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Liturgy and Charitable  
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Earliest Euchologion Manuscripts

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## *Abstract*

This article analyzes the “diakonia” prayers within the two oldest Greek euchologion manuscripts. The author reviews how later liturgical usage and scholarship has connected these prayers to monastic practice, and traces the ways in which these early liturgical prayers originally developed within non-monastic contexts of late antique lay charitable organizations.

## *Keywords*

Greek Liturgical Manuscripts | Euchologia | Diakonia

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## Liturgy and Charitable Ministration in Late Antiquity

### *Diakonia Prayers in the Earliest Euchologion Manuscripts*

Gabriel RADLE

The oldest Greek manuscripts of the liturgical presider's prayer book, known as the euchologion (pl. euchologia), contain prayers associated with *diakonia*. This word *diakonia* (διακονία) generally refers to "service", and is employed across Christian texts for a variety of purposes, including liturgical ministry, monastic responsibilities, and charitable activities. In late antiquity, the term could also be used for a monastery's estate,<sup>1</sup> a monastic storage facility and/or treasury,<sup>2</sup> and is likewise the proper name for a type of lay charitable organization that was popular in many cities of the late antique and medieval Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> Scholars of liturgy who

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. Maria GIORDA, *Diakonia et économes au service de l'économie monastique en Égypte (IV<sup>e</sup>-VIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, in: Aug. 58 (2018) 205–229. In some Egyptian contexts, the term *diakonia* could also likely refer to a governing body of monks. See Marzena WOJTCZAK, "Legal Representation" of Monastic Communities in Late Antique Papyri, in: JJP 49 (2019) 347–399, here: 360. 370 f., fn. 62.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. Darlene B. HEDSTROM – Elizabeth BOLMAN, *The White Monastery Federation Project. Survey and Mapping at the Monastery of Apa Shenoute (Dayr al-Anba Shinūda), Sohag, 2005–2007*, in: DOP 65/66 (2011/2012) 333–364, here: 349 f.; Bentley LAYTON, *Rules, Patterns, and the Exercise of Power in Shenoute's Monastery. The Problem of World Replacement and Identity Maintenance*, in: JECS 15 (2007) 45–73, here: 48 f.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. Daniel CANER, *Charitable Ministrations (Diakoniai), Monasticism, and the Social Aesthetic of Sixth-Century Byzantium*, in: Miriam FRENKEL – Yaacov LEV (eds.), *Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions (SGKIO.NF 22)*, Berlin 2009, 45–73. On the breadth of meanings and uses of the term, see also *Diakonia, Diaconiae, Diaconato. Semantica e storia nei Padri della Chiesa. XXXVIII Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità Cristiana, Roma 7–9 maggio 2009 (SEAug 117)*, Rome 2010. A longer version of the opening talk of this conference was subsequently published as John COLLINS, *A Monocultural Usage: διακον- words in Classical, Hellenistic, and Patristic Sources*, in: VigChr 66 (2012) 287–309.

have examined *diakonia* prayers have not been in agreement about what these texts refer to, in part due to the ambiguity of the term *diakonia*, and in part because these texts are employed in the sources for a variety of purposes, including today. While ongoing research into Byzantine lay religious confraternities by scholars like Claudia Rapp, Daniel Caner and others will doubtless shed light on the broader context of such organizations and their ritual practices,<sup>4</sup> with this present article, I wish to revisit the narratives that have been constructed about *diakonia* prayers in liturgical scholarship, past and present, and provide broader context for how we might contextualize them, at least in part, within the history of the lay charitable institution of the *diakonia*.

### *Diakonia prayers in the Oldest Liturgical Manuscripts: Barberini gr. 336 and Sinai gr. NF/MG 53*

The pool of surviving liturgical manuscripts from the first Christian millennium is relatively sparse compared to later centuries. For the Greek language, two euchologia survive from the period of the eighth/ninth centuries. The first and wider known is the codex *Barberini gr. 336*, copied in Calabria at the end of the eighth century. It was modeled in large part upon a manuscript representative of Constantinopolitan practice, but also includes many additional prayers that can be traced to other Greek-praying regions of the Mediterranean.<sup>5</sup> The second and far less studied is the partially-intact euchologion *Sinai gr. NF/MG 53*, copied in the eighth/ninth

<sup>4</sup> See especially Claudia RAPP, *Christian Piety in Late Antiquity. Contexts and Contestations*, in: Harriet I. FLOWER (ed.), *Empire and Religion in the Roman World*, Cambridge 2021, 161–186, and unpublished talks, cited below; CANER, *Charitable Ministrations (Diakoniai)*. For bibliography on Western examples, see discussion below. Because Rapp has been studying other manuscript evidence for prayers and other texts related to confraternities, and it is my understanding that she intends to incorporate them into a broader study, I limit myself here to discussing the versions contained in the two oldest euchologia, both of which have already been edited and commented upon – with contrasting opinions – within previous liturgiological scholarship.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *L'eucologio Barberini gr. 336. Seconda edizione riveduta con traduzione in lingua italiana* (BEL.S 80), ed. by Stefano PARENTI – Elena VELKOVSKA, Rome <sup>2</sup>2000. A broader discussion of the manuscript's history is available in the Russian introduction to the third edition: *Евхологий Барберини гр. 336. Издание, предисловие и примечания*, ed. by ИД., Omsk <sup>3</sup>2011, 27–71.

century, most likely in Palestine or thereabouts.<sup>6</sup> It contains a number of liturgical practices that are not found within the Constantinopolitan tradition, and a later scribal hand added Arabic marginal notes to facilitate finding the prayers, evidently because its clerical user at the time prayed in Greek without a robust comprehension of the language. These two liturgical manuscripts contain a number of differences that clearly indicate they stemmed from different local liturgical traditions. At the same time, they overlap in a considerable enough number of places to demonstrate that they were each part of a broader liturgical-textual religious community that many conventionally refer to as Byzantine Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

One of the shared elements between the Barberini and Sinai euchologia is that they both contain prayers that, understood literally, are intended to bless individuals who are beginning to perform a *diakonia*. While the actual texts are different, they appear to be related to the same purpose, given a number of similarities, including in their titles. The liturgical context of these prayers was clearly understood to these diverse scribes in different corners of the Mediterranean, even if scholars have had difficulty unraveling their meaning. In the Sinai manuscript (fig. 1), the prayer bears the title *Εὐχὴ εἰς τοὺς εἰσερχομένους διακονῆσαι*, or literally, “Prayer for those who are entering to serve”. It reads:

<sup>6</sup> Cf. HOLY MONASTERY AND ARCHDIOCESE OF SINAI, *The New Finds of Sinai*, Athens 1999, 150. Christos KANAVAS, *L'eucologio MG 53 (sec. IX) del monastero di S. Caterina del Sinai* [PhD dissertation, Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome], 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Note, however, that definitions of “Byzantine Christianity” vary widely and partially overlap with scholarly debates around the term “Byzantine” and the time period under examination. Compare, for example, the definition given in Derek KRUEGER, Introduction, in: ID. (ed.), *Byzantine Christianity*, Minneapolis/MN 2010, 1–18, here: 8, with that of Averil CAMERON, *Byzantine Christianity. A Very Brief History*, London 2017, 14.

Εὐχὴ εἰς τοὺς εἰσερχομένους διακονῆσαι

Sinai gr. NF/MG 53, fols. 11<sup>v</sup>–13<sup>r</sup>

Ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας καὶ θαυμαστός<sup>α</sup>. ὁ θεὸς ὁ προαιώνιος· ὁ πρὸ αἰώνων ὑπάρχων<sup>β</sup> ὁ διὰ τῆς καθόδου τοῦ μονογενοῦς σου υἱοῦ καὶ τῆς ἐπι-|<sup>12r</sup>-φοιτήσεως τοῦ ἁγίου σου πνεύματος ὑποδείξας ἡμῖν τὰς εἰς σωτηρίαν ὁδούς, καὶ νῦν δεόμεθά σου Κύριε ἐπίβλεψον ἐφ' ἡμᾶς<sup>γ</sup> καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους σου τούτους τοὺς προσερχομένους εἰς ἔργον τῆς διακονίας εἰς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν τοῦ ἁγίου σου ὀνόματος, ἐνίσχυσον αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐνδυνάμωσον, ἄγγελον ἰσχύος καὶ ὑπομονῆς |<sup>12v</sup> παρακατάστησον τῇ ζωῇ αὐτῶν ἵνα ἐν ὑπομονῇ καὶ καρτερίᾳ πολλῇ<sup>δ</sup> καὶ φόβῳ σου ἐξυπηρετησάμενοι τῇ ἁγίᾳ σου ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου<sup>ε</sup> τὸ ἅγιον τύχῳσι τῆς παρὰ σοῦ βοηθείας καὶ ἀντιλήψεως καὶ μὴ ἐκπέσωσι τῶν αἰωνίων ἀγαθῶν ἀλλ' εὔροσιν ἔλεος καὶ χάριν |<sup>13r</sup> ἐνώπιόν σου διὰ τῆς ἀντιλήψεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ σου.

