



Happy Christmas!

Welcome to issue 11 of the e-news.
Please visit our website
www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk
Please contact me with items for next e-news by
10 January 2009

*We must not let these harsh
times destroy the warmth in our
hearts*

Che Guevara

Herod said, "who is this Jesus?" LK 9: 7-9.

Herod said, "but who is this about whom I hear such things? And he tried to see Jesus. For Herod, who was Jesus?

Jesus was an itinerant preacher, a teacher, a healer and a prophet.

Jesus was successful and popular, for he had many disciples and a large following. He was one of the good Pharisees, who criticised the bad Pharisees and some of the establishment, who had lost the plot!

Did Herod find Jesus' charisma intriguing? Or was he frightened by Jesus' power and moral superiority?

Today, for us in CWO, who is Jesus?

Jesus is the preacher who had many women among his disciples and followers. He rewarded their work and support for his movement by treating them with dignity and as equals.

Jesus is the teacher who called the woman of Samaria to be his first disciple. This woman was the first person to whom the Holy Spirit imparted the insight that Jesus was the Messiah.

Jesus is the healer who cured women as well as men, and cured the woman with the haemorrhage. He made her whole physically, and spiritually. By doing this Jesus rejected all laws and superstitions, which decree that women's bodies and blood are unclean or impure.

Jesus is the prophet who said to the daughters of Jerusalem, "do not weep for me, but for yourselves and for your children," because he knew of the suffering, the oppression, and the violence that humanity would create for itself throughout history by ignoring his teaching, whether totally, or selectively!

Jesus is the Risen Christ who appeared to Mary Magdalene and told her to go and tell the brothers that he was Risen.

We in CWO are not like Herod, who tried to see Jesus, and failed.

We like Mary Magdalene have seen Jesus. We have seen him in the light of our faith, and he calls us to criticise the religious establishment like he did, and to deliver to it his message of his discipleship of equals.

Morag Liebert

The Lisieux Trust for Women's Ministry Education Day

Sat 28th Feb at St Andrews Church
Short Street, Waterloo (street opposite the Young Vic, off
The Cut)

10.30 for 11.00am - 4.00pm

Cost £10 00

“Putting Tradition in its place - an encounter with the God
of the Letter to the Hebrews”

Led by The Ven. Dr. Joy Tetley

Joy Tetley is an Anglican priest, theologian and teacher. Until recently, she was Archdeacon of Worcester. Now based in Oxford, she is further exploring a ministry of prayer, writing and teaching. As well as parochial and Cathedral ministry, her previous posts have been in the field of theological education, relating to both pre- and post-ordination training.

Joy was made deaconess in 1977, deacon in 1987, and was among the first tranche of women to be ordained priest in the Church of England in 1994. Over recent years, she has been closely involved in the C of E's examination of the issue of women in the episcopate. She has a keen interest in ecumenism, being a member of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity and having participated in a number of ecumenical dialogues (most recently the Anglican-Orthodox conversations). Her areas of particular focus are biblical studies, spirituality and ministerial theology. She has a special and long-standing passion for the Letter to the Hebrews (the subject of her doctoral thesis) and its vital significance for today.

Myra Poole

North West CWO

The North West members of CWO will be meeting for a soiree on Monday 26th January 2009 from 7.00 onwards at 76 Church Road, Bebbington, Wirral. Jennifer Stark will give a talk at 8.00pm on her recent experiences in Rome on the occasion of the Bishops' Synod, when she attended the Women's event and presented the Petition on the Ordination of Women to the Vatican.

We hope that as many people as possible can make it to this social event. This will be an opportunity to explore ideas and plan a programme of activities, dates and venues for the year ahead. Please join us if you live within reach of the Wirral.

Mary Leslie

*God our deliverer, whose approaching birth
Still shakes the foundations of the world,
May we so wait for your coming
With eagerness and hope
That we may embrace without terror
The labour pangs of this new age*

From prayer mail

Yes we can!!

