

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

DEACONS OF THE CHURCH

“SEEK OUT FROM AMONG YOU SEVEN MEN”

In the sixth chapter of the Book of Acts, we read of a great problem developing in the early Church. To put it simply, the Apostles – the first priests of the Church - -were becoming overworked! Today, we might say that they were on the verge of ‘CLERGY BURN-OUT.’ They rightly perceived that their primary mission was to preach the word of God and carry Christ’s Gospel to the ends of the earth. This is precisely what their Master had instructed them to do. The phenomenal growth of the early church, however, brought increased duties to the Twelve. The Church had assumed the responsibility for widows, orphans, and the poor. The task of caring for them fell largely upon the Apostles. If the Apostles were expected to look out for the material needs as well as the spiritual concerns of their ever-increasing flock, then they would need some assistance.

Seven men, therefore, were selected to provide this aid, bringing about the establishment of the *diaconate in the Christian Church*. The original seven DEACONS of the Church were: ‘STEPHEN, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, PHILIP, PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS, and NICOLAS, a convert from Antioch.’ (Acts 6:5)

Deacons continue to play an important role in the church. They assist in the celebration of liturgical services, teach Church School and Bible Study classes and visit the sick. Many of the dedicated deacons of today’s Church fulfill their tasks while still holding demanding secular jobs. Let us pray that more are inspired to seek the life of service for which deacons are called.