

**CWO**  
**Challenging Institutional Sexism in the Roman Catholic Church**  
**E-news June 2014 issue 71**

Welcome to the edited issue 71 of the e-news. Some names have been abbreviated or addresses removed. Editor Pat Brown. Please visit CWO's website [www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk](http://www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk) News and previous issues can be seen there. Please send items July e-news by 20 July. Also contact me for further information about anything in this e-news where contact details are not given [info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk](mailto:info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk) Many thanks to Ruth W for proof reading the e-news.

I hope you enjoy this monthly collection of news from CWO. Please also sign up to the monthly WOW e-news (see below)  
<http://womensordinationworldwide.org/connect/>  
Even if you can't go to the conference (or maybe especially if you can't go to the conference) you will be able to keep abreast of all that is happening in the women's ordination movement worldwide.

Please check out all the links and websites mentioned in the e-news. Some have a limited life. Use them or lose them!

A statement from WOW, who support the diaconate, is being sent with this e-news. This is to further inform our discussion at our Annual Gathering in Bristol on 4 October (see below). You have already received an information sheet from Miriam Duignan, who is one of the speakers at the Annual Gathering. Please support this gathering in Bristol, and Roman Catholic priest who has invited us.

**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.

## **What do you think about the issue of women's diaconate in the Roman Catholic Church?**

For me, it seems to have cropped up in several places this year:

First up, Katrina Scott who looks after women clergy in Coventry CoE diocese came to talk to the Newman Association in our area. Keen to raise an essential question, I asked her whether she would advise Roman Catholic women to accept the diaconate if offered, as did the Anglican women in the UK. I remember from her answer that she thought the theology of deacons but not priests made no sense, but that it helped prepare the ground and relieve uncertainty in the church. There was a lively and positive dialogue between Katrina and those present.

Second, CWO has chosen the diaconate for the AG theme. How does it fit in with the idea of a renewed ministry in the church? There must be many angles to this question. Personally I was doubtful about the title chosen for the AG meeting. Still, what angle does it bring, and what different ways are there for the whole issue to be thought about?

Thirdly, Phyllis Zagano and a number of other scholars in the USA are running a course at present publicizing a text by Cipriano Vagaggini from the 1970s about women deacons of the past. Vagaggini was a theologian tasked by the CDF to investigate this. His conclusion was positive for a renewed women's diaconate, but the text was buried and has only now been translated from Italian. It is noted that the question has not been the subject of any official ruling since many bishops and Pope Paul VI raised it at the time of Vatican 2 to the present.

Phyllis has sent this important text to all English speaking bishops and has had a certain number of positive replies.

For me, one of the most striking things is the realization that there are many women who feel a call to be a deacon, and I added a bidding prayer for them at the National Board of Catholic Women's annual gathering last weekend. I represent Women Word Spirit there - should it be possible for CWO to be part of NBCW too, and would we want to be?

Another question.

In conclusion, we are always a varied lot. I would myself like CWO to be able to reach out to all who wish to advance the work of women in the church, and hope we would be happy to be in solidarity with the women who feel called to the diaconate even if we differed on some issues.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on all these things.

Cathy W

## How will peace come?

...in my mind is the memory of one lone Chinese student who, rising from the midst of the protesters in Tiananmen Square, stood in front of a moving tank whose orders were to sweep the square empty of anyone who dared to remain there once ordered to leave. The boy stood, head bowed, shoulders straight, feet planted squarely on the pavement. It was one unarmed boy against a Chinese tank. Suddenly, the tank stopped moving.

The power of the spirit had never been more clear than in the face-off between the tank and the thin young man. All the power in the world could not make the young man move, could not destroy his strength of spirit, could not break his resolve. Nor could it move the driver of the tank to an act of public barbarism in the name of public order.

"Peace hath her victories," Milton wrote, "no less renowned than war." All the weapons in the world, in other words, were, in the end, for nothing.

Peace is such a powerful presence.

A commitment to peace, to being peaceful, to peacefulness draws from a very deep well. It is a source beyond the corruptions of either ambition or pride. It transcends addiction to either power or personality cults.

And how does peace come? Simple. By accepting who we are and what we have as enough for us. By recognizing and respecting who the other is and what they have as theirs. By finding within ourselves "the pearl of great price," the richest thing there is in life, the sense of the presence of God who loves and companions us through all the pressures of life.