Ὅτι σὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ἔλεειν καὶ οἰκτερεῖν καὶ σῶζειν ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ σοὶ τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν εὐχαριστίαν ἀναπέμπομεν καὶ τῷ μονογενεῖ σου υἱῷ καὶ τῷ παναγίῳ καὶ ἀγαθῷ καὶ ζωοποιῷ σου πνεύματι, νῦν καὶ ἀεί.

O great and marvelous God, O God before time who is before the ages, through the descent of your only begotten Son and the descent of your Holy Spirit you have shown us the ways of salvation, we now pray to you Lord, look upon us and upon these your servants who are about to enter upon the work of the *diakonia*<sup>8</sup> for the honor and glory of your holy name; strengthen and empower them, establish a mighty and steadfast angel beside their life so that, in steadfastness and much endurance and fear of you, having provided utmost assistance to your holy church and all those who fear your holy name, they might obtain help and ministry from you and not fall from your eternal goods but may find mercy and favor before you by the ministration of your Christ.

For yours it is to show mercy and compassion and to save, O our God, and to you do we send up glory and thanksgiving together with your only-begotten Son and your all-holy and good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever.

<sup>α</sup> Dan 9:4 <sup>β</sup> Ps 55:19 <sup>γ</sup> Cf. Ps 25:16 <sup>δ</sup> Eph 4:12 <sup>ε</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 6:4 <sup>ς</sup> Rev 11:18 <sup>ζ</sup> Acts 7:46

<sup>8</sup> While one could also translate this more generally as “the work of ministry” or “the work of service”, my decision to translate it as “the work of the *diakonia*” is motivated not only by a hypothetical contextualization regarding this prayer’s original use, but also by the Arabic marginal note, on which, see below.

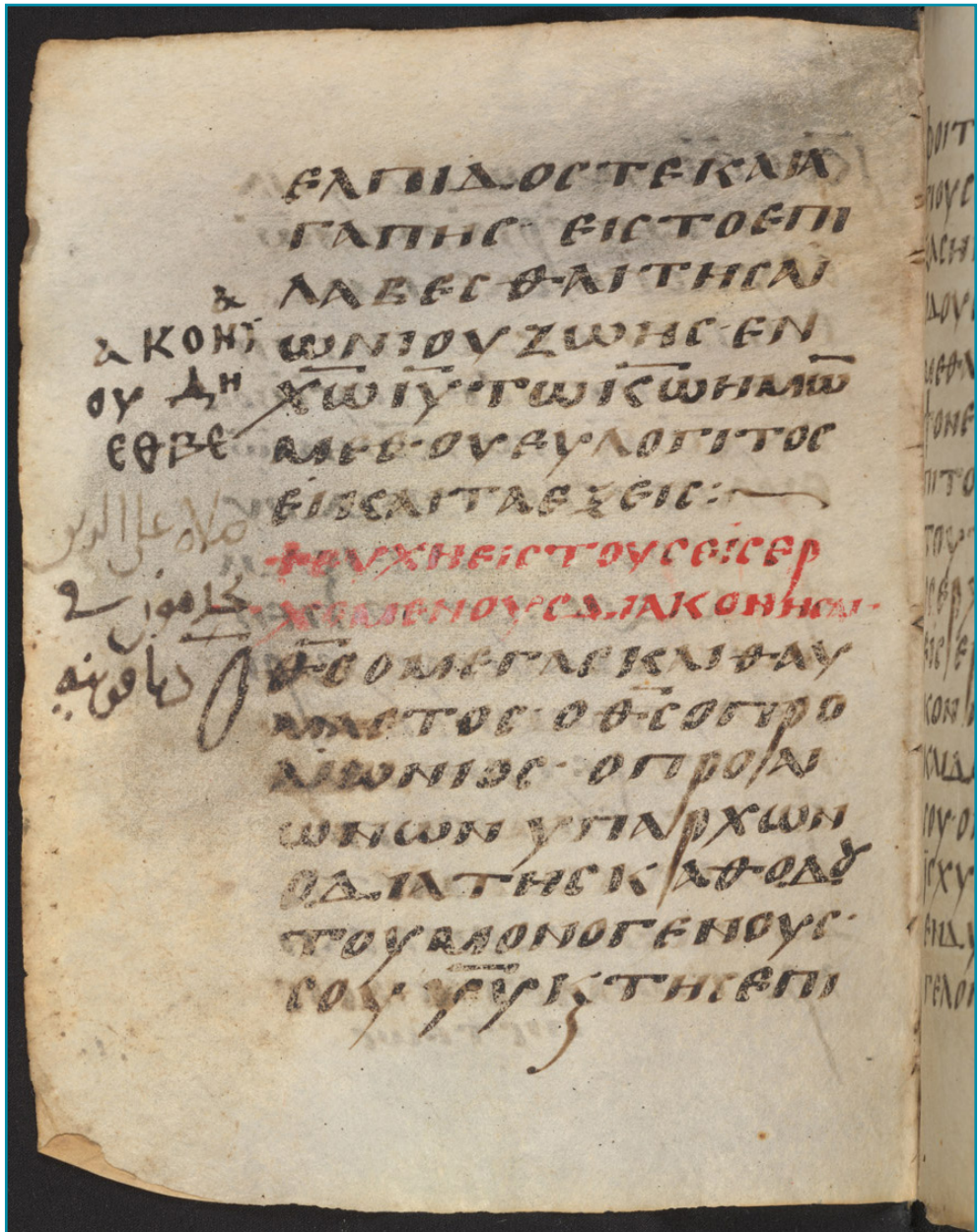



Figure 1: Beginning of diakonia prayer in Sinai gr. NF/MG 53 (eighth/ninth century), fol. 11v.  
 Photo: St Catherine's Monastery



Understood generically, the prayer could be applied to any type of service ministry. Christos Kanavas in his doctoral dissertation on this manuscript appears to assume the prayer was employed within monastic contexts. Although he does not discuss the prayer in detail, he nevertheless sends the reader to Wawryk's study on monastic initiation,<sup>9</sup> where, in fact, Wawryk does not discuss this specific prayer.<sup>10</sup> One must surmise then that Kanavas' theory of monastic origins was inspired elsewhere. Indeed, as he acknowledges in a footnote, the prayer in question did manage to be copied in some later euchologia and found its way into printed versions of the euchologion, where it can be found within rites for the appointment of monks to various offices within a monastery, namely an ecclesiarch, oikonomos, or cellarman (kellaritis).<sup>11</sup> The use of this prayer within monastic usage is not only backed up by modern printed books, but could be

<sup>9</sup> Cf. KANAVAS, *L'eucologio MG 53*, 148.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Michaël WAWRYK, *Initiatio monastica in liturgia bizantina. Officiorum schematis monastici magni et parvi necnon rasophoratus exordia et evolutio* (OCA 180), Rome 1968, 67. As noted correctly by Kanavas, the text Wawryk gives here is an Ἀκολουθία εἰς τὸ ρασοφορέσαι κοσμικόν, which is from *Paris, BnF Coislin 367*. However, an examination of the manuscript in question (fols. 163<sup>v</sup>–164<sup>v</sup>) reveals that this rite is completely different from the text in the Sinai euchologion. See: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b11004947g/f167.item>.  The specific prayer in *Coislin 367* is also mentioned briefly in the more recent work of Leonard-Daniel OLTEAN, *Devenir moine à Byzance. Coutumes sociales, règles monastiques et rituels liturgiques* [PhD dissertation École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris – Aristotle University, Thessaloniki], 2017, 125. 297. The dissertation has since been published as Daniel OLTEAN, *Devenir moine à Byzance. Coutumes sociales, règles monastiques et rituels liturgiques* (OLA 291/Bibliothèque de *Byzantion* 24), Leuven et al. 2020.

<sup>11</sup> The prayer was already noted by Jean MORIN, *Commentarius de sacris Ecclesiae ordinationibus, secundum antiquos et recentiores, Latinos, graecos, Syros, et Babylonios, in tres partes distinctus*, Paris 1655, 116 f. The prayer can be found in an early-sixteenth century manuscript from Cyprus, Larnaca, *Metropolis of Kition 18*, on which, see Gregorios A. IOANNIDES, *A New Manuscript of the Scribe Ambrosios from the Monastery of Andrion: Larnaca, Metropolis of Kition 18*, in: Charalambos DENDRINOS – Ilias GIARENIS (eds.), *Bibliophilos. Books and Learning in the Byzantine World* [FS Costas N. CONSTANTINIDES] (ByA 39), Berlin 2021, 223–243, here: 231: “Τάξις γινομένη ἐπὶ προχειρίσεως ἐκκλησιάρχου ἢ οἰκονόμου μονῆς ἢ κελλαρίτου”. See also, for example, *Εὐχολόγιον τὸ μέγα ἐν ᾧ περιέχονται κατὰ τάξιν αἱ τῶν ἑπτὰ μυστηρίων ἀκολουθίαι [...]*, ed. by Nikolaos GLYKYS, Venice 1802, 216: “Τάξις γινομένη ἐπὶ χειροτονία ἐκκλησιάρχου ἢ κελλαρίτου”, or *Εὐχολόγιον [...]*, ed. by ID., Venice, 1839, 185 f.: “Τάξις γινομένη ἐπὶ χειροτονία ἧτοι προχειρίσει ἐκκλησιάρχου ἢ οἰκονόμου μονῆς ἢ κελλαρίτου”.



