

CWO e-news October 2009 issue 21

All email addresses have been edited. Please use info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk for any enquiries.

Welcome to issue 21 of the e-news. Editor Pat Brown. Please visit CWO's website www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk Previous issues can be seen there.

The next e-news will be for November and December. Please send items for publication by 15 November 2009.

Some people have sent me their thoughts on the occasion of the visit of St Thérèse's relics. There will be a separate mailing in about a week devoted specifically to these reflections. If you have visited the relics or have anything you would like to share with others, please email me by 24 October.

CWO Annual Gathering

After the business part of the AGM, discussing reports etc., there was time to look forward to future action.

There were ideas put forward about the Pope's visit. A media day will be organised to help us keep women's ordination on the agenda. The next Annual gathering will be organised in London to coincide with the visit.

The contra legem statement has not been agreed. NatCog have to work on it further. However a summary was agreed which is important in case the press ask us.

1. Catholic Women's Ordination (CWO) is a prayerful, educational, activist and consciousness-raising campaigning group in Britain, born out of the Church of England vote for women priests in November 1992, and has retained these strong ecumenical links with all its sister churches in its membership.
2. CWO is working for a reformed ordained ministry in a reformed Roman Catholic (RC) Church in the light of the documents and spirit of Vatican II coupled with the ever developing historical, theological and spiritual understanding of women's call to the full ordained ministry in the RC Church.
3. CWO is inclusive. Any member who chooses to follow a different path to ordained ministry may be a member.

Time for reflection is also important – (see Pippa Bonner's article below)

Full copy of minutes can be obtained on application.

After lunch, we had an interesting discussion followed by an uplifting liturgy. We are very grateful to Katharine for her valued contribution to this part of the meeting.

More time for reflection needed

I can only speak for myself, but...being part of a long distance campaigning group: CWO, which is consistently ignored or condemned by the organisational Catholic Church, can be really hard and hardening. I often think and feel, after many years of campaigning for a more collaborative and empowering church I am "running on near empty".

So I think it is important for me, and perhaps all of us, to attend to and nurture our spiritual lives so we go back to the sources that inspire and feed us and help us to contemplate, learn, build and strengthen the original and developing, maturing vision of CWO with God and each other with love, listening and support. Otherwise I think the danger is I/we can become despairing, angry and potentially unsupportive. This can alienate others who, do not wish to join and seek our vision, that has sometimes become, (because of how we can react), unattractive and unspiritual.

We need to grow, welcome new members and bring them on board with us and learn from them so there is an interaction that is creative.

In the Leeds group, we have Eucharistic liturgies that happen alongside our business meetings. I would additionally ask us all in our local groups, or nationally, to consider having CWO days/avenues of reflection so we can think, listen to each other and God and have these integral with our campaigning work.

Pippa Bonner, Leeds CWO

From Erin Saiz Hanna, Women's Ordination Conference (WOC)

Like you, I want to do more to support women religious facing Vatican interrogation. From the time I was three years old until I graduated college, I was educated and inspired by women religious. My passion for working for social justice and my roots in working for a more peaceful, just, and equal world comes from these amazing women whose shoulders I stand on. Many women religious are my best friends, mentors, and confidants. And since the onset of this investigation, I have heard from countless WOC supporters who share my warm regards for women religious and who want to take action to show their support. You can take action today by signing this very important ad. Click here https://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/531/t/7457/shop/custom.jsp?donate_page_KEY=5300&track=CSG13

Women religious have stood with WOC since 1975. Now it's time to stand in solidarity with our sisters. Thank you for taking action!

More at

<http://thankyousister.com/>
<http://ncronline.org/news/women/vatican-investigates-us-women-religious-leadership>

African nuns tell Vatican they want more influence

By NICOLE WINFIELD (AP) –
Associated Press
October 9, 2009

Article cannot be printed here for copyright reasons. Please click link

http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jpI1bL-AIzW8aIF-W_AKrb7pop6wD9B7LMTG0

In the last e-news, you were asked to write to Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk to support Sister Louise Akers. Here's a letter sent by one of our members.