Then we find that we have changed. We have become peaceful. We have come to realize that we have all we need. We begin to see that our own role in life is only to spread the peace we have.

Then we begin to dedicate ourselves to that highest possible level of humanity that not only does good but, most of all, does no harm. To do no harm requires real care, genuine compassion, true realization that the glow of the other diminishes no glow of my own. So we say an alleluia for the coming of peace, for the death of ambition, for the passing of pride that enables us to be happy with who we are and what we have.

—excerpts from "Peace" in *Uncommon Gratitude*  
by Joan Chittister and Rowan Williams (Liturgical Press)

## 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



You can't kill the spirit  
She is like a mountain  
Old and strong  
She goes on and on and on

## 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/>

Please sign up to receive the monthly WOW e-news.

<http://womensordinationworldwide.org/connect/>

## An invitation to a new group in Leicester

As an evangelist I like to bring good news. Our local priest at our Roman Catholic Church in Leicester has allowed us to set up a Modern Women's Group to discuss issues about the part Women play in the Roman Catholic Church and how we can improve equality in the church. Men would be welcome too. If you are interested please contact Liz M [info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk](mailto:info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk)

Thanks for your support and look forward to hearing from you.

Liz M

## Still I rise

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may tread me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the  
slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

Maya Angelou

## **Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori at St Alban's**

On June 21 3000 people travelled to St Albans to hear Bishop Katharine speak on heroes. She was a truly inspiring speaker, filling us with hope for the votes on women bishops. It was wonderful just to see the presiding Bishop of the United States of America in England and to hear the hope that she brought from her context.

A willingness to meet with those who disagree with her has transformed her relationship with traditionalists yet she has also brought hope to those communities who still feel on the margins of the church. She spoke warmly of her relationship with other bishops both in the United States and abroad. She has encouraged her brother and sister bishops to keep dialoguing with one another and to bring their differences to the table rather than discussing one another behind closed doors.

It was exciting to see a woman in the pulpit of St Alban's Abbey. Her sermon on heroes gave much food for thought to the Catholic women's ordination movement. She asked the congregation to consider who our heroes are and who are we heroes for? She made me think of those brave women who campaigned for the vote and those who work for inclusion in all churches where there is discrimination.

In the afternoon she led a question and answer session on Ministry for those of us who are WATCH members. She spoke of her calling as Bishop and its similarities with her work as an oceanographer because she had faced discrimination in both contexts. She spoke of her supports for the inclusion of lesbian and gay people within the church and how she listens to those who oppose her. She encouraged us to keep dreaming of a future in the Roman Catholic Church with women and men are treated equally and she also spoke of the importance of being yourself and listening carefully to those who disagree.

At the afternoon celebration we were blessed with a sermon from John Bell of the Iona community. His radical inclusion reminded us to think where integrity is and to be aware of those politicians who trample on those who are poor and abused. Bishop Katharine has been invited to the WOW conference. We pray she will be able to accept.

Katharine S

**A Liberating Spirit?** 14 - 17 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>

## Links

Methodist Church celebrates 40 years of women's ordination

<http://methodist.org.uk/news-and-events/news-releases/methodist-church-celebrates-40-years-of-women%E2%80%99s-ordination>