implied by the location of the prayer within the Sinai manuscript itself, where it follows immediately after a set of prayers for monastic initiation. The theory that we are dealing with monastic obediences here is logical. In the Life of the eleventh-century Philaret of Calabria, for example, we see the term *diakonia* being used precisely for roles of service to the monastery, like taking care of cows, horses, or farming.<sup>12</sup> Tempting as it may be, the view that this prayer represents a monastic rite has a number of problems. First, the Sinai manuscript was not isolated to monastic use, as clearly indicated by its inclusion of marriage rites later in the codex.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the monastic prayers that proceed the *diakonia* prayer are all centered on the initiation of a single monastic brother (*ἀδελφός*), whereas the wording of this prayer is formulated for plural servants of God (“*τοὺς δούλους σου τούτους ...*”), a generic expression used widely in liturgy to refer to faithful independent of clerical or monastic state. The switch from the singular (in the preceding monastic initiation rites) to the plural in this prayer indicates that it should not necessarily be considered as part of the former. Furthermore, an examination of the broader text reveals nothing that definitively identifies the prayer as monastic or non-monastic in origin. The block of prayers that follow is for the Hours, beginning with the *Εὐχὴ λυχνικοῦ*, which is commonly found in both monastic and non-monastic euchologia, and which further indicates that one must be cautious in associating this *diakonia* prayer too strictly with the purposes of the prayers that come either before or after it in the manuscript. It could simply have nothing to do with either monastic initiation or the liturgy of the hours.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Enrico MORINI, Greek Monasticism in Southern Italy. The Encounter Between East and West, in: Ines A. MURZAKU (ed.), *Monastic Tradition in Eastern Christianity and the Outside World. A Call for Dialogue* (Eastern Christian Studies 19), Leuven 2013, 69–101, here: 82; ID., *Nilo. Vita di s. Filareto da Seminara*, Reggio Calabria 1993, 96–98.

<sup>13</sup> On the marriage rites of this codex, see Gabriel RADLE, *The Nuptial Rites in Two Rediscovered Sinai First-Millennium Euchologies*, in: Bert GROEN et al. (eds.), *Rituals and Rites of the Christian East. Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy, Lebanon, 10–15 June, 2012* (Eastern Christian Studies 22), Leuven 2014, 303–315.

Most significant of all, however, is that the existence of formalized liturgical services for the appointment of internal monastic responsibilities is otherwise unattested in euchologia of the time period, and the practice only seems to come about many centuries later in isolated manuscripts,<sup>14</sup> so much so that the attested modern use of this prayer is even sporadic in the printed editions, indicating that this use was not universal even among post-Byzantine Orthodox communities.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the modern version of the prayer has undergone a change from the plural to the singular precisely to make it relevant for appointing individuals to specific monastic offices held by a single person. Given how common it was for individual prayers in early euchologia to be repurposed for entirely different uses by the late Byzantine period,<sup>16</sup> it is most prudent to seek out the original meaning of this prayer not in its later manifestations, but within the socio-historical context of the Eastern Mediterranean Christian world that produced the ritual occasion for such *diakonia* prayers most likely at some point within the late antique period prior to the copying of the oldest extant specimens in the eighth-/ninth-century Sinai and Barberini euchologia.

The Sinai euchologion itself contains a clue as to its original purpose in its Arabic marginal note. Although this note was clearly written at a later date to help facilitate a user who likely did not use Greek beyond formal liturgical prayers, it nevertheless provides important insight into how the prayer was understood at a time prior to the manuscript falling out of use and in which at least some degree of continuity in the purposes of these prayers can be cautiously presumed. The Arabic marginal note reads:

<sup>14</sup> In Dmitrievskij's large overview of euchologia, he notes the existence of this service – albeit without noting this specific prayer – for manuscripts dating to the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries, cf. Alexej A. ДМИТРИЕВСКИЈ, Описание литургических рукописей, хранящихся в библиотеках Православного Востока, vol. 2, Kiev 1901, 667. 866.

<sup>15</sup> The rite is missing from the earliest known printed euchologion, Venice (1545), as well as others, such as *Εὐχολόγιον*, ed. by Pietro PINELLI, Venice 1662.


<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Gabriel RADLE, When Infants Begin to Toddle. A Liturgical Rite of Passage in the Greco-Arabic Manuscript Sinai NF/MG 53, in: BBGG 3 (2014) 159–168, here: 165 f.; ID., The Veiling of Women in Byzantium. Liturgy, Hair, and Identity in a Medieval Rite of Passage, in: Spec. 94 (2019) 1070–1115, here: 1109–1114.

صلاة على الذين يخدمون في ذياقونية <sup>17</sup>	Prayer on those who serve in a <i>diakonia</i> .
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The Arabic-speaking scribe has taken the Greek *diakonēsai* in the title and turned it into a transliterated Greek noun, *diakonia*. While one could interpret this as an attempt to maintain the rich biblical / theological sense of *diakonia* to simply say “those who serve in a ministry (*diakonia*)”, similar to the way many English-speaking Christians continue to transliterate biblical and patristic Greek theological terms, the use of a Greek substantive here could also indicate that the scribe was familiar with the term *diakonia* as a proper name, whether that be for something involving a monastery’s estate management, or for the type of religious charitable confraternity popular in many cities of the late antique Mediterranean that was devoted to serving the destitute. The service provided by these individuals is described in the prayer as being given broadly – namely, to the church and all those who fear God’s name – without any explicit mention of a monastery or brotherhood.

The idea that the word *diakonēsai* of the title could allude to membership in a charitable confraternity is buoyed up by the later euchologion, *Coislin* 213, copied in Constantinople in the year 1027, which contains within it a prayer for inducting a new brother into a confraternity associated with the charitable bath of the Blachernae (Εὐχὴ εἰς τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀδελφὸν εἰς τὸ ἅγιον λοῦ(σ)μα)<sup>18</sup>, discussed further below. The primary request of this prayer’s epiclesis is precisely for God to bless an individual “who has come forward to serve you (τὸν προσελθόντα διακονῆσαι σοι)”, a formulation that rings quite similar to the Sinai text’s intended purpose of blessing individuals “entering to serve”. Yet the ambiguity of the Sinai text and its later documented uses within monasticism leave its original purpose somewhat vague, and therefore invite comparison with the Barberini euchologion before further conclusions can be drawn.

<sup>17</sup> *Sinai gr. NF/MG* 53, fol. 11<sup>v</sup>. My thanks to my graduate assistant, Arsany Paul, for transcribing and translating the marginal note.

<sup>18</sup> ДМИТРИЕВСКИЈ, Описание, 1051. To see the digital reproduction of this portion of the manuscript (fol. 209<sup>v</sup>), see the webpage: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10038010r/f209.item>. 

The Barberini euchologion from the end of the eighth century contains a different prayer that bears an almost identical title to the one found in the Sinai manuscript. According to this Italo-Greek manuscript, the prayer is an *Εὐχή εἰς τοὺς εἰσερχομένους εἰς διακονίας*, which the editors of the Barberini Codex translated as “Preghiera per coloro che assumono un servizio”<sup>19</sup>, or in English, “Prayer for those who are taking on a service”<sup>20</sup>. The prayer reads:

<i>Εὐχή εἰς τοὺς εἰσερχομένους εἰς διακονίας</i> Barb. gr. 336, 234 (BEL.S 80, 215; PARENTI – VELKOVSKA)	
<p>Δέσποτα Κύριε ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐπαγγελία καὶ ἀμεταμέλητος τοῖς χαρίσμασιν, ὁ καλέσας τὸ πλάσμα σου κλήσει ἁγία καὶ συναγαγὼν τοὺς δούλους σου εἰς τὴν ἐπουράνιον σου ταύτην καὶ ἀγγελικὴν πολιτείαν, αὐτὸς σύνεργος αὐτῶν γενοῦ καὶ ἐνδυνάμωσον εἰς τὸ διακονεῖν τῇ ἁγία σου ἐκκλησίᾳ· αὕξων αὐτῶν ἐκ δικαίων πόνων συναδομένων ἕκαστον καρπὸν πρὸς εὐαρέστησιν τῆς σῆς ἀγαθότητος· καὶ ἡμῶν δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς ῥύθμισον πρὸς πᾶσαν εὐταξίαν καὶ κατάστασιν εἰρηνικὴν ἐν τῷ ἀνασχέσθαι ἀλλήλων ἐν ταπεινώσει ἀληθινῇ καὶ ἀνηποκρίτῳ, χαριζόμενος πᾶσιν ἡμῖν τὴν ἐπουράνιον σου βασιλείαν. Ἐλέει καὶ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ μονογενοῦς.</p>	<p>Sovereign, Lord our God, faithful in promises and steadfast in gifts, you who called your handiwork with a holy vocation, and gathered your servants in this your celestial and angelic organization, may you accompany their work and strengthen them for serving your holy Church, increasing each fruit gathered by them through righteous labors that are pleasing to your goodness; direct our souls toward every moderation and condition of peace to sustain one another with true and unfeigned humility, granting to all of us your heavenly kingdom. Through the mercy and love for mankind of your only begotten (Son, together with...).</p>

This prayer has a complex history that remains insufficiently studied. It continued to be copied in some later euchologia, as noted by Passarelli in

<sup>19</sup> PARENTI – VELKOVSKA, *Leucologio Barberini*, 364.