Your Grace

Your action of 10th August 2009, calling on Sister Louise Akers to cancel her membership of Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) and renounce her long held support for the equality of women and men in the Church is without mercy and contrary to justice as I along with many others have come to understand it from close attention to Scripture and the example of Christ. Sister Louise Akers has a duty as a baptised member of the Church to inform her conscience and to live by it. Surely no other member of the community, including those in authority can constrain what we know in our hearts. Considering Sister Louise's lifetime of dedicated service in Christ's name it seems arbitrary to forbid her to share her insights and convictions in faith with other members of the faith community.

Like the Chinese nation with its one child birth policy, the visible Roman Catholic Church may soon find itself bereft of women if those with authority in the Church continue to ignore the movement of the Spirit in our time. That women's rights are human rights, is a position increasingly recognised in our world, taken to heart by women and by the men who respect women and choose to live in mutual relationship with them, as exemplified in the gospels.

There is no equal justice in a Christian Community that has six sacraments for women and seven for men: ordain women or stop baptising them. These words were first used by WOC in 1975. As a member of the worldwide movement for the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church, I am prepared to continue to wait upon the Spirit to lead us. But for me, it would be a denial of the gospel to set my face against the inclusion of women in every aspect of Church life.

I assure you that I respect your office and authority in our Church, but in conscience, I must speak truth to power. Sincerely, Alexina Murphy

From a remembered meeting with the Dalai Lama who said,

"I have a friend in Dharamsala (where he lives in exile) who is an old monk. He is 94 years old now. We talk regularly and I asked him to tell me what he knows of compassion.

He told me of his life many years ago. He was locked up in a Chinese gulag for 20 years for practicing his beliefs. He told me of the hardships he faced in the gulag. He said many times he was in danger. Naturally, I thought to myself he must mean danger of violence, danger of death in the gulag. But I asked him anyway,

'Do you mean you were in danger of dying in there?'

'No', he replied, 'I was in danger of losing my compassion for my Chinese captors.'"

He went on to say that having compassion does not mean we are passive and allow people to walk all over us. But it means that "although we may hate the acts that are being committed, we must not hate the actors". That they are very troubled souls and are usually living in their own prison created by their brutality.

Inclusive Church Press Release 12 October 2009

The Decision of the Revision Committee

Inclusive Church is deeply disturbed by the recent announcement of the Revision Committee. It has moved away from the expressed will of General Synod in July 2008 - that there should be legislation to consecrate women as bishops on the same terms as men with an additional code of practice containing arrangements for those who do not accept the authority of bishops who are women.

Their decision reflects a further undermining of the Anglican understanding of the role of the Bishop as the pastor of, and focus of unity in the Diocese. If implemented it will inevitably create a two-tier institution with little prospect of long-term unity.

The impact of this on those within and outside the church will be immense. The bias shown against women in this proposal will mean that the church continues to be seen as institutionally discriminatory towards them. The impression given is of an organisation which perpetuates injustice, undermining its ability to witness to Christ in the world. It ignores the considerable gifts ordained women have to offer within the Episcopate. Men and women should be present on the same terms.

We urge the Revision Committee to reconsider its decision and prepare legislation, as it was requested, to open the Episcopate to women with a national code of practice to be drafted separately.

www.inclusivechurch2.net

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr9509.html>

If all gets too much for you, try going to a quiet place and shouting as loud and long as you can.

Ulysses Brave

Equal say for women in Church decisions by CITHARA PAUL Sept. 19, 2009

What politicians won't share with ladies, the Church will — equal space.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of India, the highest ecclesiastical body of Catholics in the country, will soon come out with a policy that recommends equal representation for women at every level to "redeem" a centuries-long "injustice".

In other words, a say in decisions.

The policy, to be announced after a meeting of the CBCI executive later this month, comes at a time India's political parties are still undecided on leaving aside one-third of the seats in elected legislative bodies for women.

Sources in the Catholic Church, one of the most rigid patriarchal structures around, said the equal representation policy was "historic". It would be the "first time in the history of the Catholic Church" across the world that such an "attempt" is being made, said a source.