Before his Presidential victory, President Elect Obama of USA spoke of the "unyielding hope", of all people, of whatever party or nation, who retain faith in the capacity of any society to improve and reinvigorate itself. His words, "YES, WE CAN!" were inspirational - for all who suffer injustice, not least for Catholic women. WE CAN and WE WILL reinvigorate our Church!

Given the complexity of the problems the President Elect faces, his more moderate words after his victory, "Well, we'll try, but you know these problems are really big. We might not be able to solve them all at once, or at all" were understandable. In contrast to Obama's almost impossible mission, the mission of Catholic women to overcome the misogynist prejudice which bars them from the priesthood and diminishes their Church is simple. With God's help it should also be completely attainable in our lifetime.

We have been asked many times why we call for a reinstatement of the diaconate for women. After much research, we have amassed evidence to prove that there were women deacons in the early church.

Petition goes to Rome

At last women's voices are being heard in the heart of Rome. Whereas, no women were included in the 2002 synod, six women participated as experts in the October 5-26 World Synod of Bishops on "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. 19 women also present as auditors, making a total of 25 out of 240 delegates. Ten per cent of delegates is clearly not enough but it is a start.

At the same time, representatives from Church reform movements from all over the world joined together in Rome to call for full and equal participation of women in the Church, including ordination as deacons, priests and bishops. On the Feast of St Teresa of Avila, one of only three female Doctors of the Church, a press conference launched a weeklong campaign of women's ordination events.

The exclusion of women from ordination matters because the Vatican has enormous cultural and political influence in international affairs, a seat at the United Nations and the ability to meet almost at whim, with powerful Heads of State. Without the assistance of women's experiences in most Church decision-making bodies, the Vatican's influence on public policy regarding women's issues, especially in developing countries with large Catholic populations, has been devastating.

The Petition calling for the diaconate to be restored to women, which had been coordinated by <http://www.womenpriests.org/>. and signed by 26 organisations representing 40,000 people, and 1700 individuals was finally handed over to the top Vatican security officer. So far there has been no reaction from the Vatican, so it has been decided to keep the petition alive collecting signatures until the Pope responds. The hierarchy must be awakened to the reality that it would neither be sacrilegious, contrary to nature nor a departure from sanctified Church law, to ordain women.

YES WE CAN! With God's help we will bring beneficial change into our Church.

God speaks the true word of power, but we cannot believe it. We trust in our power, which we think will change the world, but what has it done?

Conservatives tend to mistrust powerlessness, while liberals tend to mistrust power. Jesus puts them both together in an utterly new way that satisfies neither group.

We have never had the courage to take the word of the Lord seriously. We are afraid of both gospel power and gospel powerlessness. We've experienced just enough Christianity, someone once said, to forever inoculate ourselves from wanting the real thing.

Richard Rohr from [*Spiral of Violence*](#)

Websites to visit

www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk

Ours!

<http://ncronline3.org/drupal/>

National Catholic Reporter

www.womenpriests.org. You can sign up for their regular newsletter

www.womensordination.org

More news of Rome Petition, Fr Bourgeois and many other issues

"WHAT SHALL WE SAY?"

A Day Conference on Inclusive Language in the Liturgy
hosted by Inclusive Church and WATCH

Saturday 7th February 2009 11.00am – 4.00pm

At "InSpire" St Peter's Church, Liverpool Grove,
London SE17 2HH
(near Elephant and Castle)

Key Note Speakers

Lucy Winkett – "Inclusive language: what is it and why use it?"

Elizabeth Baxter – "Inclusive Language for a Therapeutic Church"

Steven Shakespeare – "Speak to us of Prayers"

June Boyce - Tillman - "Sing to us of Hymns"

This day conference will consider the theological importance of inclusive language in liturgies both common and rare, with a primary emphasis on its use in our common Sunday worship services. We aim to have some fun too (it is on Saturday!) and to end with a panel discussion of your questions.

