

CWO
Challenging Institutional Sexism in the Roman Catholic Church
E-news May 2014 issue 70

Welcome to the edited issue 70 of the CWO e-news. Editor Pat Brown. Please visit CWO's website www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk News and previous issues can be seen there. Please send items for May e-news by 20 June. Also contact me for further information about anything in this e-news where contact details are not given info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk Many thanks to Ruth W for proof reading the e-news.

Vocations Sunday can be a painful day for us – see article p. 3. As an “antidote”, we put up a video “What If?” on the home page of our website. You can link to it directly on youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZNE0mHN-WA>

Pope Francis may have a better idea about how we feel now that over 700 letters were handed in to the CDF. See pp. 5-6.

Support the American women religious – sign petition on p. 7.

We congratulate our Anglican sisters on the 20th anniversary of the first ordinations of women to the priesthood - see article and link p. 8.

You may have heard of two members of We Are Church being excommunicated. <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2014/05/22/senior-figure-in-we-are-church-movement-is-excommunicated/>

Here's something from the We Are Church website. There is more information on this site

<http://www.imwac.net/413/index.php/news/we-are-church-news-and-comment/305-decree-of-the-former-holy-office-of-the-inquisition-against-the-international-chairperson-of-we-are-church>

CWO Annual Gathering

A Foot in the Door? Women Deacons.

Saturday 4 October
11.00am – 5.00pm.

St Nicholas of Tolentino, Bristol

The AGM (members only) will be in the morning and the Annual Gathering which is open to all will be in the afternoon.

On the subject of deacons...

I would only comment that when women were ordained Deacons in the Church of England some of the opposition thought that they had shunted us into a nice little siding and the call for women priests would collapse. Exactly the opposite happened. People in parishes got used to women carrying out Diaconal functions and sometimes being in charge - just having to import a priest for the Eucharist. It led in the parishes to a strengthening of the call for women priests and helped us a lot.

Jean M

Sharing Eucharist

I have just returned from staying with friends in Norway for a week. During my early visits, beginning over 30 years ago, when Sunday arrived, I would look for the nearest Catholic Church. Sometimes there simply wasn't one, and on these occasions I would attend the Lutheran church where my friend was the priest. This was how I got used to seeing a woman vested and celebrating the Eucharist, and came to see it as normal practice. But in those days I didn't receive communion, because, after all, I wasn't allowed to – by my church, not hers! However, over the last ten years I have realised how ridiculous that stricture is. Who is anyone to say that I may not receive Christ in a Lutheran church, and she may not receive in a Catholic one? Would Jesus take this attitude? This year, as during my last few visits, I took as full a part as possible (some of the hymns defeated me!) in a service which differed very little from our own Mass. Another English friend, who was with me, said that, although she has no Norwegian – I speak a little – she had no difficulty at all in following the format of the service. When the time came for communion we both filed up with everyone else, and received a Eucharist which was to us equally valid with any Catholic one. One practical difference, of which I greatly approve, is that everyone is given a tiny cup, and a priest or Eucharistic minister pours a little wine into each individual cup. How much more hygienic this is, and much tidier than dipping the host, which we are also told is unacceptable at our celebrations.

I would never wish to leave the RC Church for another denomination, but such an experience makes me realise how unnecessary, and positively un-Christian are some of her rules and regulations. This, of course, is my individual point of view, and does not reflect any official attitude of Catholic Women's Ordination

Ruth W

Vocations Sunday is always tough to sit through: listening to appeals for vocations to the priesthood with the occasional reference to women and religious life. Some years it has been widened to everyone considering their vocation in life. We currently have no bishop, so at least I knew there wouldn't be a Bishop's letter. He always tended to take the narrow interpretation of clerical vocation by appealing for men to consider the priesthood. As I came out of church I saw a leaflet entitled "Priests Training Fund". Unwisely for my mood and blood pressure I took a copy to read.

We now have no seminary in the north of England, and of the few men coming forward most seem to go to Rome to train. There was a colour photo on the front of the leaflet of five men of our diocese studying at the Venerable English College in Rome. (I hope the expensive leaflet was at least funded by a benefactor and not our diocese which has a massive debt.) The back of the leaflet was a Gift Aid Declaration with a tick box for a Standing Order. It seems it takes between £20-25,000 annually to train a priest, for at least six years. They do preparatory placements in parishes and hospices etc. This is good but is not where the money is going. Nowadays most seminarians do a university degree which requires funding. However it would seem to me that a lot of this money is going to prop up the Rome colleges. How does that prepare these men for work in our inner cities, alone, in parishes? No mention of women of course, or religious orders. I worked out that these five men will cost our diocese three quarters of a million pounds to train.