"Women, no matter whether they are nuns or ordinary laity, have never got their due. Ours is an attempt to redeem this century-long injustice," said Sister Lilly Francis, executive secretary of the CBCI Commission on gender policy.

The crack at the Church glass ceiling followed an all-India survey initiated by Sister Lilly's team. Some of the bodies where women stand to get equal representation are CBCI commissions, which take decisions regarding all aspects of Catholic life; seminaries; parish and diocesan pastoral councils, which take administrative decisions; finance committees that decide diocese budgets; marriage tribunals and social service societies.

Women can "also become pastoral assistants in all parishes and take part in a common decision-making process", says the policy, which includes a plan to ensure violence-free homes and workplaces.

"The gender policy would be a landmark," Sister Lilly said. "It is the first time in the history of the Catholic Church that this kind of an initiative is being taken. Even fellow sisters from the so-called liberated western countries could not believe that the Catholic Church in India is going to have an egalitarian system this soon."

The CBCI Commission, however, steered clear of the controversial topic of considering women for priesthood which would allow them to conduct mass.

The Catholic Church has been consistently opposing priesthood for women, though the Anglican Church has allowed women to be ordained since the '80s.

Equal say for women in Church Decisions (continued)

As part of its plan to bridge the divide, the CBCI Commission has suggested gender sensitivity courses and feminist theology as main subjects in seminaries, where priests and nuns train, and also called for Biblical interpretations from women's perspective. According to the policy, each parish should have a women's cell and a vigilance cell against violence. It has recommended gender sensitisation workshops for bishops, priests and other office-bearers. The CBCI has been told to condemn domestic violence and sexual abuse through church documents and homilies.

The Commission has asked the CBCI to stress on education of girls in Catholic schools and organise programmes at villages, parishes and dioceses to boost self-confidence among women.

Another suggestion is emphasis on equal partnership while conducting marriage preparation courses. "Educate men on the art of sharing power," the Commission says. The policy also includes suggestions to ensure equal pay for equal work for women employed in Church-run institutions, and land and property rights for women.

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090920/jsp/nation/story_11518250.jsp

Pope Benedict on formation of conscience when was Cardinal Josef Ratzinger.

'If I believe that the church has its origins in the Lord, then the teaching office in the church has a right to expect that it, as it authentically develops, will be accepted as a primary factor in the formation of conscience.

There corresponds to this then an obligation of the magisterium to speak its word in such a way that it will be understood in the midst of conflicts of values and orientations. It must express itself in such a way that an inner resonance of its word may be possible within the conscience, and this means more than just an occasional declaration of the highest level.

Here we need what Plato was referring to when he said the good cannot be known scholastically, but only after regular familial discussion can the notion of the good spring into the soul like light springing from a small spark (Seventh Letter).

This constant "familial discussion" within the church must build up the community conscience; those who try to express their word in the teaching office, as well as those who wish to learn that word from within themselves.'

Introduction to Christian Ethics Edited by Hamel and Himes Paulist Press 1989. The article originally appeared in *Origins* 13 (March 15 1984): 657, 659-666

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*

Also on first Wednesday

A prayerful presence inside Westminster Cathedral is the logical progression of London CWO's witness outside the cathedral, which London CWO has persevered in for the last 14 years! This we hold in silence beneath the 8th Station with all its significance for us and wearing our purple scarves/stoles. Please join us if you are in London

The CWO Newsletter

(That's the "physical" one with the purple cover)

The newsletter will come out in January.

Please send articles, book reviews etc to

(edited)

Please recycle

any old how to join CWO forms. The Bank of Ireland has changed their address (for the second time!) so they can't be used. Please email me if you would like a copy of the form with the new address.

Websites

www.womenwordspirit.org

Women, word, Spirit (formerly Catholic Women's Network)

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

Group for rescinding the Act of Synod

www.womenandthechurch.org

Women and the Church

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

National Catholic Reporter - Joan Chittester is a regular contributor

www.womenpriests.org.

You can sign up for their regular newsletter

www.spirituschristi.org

An inclusive Catholic Church where all are welcome