<sup>20</sup> In their Russian translation of the Barberini euchologion, the editors maintained this more general sense of *diakonia*, “Молитва о поступающих на служение”, in: PARENTI – VELKOVSKA, *Евхологий Барберини гр. 336, 206*.

his edition of the tenth-/eleventh-century *Grottaferrata Γ.β. VII*,<sup>21</sup> and made it into some printed euchologia, where it is given a similar title, *Εὐχὴ εἰς τὸν εἰσερχόμενον εἰς διακονίαν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν*, or “Prayer for those entering upon ecclesiastical service”. Here, the emphasis – missing from the Barberini codex – is on *ecclesiastical* service. Today, the text is used by some Greek Orthodox bishops when they wish to bless individuals entering upon some church service, such as that of an acolyte, and it is often performed with the laying on of hands, giving it almost the sense of being a minor order. This *diakonia* prayer was also famously used in 2016 by the Greek Orthodox Pope of Alexandria, Theodoros II, when, after consecrating one deaconess, he then prayed this *diakonia* text over a group of five women, three nuns and two catechists, who were charged with helping in the missionary life of the Metropolis of Katanga.<sup>22</sup>

Contemporary usage does not associate the rite specifically with the monastic state. Yet starting in the eleventh century, different redactions of the prayer appear in some euchologia and schematologia as part of monastic initiation. One of the first to do so is the euchologion *Paris, BnF Coislin 213*, a celebrated liturgical manuscript owned by the chaplain of the patriarchal oratories of Constantinople and the first extant euchologion copied at the Byzantine capital.<sup>23</sup> Here, the *diakonia* prayer appears in an altered and expanded form as a prayer for monastic vesting.<sup>24</sup> By the twelfth century, manuscripts from the local Siculo-Calabrian tradition include this version of the prayer and apply it to “those entering the monastery” (*εὐχὴ πρὸς τοὺς εἰσιόντας ἐν μοναστηρίῳ*).<sup>25</sup> As discussed in a 2011

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Gaetano PASSARELLI, *L'Euclologio Cryptense Γβ VII (Ανάλεκτα Βλατάδων 36)*, Thessaloniki 1982, 134 (§ 211). Note, however, that it is difficult to know whether the prayer served the same purpose by this point, on which, see below.

<sup>22</sup> See the official description of the rite here: *The Orthodox Christians of Kolwezi Wished the Missionary Patriarch for His Nameday* (18 February 2017). [↗](#)

<sup>23</sup> For recent discussion and bibliography, see Elena VELKOVSKA, *Rites and Prayers for New Year's λιτή* in the Euchologion *Paris Coislin 213*, in: Stefano PARENTI – Massimo PAMPALONI (eds.), *Worship. Studies in Memory of Robert F. TAFT, SJ* (OCA 310), Rome 2021, 299–329, esp. fn. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Miguel ARRANZ, *L'Euclologio costantinopolitano agli inizi del secolo XI*, Rome 1996, 424 f.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. André JACOB, *Un euchologe du Saint-Sauveur “in Lingua Phari” de Messine. Le Bodleianus Auct. E.5.13*, in: *BIHBR 50* (1980) 283–364, here: 346 (§ 53.1); *Vatican gr. 1872*, fol. 143<sup>r</sup>. Note that both of these manuscripts are each fol-

study, Vincenzo Ruggieri notes that this redaction of the prayer appears in the life of the sixth-century St Nicholas of Sion.<sup>26</sup> There, we find the text in a scene in which the child Nicholas' uncle hands him an euchologion to study and then prays over him at the martyrion of St John outside of Myra.<sup>27</sup> In their translation, Igor and Nancy Ševčenko interpret this as the beginning of Nicholas' "monastic profession"<sup>28</sup>, and Ruggieri agrees that the scene captured in the vita represents an embryonic rite for monastic initiation as used already in the sixth century and which included this specific prayer along with a rite for handing over an euchologion to a monastic

lowed by a rare prayer entitled *Εὐχὴ εἰς τοὺς παραδιδόντας διακονίαν* (literally, prayer for those handing over *diakonia*), the purpose of which is not entirely clear, although, as the text of the prayer refers, it is intended for one "offering the fruit of *diakonia*" (*τὸν προσφερόμενον καρπὸν τῆς διακονίας*) which the priest requests for God to accept on his noetic and blessed altar (*ἐπὶ τὸ νοερὸν καὶ εὐλογημένον σου θυσιαστήριον*), which seems to imply that the prayer could be intended to be recited while an individual is making an offering of sorts at the church altar. In such a case, the *diakonia* in question here could be seen as an offering to the monastery, whether that be of someone who is relinquishing personal property after entering a monastery (if we interpret it alongside the prayer that precedes it) or perhaps even the custom of monastic tenant farmers offering a portion of the harvest, given that *diakonia* in some contexts could refer to a monastery's moveable and immovable property. These suggestions remain casual hypotheses, as this prayer requires a proper study. For the text, see *ibid.*, 346 f. (§ 53.2). Cf. *Vatican gr. 1872*, fols. 143<sup>v</sup>–143<sup>v</sup> and *Vatican gr. 1875*, fols. 131<sup>v</sup>–132<sup>r</sup>. Note, however, that Jacob seems to have been unaware at the time of the prayer's appearance in *Grottaferrata Γ.β. VII*, on which, see PASSARELLI, *L'Eucologio Cryptense*, 134 f. (§ 212). On the custom of monastic tenant farmers offering first fruits, albeit without reference to Southern Italy, see Gesa SCHENKE, *Monastic Control over Agriculture and Farming. New Evidence from the Egyptian Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit Concerning the Payment of APARCHE*, in: Alain DELATTRE et al. (eds.), *Authority and Control in the Countryside. From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (Sixth–Tenth Century)* (Leiden Studies in Islam and Society 9), Leiden – Boston 2018, 420–431.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Vincenzo RUGGIERI, *Vita Nicolai Sionitae. Tracce eucologiche e ambiguità teologiche*, in: *ByZ 104* (2011) 705–718, here: 708–711. That same year, the editors of the Barberini euchologion came to the same realization, as they note in their commentary to the third edition and Russian translation of the codex that the prayer appears in this vita. Cf. PARENTI – VELKOVSKA, *Евхологий Барберини гр.* 336, 59.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ihor ŠEVČENKO – Nancy P. ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas of Sion* (The Archbishop Iakovos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources 10), Brookline/MA 1984, 26 f.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



initiate.<sup>29</sup> For comparison, I provide the text of the prayer as recorded in the Barberini euchologion and that conserved in the Life of St Nicholas of Sion:

<p>Barb. gr. 336, 234 (BEL.S 80, 215; PARENTI – VELKOVSKA) (late-eighth century)</p>	<p>Life of St Nicholas of Sion <i>Sinai gr. 525</i> (ByZ 104, 709; RUGGIERI) (tenth/eleventh century)</p>
<p>Δέσποτα Κύριε ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐπαγγελία καὶ ἀμεταμέλητος τοῖς χαρίσμασιν,  ὁ καλέσας τὸ πλάσμα σου κλήσει ἀγία καὶ συναγαγὼν τοὺς δούλους σου εἰς τὴν ἐπουράνιον σου ταύτην καὶ ἀγγελικὴν πολιτείαν,  αὐτὸς σύνεργος αὐτῶν γενοῦ καὶ ἐνδυναμώσον εἰς τὸ διακονεῖν τῇ ἀγίᾳ σου ἐκκλησίᾳ· αὐξῶν αὐτῶν ἐκ δικαίων πόνων συναδομένων ἕκαστον καρπὸν πρὸς εὐαρέστησιν τῆς σῆς ἀγαθότητος· καὶ ἡμῶν δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς ρύθμισον πρὸς πᾶσαν εὐταξίαν καὶ κατάστασιν εἰρηνικὴν ἐν τῷ ἀνασχέσθαι ἀλλήλων ἐν ταπεινώσει ἀληθινῇ καὶ ἀνηποκρίτῳ, χαριζόμενος πᾶσιν ἡμῖν τὴν ἐπουράνιον σου βασιλείαν. Ἐλέει καὶ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ μονογενοῦς.</p>	<p>Ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐπαγγελίαις καὶ ἀμεταβλήτοις χαρίσμασιν καὶ ἀκατάληπτος φιλανθρωπία, ὁ καλέσας τὸ πλάσμα σου κλήσει ἀγία καὶ συναγαγὼν τοὺς δούλους σου εἰς τὴν ἀγγελικὴν ταύτην καὶ οὐράνιον ζωὴν,  δὸς καὶ τούτῳ βίον εὐσχήμονα, πολιτείαν ἐνάρετον καὶ ἀκατάγνωστον, καὶ πᾶσαν ἐργασίαν τῶν ἀρεσκόντων σοι, ἵνα ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πολιτευσάμενος ἄξιος γένηται τῆς λαμπρότητος τῶν ἀγίων καὶ τῆς βασι- λείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ σου.</p>

<sup>29</sup> Cf. RUGGIERI, *Vita Nicolai Sionitae*, 706–711.

