

## CWO e-news April 2009 issue 15

Welcome to issue 15 of the e-news. Joint editors Pat Brown and Myra Poole. Please visit CWO's website [www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk](http://www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk)  
Previous issues can be seen there.

This month there's another petition to sign to support a sister who has been discriminated against for writing in favour of inclusive language; also a provocative article from Gareth Morgan. Please feel free to send your response to this or anything in the e-news for publication next month.

Please contact me with items for next e-news by 9 May 2009. This deadline must be met as I will be away from 12 May.

### **CWO Annual Gathering 2009**

Please put this date in your diary now!

**Saturday 10 October 2009**  
**10.3am to 4.00pm**  
**St Olave's Church York**

Morning - AGM

Lunch provided

Afternoon - On the occasion of her relics being in Yorkshire, we will be looking at the spirituality of St Therese especially her vocation to ordained ministry and understanding of the need for a reformed priesthood

### **Fourth Plinth Trafalgar Square**

There's still time to register for this project mentioned last month. You can read about it and watch Anthony Gormley's video on <http://oneandother.co.uk>

*I am not a liberator. Liberators do not exist. The people free themselves.*

Che

### **Help still needed!**

No one has enquired about these jobs. We can't go on like this. Either people offer to help or CWO has to pay for these jobs to be done by an outside agency.

There is plenty of time to work together so volunteers needn't feel they are being dropped in at the deep end. Please consider helping. This is your organisation!

1. **Membership secretary** –working closely with the treasurer. You will need to be able to keep a database up to date, and send reminders when subs are due.
2. **Treasurer** – keeping the accounts for Lisieux Trust and CWO.

Both the above jobs take quite a lot of time and would suit someone who knows about data bases and Microsoft Excel.

3. **E-news editor** - This involves chasing people for items for the monthly e-news, assembling it and sending it out to members. You also need to produce a version for the website with personal contact details removed
4. **Website link person** - This involves working with our website person and getting new items into our CWO news section  
*Pat Brown*

## Is the Pope preparing to join CWO?

The title of this article is perhaps over-optimistic, but it is worth noting that in recent years the Pope (and the Vatican more generally) have been issuing a range of statements which, at least at face value, are fully supportive of the equality of women and men. This article emanates from a brief e-mail exchange with members of Leeds CWO as to whether or not this is good news for the place of women in the Church.

The latest statement comes from the Pope's trip to Angola – the text in italics is from the official Vatican e-mail bulletin (English edition).

*Today [22 March 2009] on the outskirts of Luanda, Angola, the Pope met with representatives of Catholic movements for the promotion of women.*

*In his remarks, the Pope called everyone 'to an effective awareness of the adverse conditions to which many women have been - and continue to be - subjected, paying particular attention to ways in which the behaviour and attitudes of men, who at times show a lack of sensitivity and responsibility, may be to blame'.*

*After highlighting the need to 'recognise, affirm and defend the equal dignity of man and woman', Benedict XVI explained how both are 'called to live in profound communion through a reciprocal recognition of one another and the mutual gift of themselves, working together for the common good through the complementary aspects of masculinity and femininity. ...'*

*The Pope lamented the fact that 'history records almost exclusively the accomplishments of men, when in fact much of it is due to the determined, unrelenting and charitable action of women. No one today should doubt that women have 'a full right to become actively involved in all areas of public life, and this right must be affirmed and guaranteed, also, where necessary, through appropriate legislation.'*

The Pope's speech continues with some slightly patronising comments about the place of women in the family. Nevertheless, taken at face value, the words above represent a huge shift from the traditional Catholic views of the place of women in the world. An explicit affirmation of "the equal dignity of women" and which calls for this to be "affirmed and guaranteed through legislation" is surely a big leap forward.

The implication is that the Pope is fully supportive of legislation such as the Sex Discrimination Act in the UK, and he makes no specific reference to wanting exemptions for religious organisations.

However, it is harder to tease out the real implication of this sort of statement in terms of application to the Church. How can the Pope make speeches like this when there is so much obvious discrimination against the formal involvement of women in ordained ministry and hence in any positions of authority? I can see three possible interpretations.