What about putting some of this money into proper training and education for lay adults willing to serve in parishes which are closing because of a shortage of male celibate priests? (In our local A Call to Action diocesan group, the most popular request from our feedback sheet at the first open meeting was for lay adult religious and pastoral education. We want to help in our parishes in a more significant way than we have been doing.) What about some of these funds supporting discernment programmes for women and men to consider a calling to ordained ministry and other service in the church? (My social work training and subsequent theology degree, both relevant to ministry, were initially funded by a grant and my parents when I was younger, and then later by me when I was divorced and raising three children.) What about some of the money preparing women and men for ministry nearer to the environments in which they will work, attending local colleges, doing some eLearning and working in parishes and hospitals with mentors who would include experienced lay people? I mentored some seminarians who came to work in our hospice each year. The hospice may have been paid a small fee but my input was free. I usually spoke about women's ordination at some point, as probably none of them had heard it mentioned before by someone who believed in it.

This suggestion for an overhaul in training, takes it out of a Roman clerical caste system and embeds it in the person's local or regional community. This of course would require a radical look at the meaning of priesthood, and what training is relevant for this role. I can't imagine it would cost all this money to prepare women and men to serve in the kind of simpler, less hierarchical, collaborative church communities many of us envisage.

Pippa B

Feast of Joan of Arc, May 30

The story of Joan of Arc as we have known it is an almost mythical one, a fantasy of divine proportions. She was a simple French girl from the unsophisticated countryside who took it upon herself to save the country when its leaders could not. She was impelled by the voices of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Margaret, and the Archangel Michael, she said, to follow the will of God. She was to liberate a city, lead an army, save a king, and free a nation from foreign control. The story seems remote, the model suspect, and the voices from heaven not a common way of expressing contemporary spiritual insights or calls from God.

In the end, Joan is captured by her English enemies and burned at the stake with the help of churchmen who consider her a heretic, label her a witch, and condemn her to death because of her refusal to denounce her voices as the church has commanded her to do.

The relation of all that to sanctity in the twenty-first century seems at best obscure until little by little the local history is peeled away and the light is focused on the very human and very universal situation that underlies it. Joan is not to be revered because she was a soldier in the service of the king. Joan is to be revered because she is a model of conscience development, a monument to the feminine relationship to God, and a breaker of the stereotypes that block the will of God for people.

Suddenly, Joan of Arc appears in the plain light of our own lives. She is a woman with a conscience. She is a woman with a mission. She is a woman who has been chosen by God for a man's job. She is a woman who is bold enough to claim that she has access to God and that God has outrageous plans for her. She is a woman who dares to confront the authorities of the time with a greater question than they are able to handle. She is a woman who threatens the status quo. She tells an inspired truth and leads a life consecrated to her God.

Joan of Arc is not simply the patron of France in times such as ours. Joan of Arc is patron of all those who hear the voice of God calling them beyond present impossibilities to the fullness of conscience everywhere.

from "Joan of Arc: A Voice of Conscience," A Passion for Life, Devotional Edition
by Joan Chittister (Orbis)

WOW News – Rome

May 22 marked the 20th anniversary of 'the papal no' - the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* also known as Pope John Paul II's attempt to categorically exclude women from priesthood and ban discussion about it. At a press conference held in Rome this morning, WOW (Women's Ordination Worldwide) issued a joint statement as they prepared to deliver hundreds of letters to Pope Francis from ordinary Catholics around the globe who want an end to the ban. Many letters are from women called to priesthood. Others are from people saying they are frustrated with a Church whose leaders are complicit in the oppression of women because of the ban.

Erin Saiz Hanna, Executive Director of the U.S. Women's Ordination Conference pointed out, "For 20 years now Catholics have been forbidden from discussing women's leadership. For 20 years, employees at Catholic institutions have risked job security if they talk about women's ordination." She added, "For an even longer time, Catholic women called to priesthood have had door after door slammed in their faces. People around the world are deprived of sacraments only because male Church leaders reject the women God is calling. God doesn't reject them; male Church leaders do. This is wrong."

Miriam Duignan from the academic organisation womenpriests.org said, "It's true that Pope Francis is portraying a new image of the Church being open to all and that he is trying to shake off the judgements and restrictions of the past. But despite this openness that's exemplified for instance by his response to questions about gay men in priesthood, 'Who am I to judge?' Francis holds fast to the old party line that says 'women in priesthood is not open to discussion. It is reserved for men alone. Women are not welcome.' The community of faith recognises the women who are called. How long do women have to wait to be considered equal and worthy of receiving the same welcome by the official Church as men?"