As can be seen, the vita version largely overlaps with the Barberini *diakonia* prayer in its first six lines, after which the prayers are distinct. According to Ruggieri, the vita contains the original redaction of the prayer as a rite of monastic initiation, while the ambiguous *diakonia* prayer in the eighth-century Barberini euchologion – and by extension, that version that is maintained in contemporary practice – is a later version that was artificially stitched together.<sup>30</sup> While this chronology is possible, there are nevertheless some difficulties in the argument. The first is that the broader thrust of this portion of the vita appears less concentrated on Nicholas' monastic state and is more centered on his future liturgical service and management of the shrine. Indeed, the scene is preceded by his ordination as reader and it is followed immediately by the remark that he was ordained years later as a priest and appointed head of the shrine. Therefore, we might read some aspects of this portion of the vita, such as the handing over of an *euchologion* to the young Nicholas, as less a part of a formalized monastic initiation rite and perhaps more geared toward the author highlighting Nicholas' specific journey toward being an ordained archimandrite.

In any case, it is clear that the version of the prayer contained in the vita was used for monastic initiation, since, as Ruggieri notes, this version is found in euchologia and schematologia for this purpose. However, the claim that this rite represents a form of monastic initiation as practiced already in the sixth century is complicated by the fact that this scene is missing from important manuscript witnesses to the vita, namely, *Vatican gr. 821* and *Jerusalem Sabbas 18*.<sup>31</sup> As the most recent editors note, this entire chapter of the vita is found only in *Sinai gr. 525*, dated to the tenth or eleventh century, and might not have been part of the original sixth-century layer of the text.<sup>32</sup> In the absence of other liturgical or hagiographical sources to corroborate an early dating, it appears most prudent to acknowledge that no evidence survives of the monastic version prior to the tenth century. It may or may not have been used as a monastic initiation

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 710.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Gustav ANRICH, *Hagios Nikolaos, Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche. Texte und Untersuchungen*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1913, 6–10.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. ŠEVČENKO – ŠEVČENKO, *The Life of Saint Nicholas of Sion*, 17.

prayer already in late antiquity. But regardless of which version of the prayer came first, the fact of the matter is that the version as represented in the Barberini euchologion does not contain anything that can be definitively and exclusively described as monastic. It is not part of nor even adjacent to the monastic rites within the Barberini euchologion, and the title, like that of the Sinai manuscript, is centered on individuals entering upon *diakonia*, while the prayer links this *diakonia* with participation in a “heavenly and angelic *politeia*”.

The word *politeia* (polity, organization) has a rich history and diversity of meanings, but many late antique Christian authors often used it to denote a community of people who shared religious values and lifestyle.<sup>33</sup> As such, it became common to refer to monasticism as a type of angelic or heavenly *politeia*, which led Ruggieri to logically conclude on two occasions that the Barberini version must be monastic, most recently writing that this text was intended for “monks who take on a ministry”<sup>34</sup>, similar to Kanavas’ theory about the *diakonia* prayer in the Sinai manuscript. The term *politeia*, however, could be used more broadly in late antiquity.<sup>35</sup> As Mark Roosien recently discussed, even if Chrysostom uses the expression “angelic *politeia*” in reference to the monastic order of life, he also describes the lay liturgical assembly in identical terms.<sup>36</sup> In short, “angelic *politeia*” is not an exclusively monastic expression, but can refer in late antiquity to any community of believers that in some way anticipates or actualizes the kingdom of heaven.

Similar to the Sinai version of the prayer, the Barberini text is framed in the plural. The concept here is not one of a single person taking on an individual task, as we see in later redactions of both of these prayers, but

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Michael J. HOLLERICH, *Eusebius of Caesarea’s Commentary on Isaiah. Christian Exegesis in the Age of Constantine* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 1999, 119. 125 f.

<sup>34</sup> Vincenzo RUGGIERI, *The Water in the Basin (Embatês, Loutron) and the Byzantine Euchology*, in: *SOrCr* 21 (2017) 303–321, here: 307. Cf. *id.*, *Vita Nicolai Sionitae*, 710.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. HOLLERICH, *Eusebius of Caesarea’s Commentary on Isaiah*, 114 *et passim*.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Mark ROOSIEN, “Emulate Their Mystical Order”. Awe and Liturgy in John Chrysostom’s Angelic *πολιτεία*, in: Yannis PAPAIOGIANNAKIS (ed.), *Emotions. Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015*, vol. 9 (StPatr 83), Leuven et al. 2017, 115–130.

rather that of a group of individuals entering into an organization that serves the Church in some capacity. While both prayers are short, they concentrate their petition to God in asking him to keep these individuals “steadfast” and aid in their “endurance” in the work they are setting out to accomplish. The impression from the texts alone is that they are intended for some sort of service organization—whether liturgical, charitable, or otherwise—that multiple individuals might join and be inducted into together. As implied in the Greek text of the Sinai prayer, and made explicit in the Arabic marginal note, this Barberini prayer also appears to conceive of a *diakonia* as a specific type of organization. In order to probe the origins of these texts further, we have yet another *diakonia* prayer in the Barberini euchologion.

Just two folios before its prayer for those entering the *diakonia*, the Barberini euchologion includes an Εὐχὴ ἐπὶ διακονίας λεγομένη ἐν τῇ ἐμβάτῃ ἐκφωνητικ(ῶς), which might be translated as a “Prayer upon the *diakonia*, recited out loud in the pool”. The prayer reads:

Εὐχὴ ἐπὶ διακονίας λεγομένη ἐν τῇ ἐμβάτῃ ἐκφωνητικ(ῶς) Barb. gr. 331, 231 (BEL.S 80, 213; PARENTI – VELKOVSKA) <sup>37</sup>	
Κτίστα τῶν ὑδάτων, δημιουργὲ τῶν ἀπάντων, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ πάντα ποιῶν καὶ μετασκευάζων, μεταποίησον καὶ μετασκευάσον καὶ ἀγίασον τὸ ὕδωρ τοῦτο καὶ ἐνίσχυσον αὐτὸ κατὰ πάσης ἐπικειμένης ἐνεργείας, καὶ δὸς πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐξ αὐτοῦ χρισμένοις <sup>38</sup> εἴτε διὰ πόσεως εἴτε διὰ νίψεως ἢ ῥαντίσεως εἰς ὑγείαν ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, εἰς ἀπαλλαγὴν παντὸς πάθους καὶ πάσης νόσου. “Ὅτι ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλόανθρωπος θεὸς ὑπάρχ(εις).	Creator of waters, maker of the universe, Lord omnipotent God, who creates and transforms all things, change and transform and sanctify this water and empower it against every dangerous force, and grant to all those who use it, whether by drink or by washing or by aspersion, that it bring about healing of soul and body, the deliverance from every suffering and sickness. For you, O God, are good and lover of humankind.

<sup>37</sup> For alternatives to this text in other manuscripts and an alternative translation of the Barberini text, see also RUGGIERI, *The Water in the Basin*, 305.

<sup>38</sup> While the Barberini manuscript indicates *χρισμένοις*, which most easily could be resolved as *χρισμένοις* (literally, “anointed”), Jacob did a detailed compari-

Already in 1986, André Jacob studied this prayer and noted that it can be found in Syriac sources for the blessing of waters at Theophany,<sup>39</sup> a topic recently revisited by Ruggieri.<sup>40</sup> These scholars primarily attempted a philological analysis (Jacob) or a material analysis of the probable type of pool / basin that the prayer refers to (Ruggieri). Yet the authors come to contrasting views about the uses of this prayer. Jacob interprets this a blessing upon waters to be used for the sick. Ruggieri points out that this is entirely conjectural, since the title makes no such claim and the prayer requests healing in both body and soul. He goes on to posit that the prayer functioned to bless waters in a basin—not a pool—that was used for a variety of purposes and likely housed in a monastery, given his previous interpretation of the other Barberini *diakonia* prayer as a monastic text, as we have seen above.

A far different interpretation was first suggested by Paul Magdalino in his 1990 study, *Church, Bath and Diakonia in Medieval Constantinople*.<sup>41</sup> There, Magdalino famously charted the importance of the charitable institution at Constantinople known as the *diakonia*. Among the charitable activities with which *diakoniai* involved themselves, the running of charitable baths appears to have been a particularly noteworthy element. In a footnote to his study, Magdalino pointed out that the *diakonia* prayer “recited out loud in the pool” that is found in the Barberini euchologion must have functioned within the context of such lay charitable organizations. The *diakonia* in the title of the prayer would not be a generic reference to “service”, whether monastic or otherwise, but rather the charitable institution that housed such a bath and the confraternity of the same name that operated it. Following suit, in their third edition of the Barberini euchologion, Stefano Parenti and Elena Velkovska included a note for this prayer indi-

son to other texts and argued for a likely corruption in this text from an original *χρωμένοις* or *κεχρημένοις*, which I follow in the above translation. See André JACOB, Note sur la prière *Κτίστα τῶν ὑδάτων* de l’Eucologe Barberini, in: Byz. 56 (1986) 139–147.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Cf. RUGGIERI, The Water in the Basin, esp. 304–308.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Paul MAGDALINO, Church, Bath, and Diakonia in Medieval Constantinople, in: Rosemary MORRIS (ed.), *Church and People in Byzantium*, Birmingham 1990, 165–188, here: 179, fn. 63a.

cating for the reader to consult Magdalino's chapter.<sup>42</sup> If a connection truly exists between this *diakonia* prayer and the charitable confraternity of the *diakonia*, this brings repercussions for how we might decipher the history of the other *diakonia* prayers and their evolution across time. A prayer literally translated as being for "those entering upon *diakonia*", as in the Barberini, or those "entering to serve (*diakonēsai*)", as in the Sinai manuscript, could more contextually be translated as prayers for those beginning to enter upon the work of a *diakonia* institution.

