce.

External Concerns and Challenges

Four in ten major superiors mentioned at least some external concerns and challenges to opening the diaconate to women. The most common issues are acceptance by laity, clergy and religious sisters; trust in the hierarchal structure of the Church and overcoming clericalism; and balancing community life and the expectations of the Church.

Concern over the Acceptance of Women Deacons by Clergy and Other Religious

One in six major superiors have written of their concerns that women deacons will not be accepted by clergy and other religious.

Benefit - Increased number to serve parishes Concern - Female being compared to male Challenge - People accepting ordained females.

Benefits: Many women are already skilled and experienced in service to others. They would bring gifts for improving relationships among people, broaden the perspective of the Church to include women as well as men, and nurture the faith of all as they are used to doing. Challenges: Some women would strongly oppose women in this role because they’ve been taught all their lives that men are on a higher plane than women and this role has always been reserved to men. Men have been divinely ordained to be in charge and women are subservient. Some clerics would do the same because they’ve been taught that they're superior to women and to non-ordained men.

I am not sure. I think the community would accept but I am not sure about the loyal people (Church) would react. Some of the Catholics in our area are very traditional in their thinking.

It would be a step in recognizing the gifts of women; they would need to be sturdy pioneers who handle criticism well; might not be allowed to serve in many places. Our congregation would be lauded by some,
criticized by others. In our diocese, women are not allowed to serve as parish administrators so likely the acceptance of women deacons would be a long process.

Ordaining woman deacons would be a challenge to some clergy within the local church because women are not recognized for the gifts that they could give in church ministry. Some lay people might not accept women in these roles, but many have already welcomed women who have served them.

**Reinforcing the Hierarchal Structure of the Church**

Over one in ten (14%) of the major superiors responding are concerned about the hierarchical structure of the Church.

A concern would surely be a new relationship with the ordinary of the diocese -- especially for congregations of pontifical right.

Benefits: *Enriched ministries within the Church’s mission.* Challenges: *Misconstrued of "ordained ministries" as part of a power struggle within the Church, whereas ordination is for service, not power.*

Clericalism and changing the current culture, which seems not to value the role of women in the Church. Since preaching would be an important element of the role, having the opportunity for women’s voices to be heard in regards to living the Gospel and sharing the charism for the good of the Church and the world.

External Benefits: More trained presiders and preachers to work within the parishes and the civic community. Concerns/Challenges: Demand on time and presence; ordained versus non-ordained; reinforces hierarchy and sense of clericalism.

**Balance between Community Life and a Deacon’s Work**

One-tenth of the major superiors stressed a concern over the balance between community life expectations and the needs of the Church.

Women would finally be admitted to the full ministerial life of the Church. There would be questions as to how this would affect congregational life, governance, identity.

Women deacons would be able to serve in a variety of ways liturgically and pastorally in our sponsored institutions. They would also be able to serve in parishes if there were need and/or desire. Challenges would likely derive from dual membership in a religious congregation and direct responsibility to a diocesan bishop for ministry.

The ministry of our congregation may suffer.

The balance between community expectations and the needs of the Church.

Sisters could participate more fully in the ministry of the Church. We would have to take another look at our community structures to ensure the quality of our religious life.

Many of our Sisters are excellent preachers and that would be a gain for the diocese if they were ordained. Still, putting our Sisters at service to the diocese could diminish our congregation’s impact on our ministries by their absence from congregational needs. Another difficulty regarding Sisters’ ordination could be the tension
between our need for congregational assemblies and ministry needs, and the parish needs where she would be assigned by the bishop.

Loss of communal life, communal prayer, difficulty in balancing community life/family life with the call to serve in eternal ministries, greater need for flexibility in religious life, which already now is difficult.

No Effect Externally
Just over one in ten major superiors mention that if the diaconate were open to women it would have no effect, no external benefits or concerns to their religious institute. Similar to the question of internal benefits of women in the diaconate, the same responses apply here: age of members and type of community preclude them from ordination to the diaconate.

This type of ministry—as all types of apostolates would not have external benefits because we do not work directly with the people.