Eucharistic Prayers - Diarmuid O'Murchu

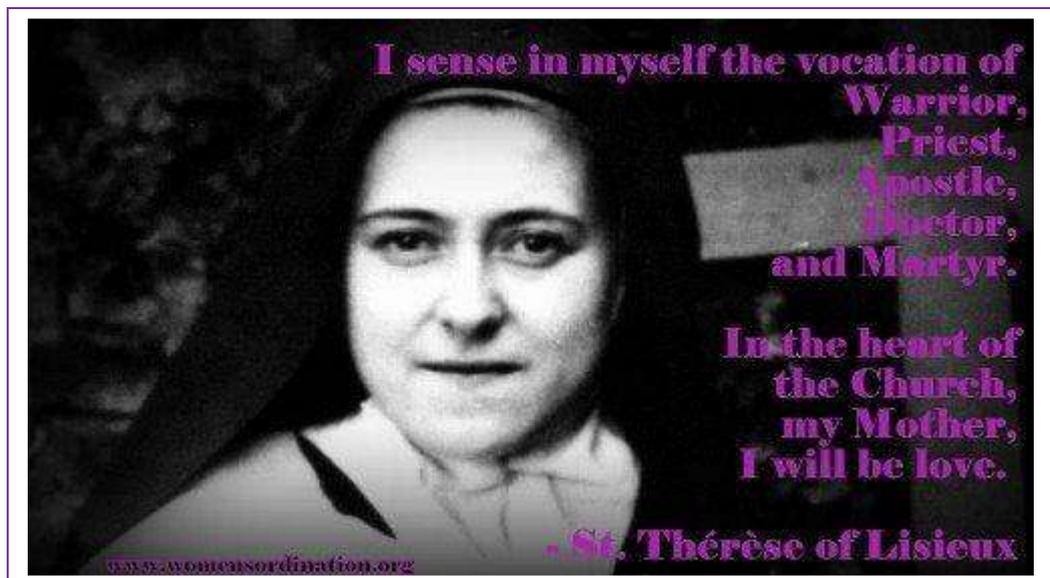
<http://www.diarmuid13.com/eucharistic-prayers>

Erin Saiz Hanna article New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/11/27/the-new-popes-new-direction/why-would-pope-francis-keep-women-out-of-the-priesthood>

Former president Mary McAleese said there was just something profoundly wrong and skewed" about asking "150 male celibates" to review the Catholic Church's teaching on family life.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/mcaleese-asking-bishops-advice-on-family-life-bonkers-1.1834452>



## **Some reflections from Anglican women priests about 20 years of ordination in a patriarchal structure**

When we went to offer our congratulations to the ordained Anglican women in St. Paul's Cathedral in early May, it was a really joyful occasion to see so many women affirmed in their ministry and affirmed by most of their hierarchy. The sadness was that we were the only visible Roman Catholics present on such an occasion and we felt it was typical of our RC brethren that none of them were present to celebrate with the Anglican women. A conversation with the Dean of St. Paul's made it very clear to us that the RC church is now completely out of step with the times, if not with true Christianity (my own perception).

I am in a Southwark feminist theology study group among whom are several Anglican women priests. Some have commented that they did not do enough to make the priesthood their own, but followed in a very male model. Even the coming of women bishops may not change this. This is an important conversation to be having with Anglican women priests if we are going to develop CWO's first aim which is to call for women to be ordained within a renewed ministry. Consequently, it would be good if we could consider different models of ministry. As someone who is supposed to be responsible for education and resources on the National Coordinating group, I am going to pass some suggestions in front of the group and then sent the details in the next enews.

As a further comment on the need for real ecumenical dialogue over many things, not just ministry, I would like to inform any members of CWO who would be interested to go that Dr. Therese' Vanier's funeral is to be held in Canterbury Cathedral on July 10<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon. It will be a requiem mass. Therese was the founder of L'Arche in the UK and a great advocate of ecumenism. Among other books, she wrote 'One Bread One Body' which is a call for Christians to unite in the work they do.

Sue W

## **Statement of the Meeting of the Indian Women Theologians Forum At Goa from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

Gathered for our annual meeting of the Indian Women Theologians Forum, at the Pilar Animation Centre, Goa, from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2014, we reflected on the theme "Violence against Women – A Feminist Theological Response." Our reflections were enriched by the presence of two feminist theologians from the UK and a woman activist from Goa.

We shared experiences of violence from our personal and other women's lives in its varied manifestations. We reflected upon the physical, emotional, intellectual, and psychological dimensions of violence. We identified internal violence which women experience as they struggle to break through their conditioned subjugation to authority and power within the family, society and Church. We realized that patriarchal structures whether social, political, economic or religious, cause, perpetuate and shield violence against women and vulnerable groups in society.

Today a new phenomenon of violence to women is observed in the trauma of the victims/survivors of HIV/AIDS. Most women are innocently infected because husbands do not disclose their status to them. As victims they carry the blame, stigma and responsibility for caring for the husband as well as other household responsibilities. They suffer terrible social ostracisation and neglect. Gender inequality is most responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The fragility of victims of violence is compounded by poverty, casteism, corruption, the market economy, unjust legal & political structures, biased interpretation of religious texts, and the misogynist attitudes of a patriarchal society. The ownership and control of resources, especially money in the hands of males tilts power relationships in their favour, making women feel powerless in the face of violence.