More recently, Claudia Rapp has drawn attention to networks of non-biological kinship in late antiquity and Byzantium,<sup>43</sup> including in spiritual confraternities.<sup>44</sup> She likewise proposes that many prayers within euchologia were connected to such organizations of lay piety, drawing particular attention to the rites of the confraternity at Blachernae that are conserved in the Constantinopolitan Coislin euchologion that Magdalino had previously highlighted.<sup>45</sup> While her publications thus far on the topic of confraternities have not touched upon the prayers found in the earliest euchologia discussed here, in lectures, Rapp has likewise agreed that the *diakonia* prayers in the early euchologia make most sense in the context of lay confraternities, as opposed to monasticism, and proposes, for example, that the text in Sinai gr. NF/MG 53 could be described as a *Gebet für die Aufnahme in eine karitative Laienbruderschaft (diakonia)*<sup>46</sup>, which is to say, a rite for admitting new members into such a confraternity. That the *diakonia* prayers represent a sort of initiation rite into a confraternity also helps to make sense out of their original emphasis on the plural, in contrast to their later use of the singular when they are employed for other contexts. As historians and ritual theorists alike would point out, from the middle

<sup>42</sup> Cf. PARENTI – VELKOVSKA, Евхологий Барберини гр. 336, 59.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. CLAUDIA RAPP, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium. Monks, Laymen, and Christian Ritual* (Onassis Series in Hellenic Culture), New York 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 17–21. 68; EAD., *Christian Piety in Late Antiquity*.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. EAD., *Christian Piety in Late Antiquity*, 179–180; EAD., *Brother-Making*, 18. Cf. MAGDALINO, *Church, Bath, and Diakonia*, 188, fn. 6. See also above, fn. 18.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. CLAUDIA RAPP, *Ritueller Verbrüderung: Gab es im Mittelalter gleichgeschlechtliche Ehen?* (ÖAW ScienceBites 2021). [🔗](#) This was likewise affirmed at a lecture she gave in June 2018, "Creating Community Through Prayers" at the workshop *Studying Byzantine Prayer Books. Manuscripts, Liturgy, and Society* at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.



ages to today, induction into confraternities is often done through rites of passage that involve multiple persons entering together.

While a detailed analysis of the early *diakonia* texts thus far already points to their likely origin within the late antique charitable *diakonai*, given the complexity of the liturgical scholarship on these texts, the continuing claims about their monastic associations, and the later uses of these prayers for a variety of different purposes, it is wise to explore further the idea that these prayers were used in origin for such confraternities. Thus, we may turn briefly to reviewing—admittedly in a superficial manner—the general history of the *diakonai* and their relationship to Christian ritual in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages before attempting to further contextualize these early euchologia prayers.

### *Diakonia Prayers in Context*

The *diakonia* was a well-established institution of several regions of the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean world. *Diakonai* (Latin: *diakonae*) have been extensively studied in the history of early medieval Rome, in the classic works of, among others, Henri-Irénée Marrou,<sup>47</sup> Ottorino Bertolini,<sup>48</sup> Ugo Falesiedi,<sup>49</sup> and Raimund Hermes,<sup>50</sup> most recently summarized and developed further in contemporary studies of Philipp Winterhager and Maya Maskarinec.<sup>51</sup> The study of Roman *diakonai* reveals quite clearly that they were – like many other religious phenomena in the city of

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Henri-Irénée MARROU, L'origine orientale des diaconies romaines, in: Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire 57 (1940) 95–142.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ottorino BERTOLINI, Per la storia delle diaconie romane nell'alto medioevo sino alla fine del secolo VIII, in: ASRSP 70 (1947) 1–145.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ugo FALESIEDI, Le diaconie. I servizi assistenziali nella Chiesa antica (SuPa 8), Rome 1995.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Raimud HERMES, Die stadtrömischen Diakonien, in: RQ 91 (1996) 1–120.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Philipp WINTERHAGER, The *diakonae* of Early Medieval Rome. From “Greek” to “Roman”, from “Private” to “Papal”?, in: Endowment Studies 3 (2019) 90–132; Maya MASKARINEC, Foreign Saints at Home in Eighth- and Ninth-Century Rome. The Patrocinia of Diaconiae, Xenodochia and Greek Monasteries, in: Stanislava KUZMOVÁ et al. (eds.), Cuius patrocinio tota Gaudet regio. Saints' Cults and the Dynamics of Regional Cohesion (Bibliotheca Hagiotheca. Series Colloquia 3), Zagreb 2014, 21–37; EAD., City of Saints. Rebuilding Rome in the Early Middle Ages (The Middle Ages Series), Philadelphia/PA 2018, 74–99.

that period – an importation from the Christian East. Many of the Roman *diakonai* were located within the “Greek” quarter of the city in the region between the Roman Forum and Tiber River, and *diakonai* were often associated with churches dedicated to non-Latin, “Eastern” saints. *Diakonai* can be documented for churches including San Teodoro, Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Santa Maria Antiqua, and San Giorgio in Velabro, among many others.

As Winterhager most recently argues, these Roman *diakonai* appear to be linked with Byzantine aristocratic patronage, which was then replaced by papal sponsorship around the eighth and ninth centuries within the context of post-Byzantine Rome. He leaves largely unexplored the nature of those who officiated the *diakonai* referred to in Roman sources, including the epigraphy of Santa Maria in Cosmedin (fig. 2), although he does reject the older tendency of associating these individuals too strictly with either the ordained diaconate or monasteries.<sup>52</sup> The *diakonai* provisioned the poor, as well as travelers, and seem to have assumed a particular importance in the absence

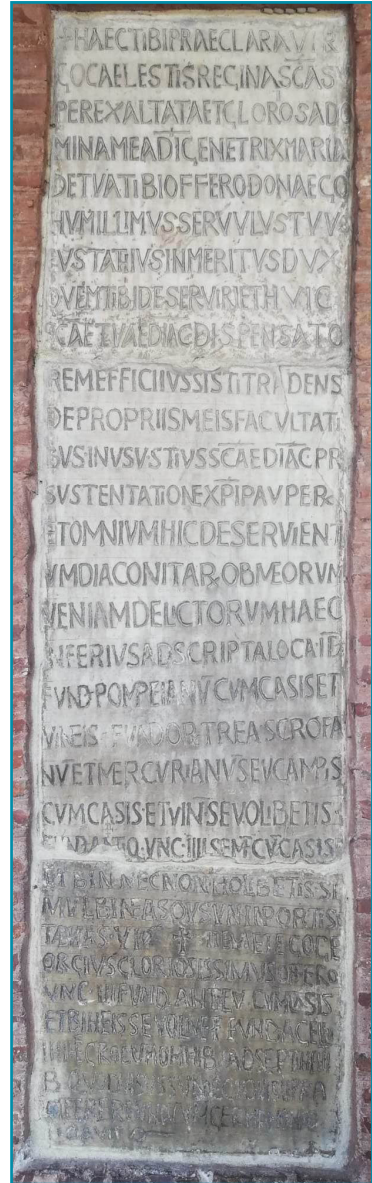


Figure 2: Eighth-century marble inscription at Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome, including reference to those in charge of the *diakonia*: “[...] pr[o] [s]ustentatione XP(ist)i pauper(um) [e]t omnium hic deservent[i]um diaconitar(um)” (lines 12–15). | Photo: Nicoletta Borgia Al Bdeivi

<sup>52</sup> Cf. WINTERHAGER, *The diaconiae of Early Medieval Rome*. For the epigraphy, see Flavia DE RUBEIS, *Epigrafi a Roma dall’età classica all’alto medioevo*, in: Maria S. ARENA et al. (eds.), *Roma. Dall’antichità al medioevo. Archeologia e storia nel museo nazionale romano Crypta Balbi*, Rome 2001, 104–121, here: 119 f., fn. 11, and especially Alfredo IANNELLO, *Le proprietà fondiarie della diakonia romana di S. Maria in Cosmedin nel secolo VIII. Una lettura dell’epigrafe di donazione dei fratelli Eustazione e Giorgio*, in: *Archeologia nel Mediterraneo*, Rome 2000, 405–416.

of a reliable grain dole.<sup>53</sup> They also sponsored ritualized bathing,<sup>54</sup> a topic we will return to below.