We’re cloistered, and so it would not apply.

None. It would not fit into our enclosed life.

This type of ministry—as all types of apostolates would not have external benefits because we do not work directly with the people.
IV. Openness of the Institute to Considering Members Ordination to the Diaconate

Major superiors of women were also invited to write a response to this question: “If the diaconate were opened to women as an ordained ministry, would you, your councilors, and / or chapter consider allowing members to be ordained? Why or why not?” In total 145 major superiors of women provided a written response. Nearly six in ten respondents said they would consider allowing members to be ordained. A quarter of the respondents said they would not consider allowing their members to become ordained.

Would Consider the Diaconate
Almost six in ten major superiors said they would consider allowing their members to be ordained. Their reasons were varied, with much discernment and consideration of the consequences for their individual members, their religious institute, and the wider Church.

Yes. With proper training and considerable discernment.

Yes, after a period of intense discernment.

I think we will need to clarify the authority point for this sister. According with it the General team will need to consider what to do.

It would need to be thoroughly studied, discerned, discussed in preparation for a decision at Chapter.

This will have to be discussed. We are willing to have the discussion.

We would consider allowing members to be ordained. The call would be discerned by the individual sister in conjunction with leadership. Since this would be a call, it would be important to pursue the call with the individual.

The question about our Sisters being ordained as deacons would need a congregational discussion. The issue is too important to be addressed solely by leadership and we do not make top-down decisions on such important matters.

We have a process of dialogue in place and would follow our regular procedures of prayer, reflection and dialogue to 'hear' where the spirit is calling one to minister.

This would entail deep community discussions - again in a small monastic community the benefits would be difficult to define.

Personally, I would. Our local chapter would depend on the General Chapter of our Congregation. I'm not sure the General Chapter would be open to it. I would hope so. I would be open to it because it could offer another way for our monastic community to serve the local community, either in the monastery, or in some related liturgical or social role.

Yes but it would depend on what restrictions and expectation were placed on the person.
If we could work out the tensions with the local bishop and some common understandings (so that we could protect them from simply being free labor with no real voice), we would. It would also be important that we would have some say, on whom the bishop would choose for ordination, since they represent us as well as the diocese.

Yes. There is no good reason to deny anyone the fulfillment of that call.

Yes, if was determined that one had a vocation to the diaconate.

I am sure that our chapter and council would be open to having members ordained if they desired that. I don't think the community would push anyone in that direction unless the person really desired it. Women in this area would bring a different dimension to the church that a male dominated Church often does not have.

I think we would allow it, if a person felt called.

I think we would consider it. We always support the person developing to her fullness, using her gifts. If a sister felt called to the diaconate, we would want to support her.

If a Sister discerned a call to be a deacon, we would listen to her request and help her process it so she is able to function as a deacon and a vowed religious.

If it's a call from God, I doubt that we would stand in the sister's way.

Maybe, if that's what a member truly desired.

Yes, if she felt called and was clear about her role within the community.

Yes. If the woman feels a call to this and it's a fit within our communal lifestyle, we affirm the directions our members discern prayerfully.

Yes, we would allow and support ordination that honors a call from God ...who does not discriminate whether one is male or female. A call is a CALL.

Yes, because our charism is to assist diocesan priests. The deacon is ordained for service. Of course, this is my opinion. Something new such as this would need to be studied, prayed about, discussed and reflected upon before any decision would be made.

We would consider it, because it would be a further call to service.

We probably would allow our members to be ordained deacons. Our ministry is focused in the Liturgy and we feel our Sisters would be educationally and spiritually prepared for this ministry.

We would consider it because pastoral work is part of our mission.

We have had considerable exposure to feminist thinking; those most pro-deacon are likely to be most prepared and most vocal about the issue. They might possibly carry the day if it came to a vote--but we prefer moving toward peaceful consensus.
Yes, provided the ordained ministry returns to its roots and purpose, because women have a great capacity to reach out and touch peoples’ lives. Women are heart people, full of compassion and love. The Church needs the woman’s perspective and commitment.