(a) The first view is that such statements are totally cynical, and are simply designed to act as a cover for the Catholic Church's treatment of women. I realise that many people, see almost anything from the Pope in that light – and given the history, this is understandable.

(b) However, even if we think the Pope has no intention whatsoever to apply such statements to the Church itself, the mere fact that he is saying this helps to highlight the inconsistency of Church teaching and hence the ludicrous nature of the current prohibition on women priests. I believe that even quite traditional Catholics can see this. So, statements like this from the Pope may therefore help them realise that the Church must reconsider the place of women.

(c) Or is it a sign of real progress that the Pope now feels able to speak so positively of the equal place of women and men? Might he, perhaps, be gently saying to bishops and others in the Church that the Church's traditional attitude to women is wrong and that a new way of thinking is needed?

I cannot answer this question, but CWO members and others have been praying for many years that the Holy Spirit will speak to the Pope and Roman Curia on this issue. Perhaps, just possibly, Benedict is hearing her voice.

*Gareth Morgan*

*The destiny of societies is strictly connected to the well-being of their women.*  
Archbishop Thomas Menampampil SBD of Guwahati  
quoted in *the Tablet* 11 April 2009

*You shall go out with joy  
And be let forth with peace  
And the mountains and the hills  
Will break forth before you  
There'll be shouts of joy  
And all the trees of the fields  
Will clap, will clap their hands*

*And all the trees of the fields  
will clap their hands  
The trees of the fields will clap their hands  
The trees of the fields will clap their hands  
While you go out with joy*

Isaiah 55

## **European Network Study Day - Sat. May 9<sup>th</sup>**

The theme of the day is 'Eco-feminism' and the main speaker is Dr Anne Primavesi. Place- St Katherine, 2 Butcher Row, Limehouse, E14 8DS.

Time 9.00am - 5.30pm

Cost £15, no lunch, £25- includes lunch. There are only seven places available so it will be on a first come, first serve basis.

Please contact via website if you want to come as soon as possible.

## **Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women**

London Forum Day  
The Church of our Lady  
Lodge Road NW8 8LA  
(opposite Lord's Cricket Ground)

Wed 1 July 2009

11.00 am to 4 pm (Coffee from 10.30 am)

Yes we can!  
What future for Christian Women  
across Europe?

Keynote Address Martina Heinrichs  
Co- President EFECW

Also Sharing News from the Forum and  
other women present

Coffee & Tea provided. Please bring packed  
lunch

Bring and Buy in aid of Ruth Epting Fund  
(bursaries)

for more details and booking form  
contact via website

## **Prayer Link**

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

*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*

**In response to Clare Shelton-Jones** (*Response to The Big Questions and Vatican 2 petition CWO March enews*)

I think her suggestion is an excellent one and one we have used effectively to campaign for the release of people who have been detained for deportation as part of the Asylum process after they have failed in their application. We have done this successfully I would hasten to add (not in every case) but email is an excellent way of spreading the news and getting / recruiting a whole body of people to join in your campaign, whatever it is!

I have signed some petitions where the letter to my MP and the MP's email address are already present and all I have to do is add my email and my name and it gets sent automatically from the website so I would say in order to make sure that the maximum number of people sign up it would be good to have a website that is this efficient because, if not, you might reduce the impact of what you are doing, inadvertently of course, by reducing the number of people who do in fact take the action that you are directing them to take.

Also related to this I have a comment about the petition that you included in the enews re Vatican II which I think is relevant to the above as well, in that if you/we are asking people to sign up to something and we need to attract a lot of people who wouldn't necessarily consider themselves to be Catholics or active members of the Catholic Church (such as myself) then we/you need to speak in plain English!

I read the article below describing the Petition and to be brutally honest I have not got a clue what the majority of it means!

I am not unintelligent, I have a degree in Psychology and am a qualified nurse but if I cannot decipher all the Church Speak (as opposed to education speak, medical speak, etc) what chance has your average person got?!