In addition to Rome, the cities of Naples and Ravenna both boasted a Santa Maria in Cosmedin church from the Byzantine era. While it has been argued that the title “cosmedin” was simply related to such churches being “elegant” (*κοσμίδιον*),<sup>55</sup> in reality this name can be historically connected to the fifth-century Kosmidion church of Constantinople,<sup>56</sup> dedicated to Sts. Cosmas and Damian, which was associated with charitable activity, especially medical care, as well as a number of miraculous healings.<sup>57</sup> This would not be an exceptional case of a Constantinopolitan site lending a name to a place in Italy at this time, since the portion of the Aventine Hill in Rome facing the Greek quarter and adjacent to Santa Maria in Cosmedin was likewise known as the Blachernae (*ad Balcernas* or *Balchernas*),<sup>58</sup> the very area of Constantinople where the Kosmidion was located.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the Kosmidion in Constantinople and the church of the Theotokos at Blachernae appear to have shared a bath, which, as we have seen above, was still associated with rituals surrounding a charitable confraternity in the eleventh century.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the *diakonia* of Santa Maria in Cosmedin provides an additional link between the sites of the Kosmidion and the Blachernae, joined together in this Roman *diakonia*, named in honor of both the Virgin Mary (Blachernae) and the medical healing saints (Kos-

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Hendrik W. DEY, *Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia* and monasteries: “social security” and the meaning of monasticism in early medieval Rome, in: *EMEu* 16 (2008) 398–422, here: 405 f.


<sup>54</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, esp. fn. 20.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Andrew J. EKONOMOU, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes. Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752*, Lanham/MD 2007, 42. The confusion actually comes from a pun used in the *Liber pontificalis*, on which, see MASKARINEC, *City of Saints*, 96.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Alessandro TADDEI, *A Journey of Men and Names. Constantinople’s Kosmidion and Its Italian Replicas*, in: *Convivium* 1 (2014) 20–31.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Mercedes LÓPEZ SALVÁ, *Actividad asistencial y terapéutica en el Kosmidion de Constantinopla*, in: Pedro BÁDENAS et al. (eds.), *Epigeios Ouranos. El cielo en la tierra. Estudios sobre el monasterio bizantino*, Madrid 1997, 131–145.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. EKONOMOU, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 42 f.

<sup>59</sup> On the location, see bibliography at: <https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1958.106.5590>. 

<sup>60</sup> See above, fn. 44.

midion),<sup>61</sup> and suggests that the Blachernae confraternity practices attested in the eleventh century Coislin euchologion began, at least in part, at a much earlier date than this oldest witness given that they appear to have made such an impact beyond the Byzantine capital already at this early date.

Although much has been written about the *diakoniai* as Roman charitable organizations, little is known, however, about the early history of these very institutions, since our first extant Roman records about them start only with the beginnings of papal interaction with them at the end of the seventh century, although from the earlier letters of Gregory the Great we do have some allusions to the *diakoniai* and can trace them in cities with a strong Byzantine presence at the time.<sup>62</sup> More recent work has been done on the Eastern Mediterranean where the institution was born and flourished. According to the non-Chalcedonian Syriac church historian, John of Ephesus, the origins of the *diakonia* institution lie with a certain layman in the city of Antioch by the name of Paul. John of Ephesus states that Paul would “carry poor and old and sick persons by night” and “bathe and anoint them, bring them to drink, and give small coins, as was suited for them each”<sup>63</sup>. Paul’s family members joined him, and others secretly went on to collaborate with him. Citing John again in a separate work on Paul of Antioch:

Even many of the great and eminent men of the city, having put off their apparel and clothed themselves in poor men’s apparel and hoods [...] would thus put straps on their necks and carry the chairs of the sick and poor [...] and perform all the ministrations to them, while in their earnest zeal they gladly spent money for each man, according to his state in life.<sup>64</sup>

John of Ephesus claims that Paul went on to found *diakoniai* in other cities, including the capital of Constantinople, and elsewhere in his history,

<sup>61</sup> Cf. MASKARINEC, *City of Saints*, 78 f. and notes.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. WINTERHAGER, *The diaconiae of Early Medieval Rome*, 94, 97, fn. 10.

<sup>63</sup> As cited in CANER, *Charitable Ministrations (Diakoniai)*, 45. Cf. JOHN OF EPHE-SUS, *Life of Paul of Antioch* (PO 18, 672 f.; BROOKS).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

John describes yet another Syrian individual, a certain Ishoq, who left his prominence in society to join a “*diakonia* that bathes the sick at night”<sup>65</sup>.

While John of Ephesus’ testimony on the origins of the institution is by no means exhaustive, it offers precious evidence of what early *diakonai* did. They offered opportunities for economically stable lay individuals of society to have direct access to the destitute through physical contact and service of the needy, including through the act of bathing. As Daniel Caner’s recent work on these texts notes, “it is apparent that John did not consider the value of participating in such *diakonai* to be merely that of helping the sick or poor. He focuses on the charity *provider*, not the receivers; *diakonia* interests [John of Ephesus] primarily as a spiritual exercise, the object of which was achieving humility [before] God [...] interacting with the anonymous sick and poor provided a means of expressing one’s humility and, in effect, of humbling oneself”. Thus, as Caner likewise notes, the Syrian *diakonai* described by John of Ephesus provided a middle solution for a late antique Christian world that glorified strict asceticism.<sup>66</sup> The *diakonia* afforded non-monastic lay individuals the ability to stay in their families and marriages and maintain their own economic status, while at the same time allowing them to humble themselves through direct interaction and service to the most lowly of society.

If *diakonai* started within a miaphysite context as John of Ephesus claims, that did not dissuade the institution’s adoption within Chalcedonian circles. *Diakonai* took off at Constantinople. Indeed, as Peter Brown and others have argued, charitable endeavors became a hallmark of competition between various Christian factions within important urban centers of late antiquity, a form of one-upmanship whereby greater charitable zeal could be interpreted as a sign of religious orthodoxy.<sup>67</sup> This was especially the case in a city like Constantinople which had strong communities

<sup>65</sup> JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Life of Isaac* (PO 18, 669; BROOKS). Cf. CANER, *Charitable Ministrations (Diakonai)*, 45 f. On the early Syrian origins, see also MAGDALINO, *Church, Bath, and Diakonia*, 179–181.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. CANER, *Charitable Ministrations (Diakonai)*, 49. Cf. RAPP, *Christian Piety*, 180.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Peter BROWN, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity. Towards a Christian Empire (The Curti Lecture)*, Madison/WI 1992, 89 f.

and even bishops of Arian or Semi-Arian faith in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>68</sup> We can recall that Constantinople's famous leprosarium likely began with Semi-Arian patronage, and then continued later under Nicæan patronage.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, we might expect an easy crossover between miaphysite-leaning and Chalcedonian patronage of *diakonai*. In any case, the institution flourished at Constantinople, which, as alluded to above, was likely a key point of transmission for the institution to Italy. As they developed at the Byzantine capital, these lay-run institutions of the *diakonai* took a particular interest in bathing the poor and sick, an activity already attested in Paul's work at Antioch. Indeed, as Paul Magdalino has argued, these charitable baths managed by the lay confraternities of the *diakonia* – which were seemingly open to all free of charge – were likely the catalyst of a revolution in Constantinopolitan bathing practice that eventually led to the gradual disuse of the large Roman baths of the imperial capital in favor of the baths at the religious institution of the *diakonai*.<sup>70</sup>

The link between bathing and *diakonia* even translated to the West, although this topic is sometimes less explored in the scholarship on Italian *diaconiae*.<sup>71</sup> So, for example, by the time of Pope Hadrian when the papacy was directly taking charge over this ministry, we have evidence in the *Liber pontificalis* and *Liber diurnus* about weekly charitable distributions connected to the *diaconiae* that took place after a procession to the bath

<sup>68</sup> Cf. David M. GWYNN, *Christian Controversy and the Transformation of Fourth-Century Constantinople*, in: Aude BUSINE (ed.), *Religious Practices and Christianizations of the Late Antique City (4th–7th cent.)* (RGRW 182), Leiden – Boston 2015, 206–220.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Timothy S. MILLER – John W. NESBITT, *Walking Corpses. Leprosy in Byzantium and the Medieval West*, Ithaca – London 2014, 75–79. For broader discussion of “Arian” philanthropy in the fourth century, see Timothy S. MILLER, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*, Baltimore/MD 1997, 74–85.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. MAGDALINO, *Church, Bath, and Diakonia*.

<sup>71</sup> On the likely social “demand” for baths from the poorer portions of society in urban environments of the early Middle Ages, and the associated health benefits of late antique bathing practices, see Paolo SQUATRITI, *Water and Society in Early Medieval Italy, AD 400–1000*, Cambridge 1998, 47–56. On the archaeological evidence for the availability of water supply to the *diaconiae* in the early Middle Ages, see Robert COATES-STEPHENS, *The Walls and Aqueducts of Rome in the Early Middle Ages, A.D. 500–1000*, in: *JRS* 88 (1998) 166–178, here: 175–178.



(*lusma*).<sup>72</sup> The procession included *diaconitae*, that is, the members of the *diaconia*, and took place with the singing of psalms, indicating that the baths of these institutions were filled with religious significance far beyond a mere hygienic purpose. The fact that the Latin documents sometimes refer to the baths with the term *lusma*, from the Greek λούσμα, is not only another betrayal of the eastern origin of these charitable facilities but also an indication that bathing or washing was an integral part of the early *diakonia* institution in Italy.

