



Saint Catherine's Vision
Building Up the Body of Christ

Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking 'Diakonima' **Open "Call for Proposals"** **"FAQS" Update**

Saint Catherine's Vision (SCV) recently launched our open "Call for Proposals" requesting help from qualified persons seeking their expertise and practical support in our first public service ministry or "*diakonima*" engaging "*Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking*".

Already, we have received a number of responses from persons who are interested in collaborating with us, as well as several encouraging communications, and some really good questions. To help clarify some of these good questions, we are sharing this "FAQS" Update.

I. "What is the general purpose of this open 'Call for Proposals'?"

This open "Call" is the first public petition for assistance regarding our *diakonima* engaging "Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking." We seek to collect the submissions of qualified persons who wish to share their assistance, helping to facilitate dialogue and bridge-building needed to establish a vibrant pan-Orthodox Christian witness and response to the ongoing tragedy of Human Trafficking. We envision cultivating a dialogue to promote sound collaborative relationships and initiatives across Orthodox Christian jurisdictions, agencies and among interested persons. Together, we desire to humbly bear witness to the unconditional love of God, while bringing a measure of competent, practical relief to enable healing and liberation in as many contexts as possible. Most importantly, this *diakonima* demands dedicated and sustained collaborative pan-Orthodox theological, spiritual, pastoral and practical exchange. As we stated in the original open "Call for Proposals" document there are essentially two parts to the underlying vision of this initiative:

1) *“While no one person, agency or institution, or combinations thereof, have the ability to eliminate this sin (as this belongs to the merciful God, alone!) we believe that a coordinated effort may “light a Candle in the darkness”. This act of faith invokes His presence already invisibly saturating this darkness, while reaching out to one person at a time, . . .*

And . . .

2) *“Furthermore, as the Lord blesses, we [will] strive to influence our own contemporary culture through prayer, education and relationship building.”*

II. “Who is invited to submit a Proposal for this *diakonima*?”

With no pre-conceptions as to the outcome, we are deliberately casting a “wide net” with this invitation. This outreach is pan-Orthodox Christian, international and also gratefully welcomes the participation of qualified non-Orthodox professionals of good will who desire to offer assistance. We believe that there are trustworthy persons ready and humbly committed to excellence with the appropriate experience and competence, who, as well as their busy schedules can be managed, are willing to volunteer their assistance with this three-to-five year project.

We anticipate during certain phases of this three to five year initiative to need help from various persons with expertise in these (and other) areas, such as:

- a. Theology,**
- b. Spirituality and worship,**
- c. Orthodox Christian ethics,**
- d. Education and communication,**
- e. Pastoral care,**
- f. Psychology, social work and mental health** (particularly, specialists in addiction and trauma in families, especially pertaining to women and children),
- g. Qualified students and others desiring to serve as interns and assistants.**
- h. Legal**
- i. Economic Development**
- j. We especially invite ministries, agencies and organizations of good will already established in ministering to trafficked and sexually**

violated persons to contact us and submit a proposal.

k. Last, and certainly not least, we humbly encourage Orthodox and other philanthropic organizations, agencies and persons individually, who wish to partner with us regarding this diakonima to contact us so as to share their wisdom, friendship, personal time, talents and/or material resources.

III. “Who is sponsoring this invitation and how will entries be selected?”

This initiative is being sponsored by Saint Catherine's Vision, an international, pan-Orthodox Christian, non-profit organization. SCV brings women theologians together with ordained and lay servant-leaders addressing contemporary concerns in a manner that is established in and accountable to the living Tradition and canonical heritage of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Founded in 2001, SCV is an endorsed organization of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. For more information about SCV, we kindly invite the reader to our website: saintcatherinesvision.org.

After the February 4, 2016 deadline, SCV will begin to review responses.

During this initial time of preparation and deliberation we will be reaching out to trustworthy Orthodox and non-Orthodox persons, institutions and agencies regarding ways to collaborate going forward. We anticipate working in sequential phases; some proposals may be more readily implemented at an earlier phase of this initiative, others possibly later. While February 4th is the set deadline to assist us with establishing the foundational planning of this *diakonima*, SCV will be accepting proposal submissions that come to us at a later date, as “Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking” will be an on-going ministry of SCV for the next few years. Please consult SCV’s open “Call for Proposals” for more information. “Call for Proposals” requests may be emailed to: scvdiakonima@gmail.com.

IV. “Why take part in this effort?”

It is impossible to be a faithful Christian and ignore the Lord’s directive to “Love your neighbor as you love yourself,” (Mark: 12:31). As Orthodox Christians we affirm how our theological statements and proclamations, are absolutely vital for directing us to “the one thing necessary” (Luke 10:42). At the same time, we must equally acknowledge that we will be held personally accountable for ignoring the Lord’s directives of loving our neighbor for our day and context (e.g., cf. Mt. 25:31-46, Luke 10:25-37).

A careful reading of Church history, as exemplified particularly through the lives of the saints, remind us that the sin of the commodification of human persons has been at issue with the gospel from even before the establishing of the Church at Pentecost. Throughout history, slaves have been viewed as commodities rather than human persons created in the “image of God” (Gen. 1:27); and sexual availability, in its numerous traumatizing and dehumanizing expressions is a typical aspect of a slave’s “job description”. It is well known that many saints through the centuries freed slaves in their household, some, like the great fourth century theologian and bishop, Saint Basil the Great and his contemporary, the justice-seeking bishop, Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, actively sought to “buy” the freedom of young girls and women doomed to slavery because of their families’ poverty.

Human slavery still takes place today and is very big business in North America and around the world. Nevertheless, there *are* Orthodox Christians, who for years have been striving to light a “Candle in the darkness”. Through SCV’s *diakonima*:

- We desire to become familiar and connect with Orthodox Christians around the world in the service of Divine Compassion (*theion eleos*, or the “*eleos* of God”) who in various ways are engaged in the combat against human trafficking; and with the help of our own social media, as well as those of our partners, to share this information with the general public.
- We desire to help through public and behind-the-scenes cultivation of pan-Orthodox Christian relationships that facilitate networks and bridge-building with organizations and persons involved with this effort.

- We desire to host safe venues that offer opportunities for collaborative prayer, listening, dialogue and mutual assistance, thus facilitating discussion while learning from persons involved in various aspects of the “hands-on” work. At the same time, a proportion of the participants will include trust-worthy, generous, philanthropic persons (representing themselves or their organization) who wish to be part of this very important conversation.
- We fervently desire to learn from these future discussions, so that SCV may also discern and in time, commit, to creating (or co-creating with partners) new “real-world” programs for the benefit of others, as an expression of this “Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking” *diakonima*.
- Furthermore, as a way to continue cultivating our charism for “Education, Dialogue and Service,” SCV plans to expand its educational programing and publishing commitments by helping develop an Orthodox theological and spiritual witness to benefit the Church and greater society regarding “Divine Compassion and Human Trafficking.”

We pray sincerely, that this initiative will aid the body of the Church to more deeply cultivate our commitment to service. Through this *diakonima*, as God blesses, we hope to be of some benefit to others on behalf of the Orthodox Christian Church “for the life of the world” regarding the commodification of human persons.

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