Cost of day (for sandwich lunch plus expenses of day) £15 (£5 for unwaged)

For booking, timetable of day, and travel info email herbert.clare@googlemail.com or write to Clare Herbert National Coordinator of IC at the Inspire Address given above, or phone 07504 577 210

Father Roy Bourgeois

Members were informed of a petition to support Father Roy Bourgeois and many signed. One member writes:-

"I have signed this petition, especially as in this instance the Vatican seems to be forcing Fr. Bourgeois' conscience, which is entirely unacceptable. Whilst as a disciplinary body they may ask him not to do or say certain things, they cannot force him to say that he does not believe what he clearly believes and bravely proclaims about female priesthood."

WOW has sent a letter in support of Fr. Roy Bourgeois to the American Papal Nuncio, with similar letters going to Fr. Roy's superior and the Maryknoll Council, and to the Vatican. More information about this and many other interesting issues on the WOC website www.womensordination.org A press release has also gone out, based on this letter

Dear Archbishop

I write as Coordinator of the ecumenical network, Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW), with regard to the threatened excommunication of Fr. Roy Bourgeois. Founded in 1996, WOW has representatives from 11 countries, and reaches many others through its international groups.

In 2001, at WOW's first international conference in Dublin, Vatican pressure forced the keynote speaker, Aruna Gnanadason, of the World Council of Churches, to withdraw. Two other speakers, Sister Joan Chittister OSB and Sister Myra Poole SND, were threatened with serious consequences. Reflecting on the Benedictine tradition of obedience and authority, Chittister's Prioress, Sister Christine Vladimiroff, wrote, 'There is a fundamental difference in the understanding of obedience within the monastic tradition and that which is being used by the Vatican to exert power and control and prompt a false sense of unity inspired by fear.'

Member groups of WOW represent a range of opinion on the 'contra legem' ordinations. Some women within our movement who feel called to ordination have chosen to wait for change in the Church's official position. Others, in an act of prophetic obedience to what they experience as a call from God and their communities, have chosen to take the path of valid but illegal ordination. WOW honours the courage and commitment of both groups.

Since the decree of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994), Roman Catholic women who feel called to ordained ministry, and those who support them, have been silenced. They have no voice within the Church's structures to make their views heard.

In this context, the threatened excommunication of Fr. Roy is a penalty that is out of all proportion to his supposed offence. His decision to speak out on women's ordination is an act of witness to his passion for justice and the Gospel. It is time to call a halt to this bullying of committed Catholics whose concern is to make the Gospel message of love, justice and compassion a reality for the world. What is at stake here is the Church's integrity as an institution which purports to uphold these Gospel values, and its regard for the teaching of the primacy of conscience.

'Over the pope as the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before anything else, if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. Conscience confronts [the individual] with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even of the official church'.

Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Vorgrimler, 1968, on *Gaudium et Spes*, pt.1, ch.1.

'Criticisms of papal declarations will be possible and necessary to the degree that they do not correspond with Scripture and the Creed, that is, with the belief of the Church. *Where there is neither unanimity in the Church nor clear testimony of the sources, then no binding decision is possible; if one is formally made, then its preconditions are lacking and therefore the question of its legitimacy must be raised.*'

Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes. Entwuerfe zur Ekklesiologie*, p. 144.

Patmos 1969 (emphasis added).

In conclusion, I quote from the keynote address by Aruna Gnanadason of the WCC, written for WOW's first conference in Dublin:

'We live in a world of exclusion and violence; a world with untold forms of discrimination that threaten the integrity of communities..... In the life of the church itself, there is evidence of gender-based discrimination and even of sexual abuse of women in pastoral contexts and more recently of the new steps the church has been called to take in the face of increasing evidence of paedophilia. In such a context, what should ordained ministry be about? The Church is called to respond with compassion and pastoral fortitude. At the heart of the commitment to the ordination of women and men must be the concern for the community in which the church is present to serve.'

(Gnanadason 2001, available at www.womenpriests.org/wow/gnanad.asp).

We urge you to support Fr. Roy's right to speak and act on this issue, and to oppose his excommunication. We assure you of our prayers as you reflect on the matter.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Stark
Coordinator, Women's Ordination Worldwide

***Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of justice:
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs (Matthew 5:10)***