Miriam sent this from Rome:-

"We got into the CDF! We knocked on the door of the CDF office and they let us in – everyone was very polite and welcoming. The secretary graciously accepted our bag with over 700 letters and said 'this is amazing!' I think we got them into good hands. We are very happy!"

<http://womensordinationworldwide.org/dear-pope-francis-may-22-2014-action-in-rome/87y0r6fl44jspkscy4i54uxa2izvb>

WOW - Rome (continued)

According to Poland's Alicja Baranowska, "The Church should not be afraid to re-examine customs, even those with deep historical roots, when they no longer communicate the Gospel. A male only priesthood does not communicate Gospel. It goes against the clear message that there is `neither male nor female in Christ`. It goes against so much evidence of women's leadership in the early Church. It goes against the teaching of Jesus and his inclusion of women in his mission and legacy.

"As internationally loved as Pope Francis is, the status of women in the Catholic Church is his blind spot," said Kate Conmy of the U.S. Women's Ordination Conference. "If the Church has confidence in exclusion, it makes no sense that discussion about including women as priests should be banned. A refusal to dialogue gives away the fact that there is no strong theology to support the Vatican's position."

WOW encourages Pope Francis to stop making Jesus the Vatican's partner in gender discrimination. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* is an outdated, fallible and painful document created by his predecessors to diminish the leadership of women. We are asking Pope Francis to open the doors of dialogue to talk with us about women's ordination. (For the full statement, go to www.womensordinationworldwide.org)

Third WOW Conference 2015

Gender, The Gospel, and Global Justice.
18 – 20 September 2015.
at the Marriott Hotel
Philadelphia PA



WOW currently includes representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Malta, Poland, and the United States.

Some of our longer serving members will remember being instrumental in setting up a travelling fund for previous WOW Conferences to help people from the developing world attend. We need to do this again so I am asking for anything you can spare for this fund. All contributions will be very welcome. There will be an account set up for this and I will have the details soon.

I hope to be producing a monthly WOW e-news as well as this CWO one to keep you up to date with developments. CWO has sponsored the conference, as all members of WOW will be doing but individuals can sponsor it as well. Please see WOW website for inspiration – this is being added to daily.

<http://womensordinationworldwide.org/>

Take Action To Support U.S. Women Religious

1. [Sign the online petition](#) asking Pope Francis to remove the mandate against LWCR and publicly apologize to LCWR and Sr. Elizabeth Johnson.
2. [Download our letter](#), add your own comments and send it to the Vatican.
3. [Tweet Pope Francis @Pontifex](#)
4. Help Pope Francis learn more about feminist theology, send him a copy of Sr. Elizabeth Johnson's book, [Quest for the Living God](#), in Spanish, or any of your favourites written by feminist theologians.

Send to:

Pope Francis PP

00120 Via del Pellegrino

Cita Del Vaticano

NW CWO greet new Archbishop of Liverpool



The NW CWO group organised a vigil at Liverpool Cathedral at the inauguration of the new Archbishop of Liverpool, Malcolm McMahon. Some Leeds group members joined them and leaflets were given out. Archbishop McMahon acknowledged the CWO banner and smiled!

Thanks to Catherine W for organising and Mary L for photographs

20th Anniversary of First ordinations of women in the Anglican priesthood

The Church of England held a large celebration in St Paul's Cathedral, London, UK, on Saturday 3rd May 2014, to mark the 20th Anniversary of the first ordinations of women to the Anglican priesthood. All the women who were ordained in that first year, 1994, were invited to take part in the service.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-27265039>

Two of our members were at St Paul's:-

Lala W and I attended this event. We had various small banners which we put on the steps of St. Paul's and many people took photos of these before we had to leave the steps so that all the ordained women could have their photos taken.

The main poster we used was 'Congratulations to the Anglican women from the RC Women.' This was very well received. It was held up as the hundreds of women went past up the main aisle of the Cathedral and then we held it up at the back as the hierarchy went past. The Dean of St. Paul's came over to us to welcome us and seemed a very good man. He said it was so unchristian that there was still discrimination in the Christian churches, against women and gay people among others. He thanked us for being there and said he would pray for us, as did many others too. Justin Welby saw the poster and nodded towards us.