I think that we need to remember that in order to sign up to support something people need to understand it first, so if you do decide to run with the petition/letter or any other campaign can we have the concepts explained in plain terms with less Latin terms please?!

I mean all of this in the best possible way as I am heartily in support of the CWO Campaign and any other for that matter that may result in my being able to enter a Catholic Church again without crying and feeling like I don't belong in it!

*Jacqui Lovell*

*Sophia,  
knead me  
until I rise with you.*

From PrayerMail

## **Take Action: Wisconsin Parish Worker Fired for her Feminist Views**

A call has been made to join in with our sisters and brothers of faith around the world to stand in solidarity with Ruth Kolpack. Kolpack was fired on March 12, 2009 from her position as pastoral associate by Bishop Robert Morlino because of her feminist views. Kolpack had come under criticism for her Master's of Divinity thesis, "Inclusive Language for Naming God: Challenge for the Church." The firing occurred after a ten minute meeting with Morlino who admits to having read only bits and pieces of the thesis.

Despite her record of 35 years service in the parish, Bishop Morlino denied her the opportunity to defend herself and her work. And she was denied an opportunity to face and respond to her accusers. Denying these standard requirements is an offence against natural justice.

Though Bishop Morlino admits he is not familiar with the 51 page thesis, he demanded as a condition of her continued employment that she denounce the thesis, make a profession of faith, and take an oath of loyalty in order to remain as a pastoral associate at the parish. While Kolpack was prepared to profess her faith and take an oath, she could not in good conscience refute her thesis. From her point of view, to do so would risk her reputation as a scholar. Morlino disagrees with the assessment in Kolpack's thesis that:

- no language is adequate for naming or describing God
- We can use only metaphors based on what we know about God and yet all the metaphors we employ will not exhaust the description of God. When we limit the metaphors used for God, we make the metaphors our idols.

Because of her unwillingness to renounce this point of view, Morlino has terminated her employment in the diocese. More news about the situation is available

<http://www.womenpriests.org/circles/fb.asp?m=32786>.

A copy of her thesis is available here:

[\*\*Inclusive Language for Naming God: Challenge for the Church\*\*](#)

There is a petition to support Ruth Kolpack and respectfully ask Bishop Morlino to reconsider his decision.

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/stand-with-ruth>

## Websites to visit!

[www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk](http://www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk)

Ours! Don't forget to click on it every so often

<http://www.gras.org.uk/pdf/winter2009.pdf>

A fine essay on the fundamentals of the choices facing the C of E in appointing Women Bishops by Rev'd. Canon Peggy Jackson

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

National Catholic Reporter - Joan Chittester is a regular contributor

[www.womenpriests.org](http://www.womenpriests.org). You can sign up for their regular newsletter

[www.spirituschristi.org](http://www.spirituschristi.org) An inclusive Catholic Church where all are welcome

[www.womensordination.org](http://www.womensordination.org)

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

## ***What is the oppressed part of your being?***

*Do you realize with what difficulty surrender will come to a fixing, managing mentality? There's nothing in that psyche prepared to understand the spiritual wisdom of surrender. All of the great world religions teach surrender. Yet most of us, until we go through the hole in our soul—our weak spot in the middle—just don't think surrender is necessary. At least that's how it is for those of us in First World countries. The poor, on the other hand, seem to understand limitation at a very early age.*

*The Third World faces its limitation through a breakdown in the social-economic system. But we have to face our limitations, it seems, in the interior world. That's our liberation theology. We must recognize our own poor man, our own abused woman, the oppressed part of ourselves that we hate, that we deny, that we're afraid of. That's the hole in our soul. It's the way through, maybe the only way, says the crucified Jesus.*

Richard Rohr

## Media Day

Last month, we asked if anyone was interested in a media day as requested at the AGM. Only one person has responded. If anyone else is interested please contact via website as soon as possible. Please say in what aspects of media you're particularly interested and any suggestions you might have. A day can then be arranged in line with demand and in a convenient location for those interested in attending.

If we don't get any more response by the end of April, we will have to presume there is no interest.