This association between bathing and *diakonia* in Italy is likewise suggested by a famous site at Ravenna. Following the formal eradication of Arianism from the city in the sixth century, the former Arian cathedral and baptistery were converted to Nicene usage. At some point, certainly by the eighth century, the former Arian baptistery was used as a monastery and known as Santa Maria in Cosmedin.<sup>73</sup> Although we lack the texts to prove that it started out as a *diakonia*, the name “Santa Maria in Cosmedin” was associated with *diakonai* in both Rome and Naples. Indeed, if the baptistery was converted into a *diakonia* following the Byzantine reconquest, this may not have been simply to suppress the memory of the Arian Ostrogoths, but also because the site was already equipped with water. As such, the famous mosaic image of Christ’s baptism in the Jordan river (fig. 3) may have continued to have symbolic importance in the Byzantine period of Ravenna within the context of non-baptismal ritual bathing. Of late, scholars of late antique material culture have increasingly identified that the quantity and proximity of bath complexes at churches was far greater than a local Christian population would have needed for practical baptismal functions, raising awareness that many conventionally labeled

<sup>72</sup> Cf. LP 97, 337 (DUCHESNE 1, 505 f.). Cf. Étienne HUBERT, Les bains à Rome et dans le Latium au Moyen Âge, in: Marie GUÉRIN-BEAUVOIS – Jean-Marie MARTIN (eds.), Bains curatifs et bains hygiéniques en Italie de l’Antiquité au Moyen Âge (CEFR 383), Rome 2007, 127–142, here: 132 f.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Jean-Marie SANSTERRE, Monaci e monasteri greci a Ravenna, in: Antonio CARILE (ed.), Storia di Ravenna, vol. 2: Dall’età bizantina all’età ottoniana, Venice 1992 here: 324 f.; Enrico CIRELLI, Monasteri greci a Ravenna nell’alto Medioevo (VI–X sec.). Storia e archeologia, in: Federico MARAZZI – Chiara RAIMONDO (eds.), Monasteri Italo-Greci (Secoli VII–XI). Una lettura archeologica (Studi Volturnensi 12), Cerro al Volturno 2018, 15–25, here: 18–21.



Figure 3: Mosaic within the Arian Baptistery (late fifth–sixth century), converted into a diakonia after the Byzantine reconquest. | Photo: Petar Milosevic

church “baptisteries” had practical and ritual functions of washings beyond the rites of Christian initiation.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> On baths and bathing among Christians, sometimes at churches, in late antiquity, see Dallas DEFOREST, Baths, Christianity, and Bathing Culture in Late Antiquity, in: David PETTEGREW et al. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Archeology*, Oxford 2018, 118–206, here: 199–202; SQUATRITI, *Water and Society*, 47–56. My colleague, Robin Jensen, recently discussed a similar phenomenon for North African fonts at a talk, “Baptism on Pilgrimage? Baptismal Fonts in Eastern and Western Pilgrimage Sites” at the conference “Explorations in Christian Initiation from the East: Symposium in Honor of Maxwell E. Johnson’s 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday” (11–12 November 2022), developing earlier ideas pro-

With this history of the *diakonia* institution in mind, we can now return to the prayers of the early euchologia. Given that these prayers show up already in the earliest euchologia manuscripts from around the turn of the eighth to ninth centuries, it is impossible to surmise from the manuscripts an estimate of the prayers' date of composition in the absence of a wide body of earlier sources. However, the inclusion of *diakonia* texts in these earliest manuscripts does suggest the possibility that these prayers descend from the late antique period in which the *diakonia* seems to have flourished across much of the Roman Mediterranean. Taking a second look at the Sinai text, we may note the prayer's repeated focus on ministration, as well as on the endurance of the individuals who are first setting upon the work of the *diakonia*, suggesting a type of rigorous charitable work akin to that described in the sources of Antioch and Constantinople. From a theological perspective, the prayer connects the ministry that individuals will receive from the *diakonia* to the very ministry of Christ, attesting to what was likely a fundamental spiritual motivation for joining a *diakonia*, namely, the opportunity to not only minister to Christ in the poor (cf. Mt 25:35–45), but to also *be* an imitation of Christ in this ministry, and in so doing, receive Christ's own ministry in return as the conclusion of the prayer implies. Similarly, the equivalent Barberini prayer describes the work of the *diakonia* as enabling an individual to live out a celestial and angelic life, supporting the idea discussed above that the *diakonia* allowed non-monastic laity the opportunity to pursue and achieve the types of virtues and associated benefits that were often tied to, but not exclusive to, monasticism. Similarly, one cannot help but notice how the Barberini's mention of "unfeigned humility" echoes John of Ephesus' insistence on the anonymous performance of charitable activity that was central to early *diakonai*.

The prayer for blessing the waters of the *diakonia* is a bit more challenging to contextualize. Ruggieri, who, as discussed above, interpreted this prayer as part of a monastic practice, performed a detailed analysis of the term ἐμβάτης in the prayer's title. While he notes that this word can refer to thermal baths in late antiquity, he prefers to see its definition ac-

posed in, for example, J. Patout BURNS Jr. – Robin M. JENSEN, Christianity in Roman Africa. The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs, Grand Rapids/MI 2014, 140 f., fn. 225.

ording to some medieval usages of a marble tub or basin, and he goes on to perform a detailed tracing of numerous kinds of basins, including repurposed sarcophagi, that were used as tubs for water in the Middle Ages. I have no reason to dispute Ruggieri's discussion of the use of marble water basins. There were many practical and even theological reasons why individuals repurposed basins and sarcophagi for water fonts in the Middle Ages. However, the recognition of the institution of the *diakonia* and their frequent association with bathing practices certainly does suggest, in my opinion, that some sort of actual bath could be the place for this prayer's original deliverance. That said, as Ruggieri rightly points out, the prayer clearly demonstrates that individuals related to this water in a variety of ways, including not only for washing, but also for drinking and asperging, even anointing themselves. Indeed, Ruggieri's broader point is that this water was not used simply for the sick (as Jacob had previously argued), and this suggestion certainly aligns with the multipurpose function of *diakonia* waters, thus buoying up Magdalino's intuition about why the large Roman baths fell into disuse at a time when the size of New Rome's population could have still theoretically justified their continuity. There was evidently a strong spiritual benefit associated with these smaller charitable baths that could not be offered by the originally pagan institution of public bathing.

### Conclusion

The data presented here make it sufficiently clear that the early *diakonia* prayers should not be summarily classified as monastic texts, even if one of these prayers was later used for blessing monastic roles. The evidence points to their likely origin stemming from late antique *diakonai* and their associated charitable activities, a conclusion that likewise sustains recent intuitions and proposals of Parenti, Velkovska, Magdalino, and Rapp. Certainly, the euchological history of these prayers is far more complex than what I have described here in the two oldest manuscripts. The understanding of *diakonia* texts shifted over time, and the meaning of what a medieval scribe understood by the term *diakonia* evolved and could have varied from one local tradition to another, just as contemporary Christians continue to have a variety of associations for the word. This remains to be further studied across the many later euchologia that include such prayers,



a task I leave to others. Yet suffice to state here that the analysis of these prayers as contained in the oldest euchologia raises a number of issues for the field of liturgical studies.

First, these prayers point to the importance of reading the texts of the euchologion *Sinai gr. NF/MG 53* alongside the better-known Barberini euchologion. Comparison of the common and different elements within these two oldest Greek presider's prayer books can provide fascinating insight into liturgical practices of late antiquity. Second, the specific use of *diakonia* prayers within these earliest euchologia invite us to see these texts as representing a genre of blessing known to different local churches of the Mediterranean world. The lay institution of the *diakonia* represents the best candidate for contextualizing these prayers. Not only do the prayers correspond to a literal reading of the word *diakonia* in reference to this institution, but *diakoniai* were spread across urban centers of much of the Mediterranean world. Given that we have echoes of liturgical practices associated with *diakoniai* in Greek manuscripts from regions as disparate as Italy and Palestine, we can safely assume a broad distribution of such ritual customs in late antiquity. In turn, this genre of liturgical blessing captured in these early euchologia highlights the importance of the institution of the *diakonia* within late antique Christianity. As liturgiologists who have run into these prayers in the past (and present) have largely ignored the historical evidence for the importance of this charitable institution, these prayers represent a reminder of the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue between liturgical studies and broader late antique studies.

If *diakoniai* were as important and prominent as some of the late antique sources make them out to be, it is unsurprising to find that they have left a trace within euchologia, since late antique liturgy tended to attract rituals for many different occasions of human life deemed worthy of a blessing. I would suggest that our brief examination of the *diakonia* prayers within these earliest sources asks us to consider the broader contexts of early liturgical books, beyond the more intensely studied rites of the Eucharist and Christian Initiation, as investigation into such other prayers as these provides evidence not only about the services as officiated by the clergy, but also gives us windows into the broader ministry of other members the ecclesial body at the time.

### *Abbreviations*

ASRSP	Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria
Aug.	Augustinianum
BBGG	Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata
BEL.S	Biblioteca "Ephemerides Liturgicae". Subsidia
BIHBR	Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome
ByA	Byzantinisches Archiv
ByZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
Byz.	Byzantion. Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines
CEFR	Collection de l'École Française de Rome
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
EMEu	Early Medieval Europe
J ECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JJP	The Journal of Juristic Papyrology
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
RQ	Römische Quartalschrift
SEAug	Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum
SGKIO.NF	Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients. Neue Folge
SOrCr	Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano
Spec.	Speculum. A Journal of Medieval Studies
StPatr	Studia Patristica
SuPa	Sussidi Patristici
VigChr	Vigiliae Christianae

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