It was altogether a very positive occasion and we were glad we were there. The liturgy was rather traditional. It did not have inclusive language but nevertheless it was very moving. I found the procession of all the ordained women particularly moving as they walked up the aisle to a standing ovation. I thought of the struggles they represented and all they now could offer the church. What a contrast is to be found in the RC church!

Sue W

A Liberating Spirit?

An exciting conference being held from 14th to 17th July at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire.

We shall be asking: What might be a "liberal" approach to spirituality? We have a fascinating range of speakers and the chair is Canon Professor Martyn Percy.

<http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/conference/conference.html>

ONE SPIRIT ALLIANCE - *one day networking fair and conference* –

'SPIRIT IN ACTION'



Saturday, 28th June 2014, 10am -5pm
at Colet House, 151 Talgarth Road, London W14 9DA
(just around the corner from the Baron's Court underground station)

*~ spiritually minded people and organisations coming together
in celebration of the One Spirit ~*

The day aims to honour the unique contribution each individual and organisation has to make whilst recognising that by working together collaboratively we are all enriched and strengthened.

Speakers on the day include:

Dr. Serge Beddington-Behrens, author of *Awakening the Universal Heart*
Anthony Russell, author of *Evolving the Spirit – from Democracy to Peace*

Suggested donation on gifting basis of £25 for the day to cover costs.

For more information contact –

info@onespiritalliance.net **www.onespiritalliance.net** **07771 701031**

Or click on this conference registration link:

http://onespiritalliance.net/?page_id=38

We would very much welcome your participation at the ***Spirit in Action*** day,
June 28th

It is an opportunity for individuals and organisations to find out more about the One Spirit Alliance initiatives and, if you are inspired, to get involved.

It is a chance to network with others of similar interests.

For organisations it is an opportunity to let others know about yourself.

It is a celebration of the one spirit!

Late item - Just received email about gender summit

<http://www.gender-summit.com/>

CWO Saints

Mary MacKillop
Ruth Norton
John Hatfield
Celia Greenwood
Michael O’Gara
Sheila Houlihan
Mary Daly
Estelle White
Pat McGarron
Marcella Althaus-Reid
Astrid Klemz
Jean Palmer
Elizabeth Rendall
Maureen Brown
Tissa Balasuriya
Jack Sutcliffe
Pat Regini

Pray for us



Prayer Link

Wednesday between 6.00 and 7.00pm, please pray for CWO, its members and its mission.

Saturdays at noon, join with women and men all over the world to pray for the work of Women’s Ordination Worldwide (WOW!)

Please take part in one or both of these prayer networks if and when you can

The CWO Prayer

Moved by a compulsion of the Holy Spirit, we cannot remain ignorant of this injustice in our midst.

We long for all humanity to be acknowledged as equal, particularly among your community of the church, so we pray grieving for the lost gifts of so many women.

We ask you, God of all peoples, to bring insight and humility to all those in positions of dominance, and an understanding that the ascended Lord called us all to act doing Christ's work here and now.

We ask this of you, God our Creator, Jesus our Redeemer, Spirit our Sustainer

Websites (apologies for smaller print – that’s to fit them in!)

<http://www.womensordination.org/>

News of Fr Bourgeois and many other issues

<http://www.johnwijngaards.org/>

All previous housetop websites can be reached via this address

<http://womenandthechurch.org/>

Campaign for women’s equality in Church of England

<http://ncronline.org/>

National Catholic Reporter

<http://www.acalltoaction.org.uk/>

Catholics inspired by Vatican II.

<http://www.gras.org.uk/>

Group for rescinding the Act of Synod

www.we-are-church.org.uk

We Are Church in the UK is a call to recognise that all the Baptised, are part of the Church.

<http://www.ccc4vat2.org.uk>

Catholics for a Changing Church

<http://lgcm.org.uk/>

Campaigns against and challenges homophobia and transphobia, especially within the Church and faith based organisations, as well as working to create and praying for an inclusive church.

<http://questgaycatholic.org.uk/>

Proclaims the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ so as to sustain and increase Christian belief among homosexual men and women. They offer pastoral support for LGBT Catholics friends and families
Sign up for quarterly newsletter

<http://82.70.116.125/index.html>

Women Word Spirit

<http://christianfeministnetwork.com/>

Christian Feminist Network - exploring faith and feminism

<http://www.spirituschristi.org>

A truly inclusive Catholic Church

<http://www.stcuthbertshouse.co.uk/>

Rachel is a professed hermit of the R C Diocese of Nottingham.