Would Not Consider the Diaconate

A quarter of the respondents said no, they would not consider allowing their members to become ordained. Some mentioned that it is not a women’s place to minister in the Church. Others mentioned, again, that their age or type of congregation would preclude them from participation.

No member of our community will ever be an ordained minister. There seems to be a widespread, misguided understanding of the nature and character of the consecrated religious. By profession of the Evangelical Counsels, the religious unites herself to Christ, in union with the Church, as the Savior’s bride. We live an eschatological reality - where the ordained receive a sacrament, which by its very nature only point toward that reality. Also, an ordained minister stands in persona Christi. An "ordained woman" would by definition deny her very gender and thereby even nature itself.

There would be no need to have any of our members ordained because the ministry of deacons that we would need is given to the Abbess of the Community. The functions of deacon are not needed as they are in a parish.

It would put us into clerical state so No -- religious are prophets.

Not essential to our mission.

No. We do not feel that women, nonetheless our Sisters, need ordination. There is a role for women and men within the Church. We would desire to remain within the beautiful role as Bride rather than move into the role of Peter.

No, none of us believes we are called to be deacons.

We have no members who have indicated any interest in the Diaconate.

Probably not. Although "women deaconesses" are found in Church history, such a role has not been exercised within the history of the [Name of institute]. Nothing in our specific charism necessitates ordained women deaconesses.

No. All of our members under-60 are very traditionally minded and do not support women priests, gender inclusive language, etc., so it is hard to imagine them supporting deaconesses. I do not.

No, we would not because Christ’s teaching does not allow women to be sacramentally ordained.

No. Our vocation in the heart of the Church as consecrated women religious and Brides of Christ is fulfilling beyond all measure. We do not aspire to the clerical state.

No. We would not want to lead others to believe that the Church may in the future ordain women to also be priests.

Our age profile would probably prohibit that consideration. Even if sisters were younger, because of the nature of the contemplative life, sisters do not engage in active ministry outside the monastery.
Our median age is 82 and several of our sisters have serious health issues. They are in the house of coming to completion and have regulated the bishop of diocese to approve and appoint a canonical community as our official leader.

Yes, we certainly would allow members to be ordained, but, as I said in #24, given the age of our members I don't think any would seek ordination.

Yes, but as I mentioned earlier we are an aging community on our journey of completion.

Yes, accept for age now.

With Church approval, I certainly would be open to allowing a sister to be ordained to the diaconate if one felt called to do so but age is against us right now.

Unlikely because most would be too old to consider this by the time it might happen.

This is not a real question for us because of our age profile. Our youngest members have not expressed interest in ordination.

Our congregation is coming to completion. None of our current members are interested in being ordained.

No not at this stage of our lives.

Given our small number and advanced age, I do not think this applies to us.

In light of our current situation of a small number and senior age span of our finally professed sisters, it would be challenging opportunity to consider.
V. Additional Comments

Major superiors were asked to write in a response to this question: “Is there anything else you would like to add?” In total 58 major superiors provided a written response. Their responses were varied and difficult to categorize. Following are some of their remarks.

I have to say that I haven’t thought much about sisters-as-deacons (or priests, for that matter), since I really doubt that such a change will be made in my lifetime. (I’m 63.) So, please don’t put much weight on my opinions! IF deacons could anoint the sick and dying, especially, I do believe that that would be a great benefit not only to women religious, but also to the many people in nursing homes or at home who don’t get the chance to see a priest in those moments. (There are MORE of "us" still, at least in the U.S.) I think that such a move would also be good for our sisters and their people in less developed parts of the world. Thank you.

While I think the topic is being advanced by the interest of the Holy Father, I am somewhat apprehensive about the openness of the Bishops to see their way to both approving and implementing any eventual change. I am thrilled that legitimate writers are taking it forward.

Within our institute, we have members with varying degrees of frustration and anger regarding the Church’s hierarchical structure/s and systematic exclusion of women in significant roles. At least one remains on the very fringe of connection with the Roman Church. I personally would like to believe the Church will ordain women deacons. I would be quite surprised if it happens in my lifetime.