We are convinced that domestic violence should rightly be termed "domestic torture" to expose its brutality and prompt national, international and religious institutions to address it in a systematic and sustained way. The complimentary and authority models promoted by the official Church teachings defining specific roles for men and women, contribute largely to the perpetuation of violence against women within the family. There is an urgent need for Christian theology to challenge this unhealthy model and advocate for a model that promotes equality and mutuality between men and women. We are aware that the 'supreme' example of the suffering of Christ has often been used to make women submit to abusive situations. We understand the suffering of Jesus as the consequence of his prophetic stance and not a passive acceptance of victimization.

## **Statement of the Meeting of the Indian Women Theologians Forum At Goa from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014 (continued)**

We are painfully aware that women are considered inferior to men because they are defined more by their bodies than their intellectual capacities. Consequently they are barred from decision making processes at all levels. Reflecting on Jesus' response to violence against women we came to realize that he strikes at the root cause of violence by treating women not as inferior or as objects but as persons with equal dignity and worth. Jesus recognizes and affirms their intellectual capacity as he engages them as equal dialogue partners. His mission was to liberate human persons from all oppression.

The condition of the bent woman (Lk 13: 10-17) is a paradigm of women's status in that society. Jesus included women as his disciples, taught women, and discussed theology with them. Women were witnesses of his teachings, his death & resurrection although in the Hebrew context women's witness had no value. Jesus challenges this mentality and values women's presence and their witness (Jn 20:16).

We also realized that people taking a prophetic stance experience violence but their spirit endures and continues to stay faithful to Jesus of Nazareth who did not let himself be overpowered by violence but conquered it. Like Jesus, we have to find resources to overcome violence by following the spirituality of Jesus which was a spirituality of resistance. Struggling like him we need to challenge and transcend the unjust structures so as to transform those very structures of which we are a part.

We felt a great need for spiritual sisterhood and companionship for sharing our pain and affirming our personhood in the context of violence and victimization to resist situations of violence.

Countering violence today calls women to interpret scripture from a feminist perspective and to understand their role in salvation history and to take up their legitimate space within the church and society. It calls us not to be content with benevolent patriarchy but to commit ourselves to:

- Creating awareness through writings, one to one interactions, and the use social media
- Promoting the recognition of woman's self-worth, enabling self-assertion and inner freedom
- Working with men and women to change attitudes, and to recognize women's equal status and selfhood
- Promoting the feminist interpretation of scripture, and making known strong biblical women and other women saints as role models
- Promoting a spirituality that is empowering for women

At the end of our reflections and deliberations we resolved to work for a violence free society where women are respected and treated as human beings with equal dignity and rights and for a church that recognizes the equal discipleship of women and men.

Virginia Saldana

## **Statement from WOC Executive Director, Erin Saiz Hanna**

The [Women's Ordination Conference](#) (WOC) is deeply saddened by yesterday's announcement that human rights lawyer and founder of the Mormon organization [Ordain Women](#), Kate Kelly, was excommunicated by her church.

WOC stands in solidarity with Kate, the members of Ordain Women, and all those who bravely challenge sexism in religion. This excommunication affects us all.

Kate followed her conscience and heart when she started Ordain Women, building a groundswell of feminist voices within the Mormon Church. She created a safe space for Mormons to speak freely about gender inequality in their religion and to challenge the sexist traditions that exclude women from ordination simply because of their biology.

As an organization that works for the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church, we understand our sisters' pain and longing for dignity, equality and justice in their faith community. We know from experience that the inappropriate use of excommunication as a means to punish those who challenge sexism cannot and will not stop the call for women's equality in our religious institutions.

Only when our religious leaders stop clinging to a culture of male privilege and dialogue with women as equal partners, will they begin to model Jesus' gospel message of justice. Communication, not excommunication, is long overdue.

In closing, Kate, know your Catholic sisters are standing in solidarity beside you. We are confident that despite this attempt to silence you, the movement you started is unstoppable and on the right side of history. You are in our constant prayers. And in words of the Carolyn McDade song we sang together at our joint [Equal in Faith](#) gathering, "it may be rocky and it may be rough, but sister, carry on."

## **CIA joins twitter with best first tweet EVER!**



[CIA@CIA](#)

We can neither confirm nor deny that this is our first tweet.

## **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](http://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.