To be ordained as deacon is not a benefit for the person but for the Church. The way of feeling, serving, being committed by the women add a beautiful face to the Church and some aspect that the men don’t have.

My answers are taking a long view—yes, I so believe it will happen. When answering 'yes', it is for a long time down the road. I also would hope ordination would be honor not as a place of privilege—the culture needs to change and then let it happen. The church does not need deacons—male or female who do not understand the role of service to the people.
Appendix: Questionnaire
Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
2018 Religious Life and Ministry Survey

Please respond to each question for the unit (congregation/monastery, province, region, delegation) for which you are responsible as a major superior.

1. For what level of governance do you serve as major superior? Select one:
   - [ ] Congregation/Monastery
   - [ ] Province
   - [ ] Region
   - [ ] U.S. Delegation
   - [ ] Other (please specify): _____________________

2. What is the canonical status of your unit or of the institute/society of which your unit is a part?
   - [ ] Religious Institute of Diocesan Right
   - [ ] Religious Institute of Pontifical Right
   - [ ] Monastery
   - [ ] Other (please specify): __________________________________________________

3. Gender of your institute/society:
   - [ ] Female
   - [ ] Male

4. Is your unit an international institute/society or part of one?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

4a. If yes, in what countries is the institute/society active: ______________________________________

5. Is your unit a missionary institute/society or part of one?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

6. Is your unit a contemplative institute/society or part of one?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

7. If responding for a men’s institute/society: Is your institute/society
   - [ ] Lay
   - [ ] Clerical
   - [ ] Mixed clerical and lay

8. Does your institute/society include members of an Eastern Catholic Church?
   - [ ] Yes, the entire institute/society
   - [ ] Yes, some members
   - [ ] No

9. If yes, which one? ______________________________________

10. If responding for a men’s institute/society: Does your unit include men serving permanently as deacons?
    - [ ] Yes, how many? ________
    - [ ] No

Please indicate the number of members of your unit (as of December 31, 2017):

- [ ] 11 In initial formation
- [ ] 12. In final/perpetual vows/commitment

Please indicate the number of members of your unit in each age category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Formation</th>
<th>Perpetually Professed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14a. 25 to 44</td>
<td>14b. 25 to 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15a. 45 to 64</td>
<td>15b. 45 to 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16a. 65 to 84</td>
<td>16b. 65 to 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17a. 85 or older</td>
<td>17b. 85 or older</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

77
Please indicate the highest level of education achieved by each member of your unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Formation</th>
<th>Perpetually Professed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18a.</td>
<td>18b. Some college or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19a.</td>
<td>19b. Bachelor’s degree (e.g., B.A., B.S., S.T.B.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20a.</td>
<td>20b. Master’s degree (e.g., M.A., M.S. S.T.L., J.C.L.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21a.</td>
<td>21b. Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., S.T.D., J.C.D., M.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22a.</td>
<td>22b. Number with an advanced degree in a ministry-related field (e.g., M.A.P.S., M.A.T.S., M.Div., D.Min.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate the number of professed members (temporary and perpetual/solemn vows) in each category (include study, sabbatical, family care, congregational administration or ministry).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Ministry</th>
<th>Number in Full-time Ministry</th>
<th>Number in Part-time Ministry</th>
<th>Number Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active in full-time ministry</td>
<td>23a. _______</td>
<td>23b. _______</td>
<td>23c. _______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active in part-time ministry</td>
<td>24a. _______</td>
<td>24b. _______</td>
<td>24c. _______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired to a ministry of prayer and presence</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>25. _______</td>
<td>25c. _______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate the number of members of your unit currently active in full-time and part-time ministry (with or without compensation) in each area and the number of members you believe interested in serving in each ministry (or would have, if such a ministry were available to them). This second, educated guess on your part is only to gauge the level of interest in these ministries. Please respond only for active full members of your unit – not those in initial formation or those who are retired to a ministry of prayer and presence (e.g., no longer active in ministry).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Ministry</th>
<th>Number in Full-time Ministry</th>
<th>Number in Part-time Ministry</th>
<th>Number Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospital/health care administration (e.g., presidents or vice presidents of a hospital, nursing home, clinic)</td>
<td>33a. _____ 33b. _____ 33c. _____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care ministry (e.g., physician, nurse, technician)</td>
<td>34a. _____ 34b. _____ 34c. _____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service administration (e.g., director, program administrator)</td>
<td>35a. _____ 35b. _____ 35c. _____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service/justice ministry (e.g., direct services, advocacy)</td>
<td>36a. _____ 36b. _____ 36c. _____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincy (hospital, nursing home, college, or school)</td>
<td>37a. _____ 37b. _____ 37c. _____</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate if your unit holds membership in the following. Check all that apply:

1. Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)
2. Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR)
3. Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)
4. International Union of Superiors General (UISG)
5. Other national or international organization(s), e.g., federation, association, or NGO, specify: ________________________________.

In 2016, at the request of representatives of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), Pope Francis established a Papal Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women.

Yes  No

1. Were you previously aware that the International Union of Superiors General had requested that Pope Francis establish the Papal Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women?
2. Are you aware that the Papal Commission has been formed and has met?
3. Do you think it is theoretically possible to sacramentally ordain women as deacons?
4. Do you believe the Church should authorize sacramental ordination of women as deacons?
5. Do you believe the Church will authorize sacramental ordination of women as deacons?
6. If the Holy See authorizes the sacramental ordination of women as deacons, do you believe the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) would implement such?
7. If the Holy See authorizes the sacramental ordination of women as deacons, do you believe your diocesan bishop (or the bishops in the dioceses where you minister) would implement such?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50. In your opinion, how important would the sacramental ordination of women as deacons be for the Catholic Church?

51. In your opinion, how important would the sacramental ordination of women as deacons be for your institute/society?

52. How aware are you of any history of women ordained as deacons?

53. Do you think the ordination of women (religious or not) as deacons would be beneficial to the Catholic Church’s mission?

54. Do you think the ordination of women (religious or not) as deacons would create a greater call for women to be ordained as priests?

If responding for a women’s institute/society (Questions 55 and 57):
55. Do you think the ordination of women as deacons will bring more candidates to your institute/society?
   - Yes
   - Maybe
   - No
   - Don’t know

56. How many members of your unit do you think would be interested in being sacramentally ordained as deacons?

57. How many members of your unit under the age of 60 do you think would be interested in being sacramentally ordained as deacons?

If responding for a men’s institute/society (Questions 58 and 59):
58. Do you think the ordination of women as deacons will bring more candidates to women’s institutes/societies?
   - Yes
   - Maybe
   - No
   - Don’t know

59. Do you think the ordination of women as deacons would cause you to recommend women to women’s institutes/societies, independent of their ministerial interests?
   - Yes
   - Maybe
   - No
   - Don’t know
For all:
Are your answers influenced by the writing and/or speaking of the following on the topic of women deacons. Check all that apply.

☐ 61. Brian Bucher
☐ 62. Sara Butler, MSBT
☐ 63. Joan Chittister, OSB
☐ 64. William Ditewig
☐ 65. Gerhard L. Muller
☐ 66. Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ
☐ 67. Sandra Schneiders, IHM
☐ 68. K. K. Fitzgerald
☐ 69. Roger Gryson
☐ 70. Gloria Marie Jones, OP
☐ 71. Gary Macy
☐ 72. Kevin Madigan
☐ 73. Aimé-Georges Martimort
☐ 74. Phyllis Zagano
☐ 75. Other:________________________

Please respond as fully as you wish to the questions below.

76. How would you define the diaconate? What is a deacon?

77. If responding for a women’s institute or society: If the diaconate were opened to women as an ordained ministry, what would be the internal benefits, concerns, challenges of ordained members for your institute or society?
78. If responding for a women’s institute or society: If the diaconate were opened to women as an ordained ministry, what would be the **external** benefits, concerns, challenges of ordained members for your institute or society.

79. If responding for a women’s institute or society: If the diaconate were opened to women as an ordained ministry, would you, your councilors, and/or chapter consider allowing members to be ordained. Why or why not?

80. For all: Is there anything else you would like to add?