

CWO supplement to the e-news on the occasion of the visit of Pope Benedict to the UK September 2010

From the Catholic Herald 19.9.10

By no means all the protestors on Saturday were angry members of the LGBT community, however.

Inside the arena I saw a pilgrim wearing a T-shirt that bore the following instruction:

"Pope Benedict: ordain women now"

Well done to Gareth for wearing this "instruction" so well.



For those of you who've been on the moon, Pope Benedict visited us last September. CWO maintained a high profile in the weeks leading up to the visit, particularly after the statement linking clerical paedophilia and women's ordination. Myra set the tone on News at Ten when she questioned, "What would Jesus say?" and that question motivated us all.

Over the next few days we received many enquiries from press and individuals. The website provided an address to contact us and the CWO mobile nearly blew a fuse as a result of so many phone calls! On the Sunday before the visit, the subject of women's ordination was third item on the early evening and ten o'clock news on BBC and ITV. We were also featured in longer interviews on the BBC news channel. This was because various polls had shown that the majority of Catholics thought women should "have more authority in the Church."

At the vigil on the eve of the visit, organised by our London group, our quiet presence and liturgy was filmed by TV companies from all over the world. We didn't have time to get nervous, as microphones were thrust at us one after the other.

At Lambeth, there were about a hundred of us (and more than a hundred balloons) and again the press were there in great numbers. The CWO mobile was still ringing from people who couldn't get there to interview us as we waited for the Pope to arrive. Peter Tatchell joined us for our procession from Southwark to Lambeth and stayed with us, redirecting eager journalists to our members rather than take the limelight himself. Some of us joined the march he organised – Protest the Pope. I was so glad to be there and be in solidarity with people who have been hurt by the intransigence of this institution. The interviews continued during this march but weren't shown. The media went a bit quiet on us once the visit got under way. However, that should not put us off. We were seen all over the world: Europe, Asia, Australia, the US and Canada. Our small group through prayer, campaigning and persistence has put this issue well and truly on the map and it's never going away. Not till we win!

Pat B

From Olive P

The demonstration at Oscott was a very happy experience for me, and I've found myself re-energised by it. The sight of so many bishops and seminarians waving to us enthusiastically as their coaches came by slowly, when they could hardly have missed our banner and tee-shirts, is now one of my most hilarious memories. I was in eye contact with one seminarian as he blessed us, and could see he was quite taken aback by my large Sign of the Cross in response. I pray that these encounters will have radical, if forever undetectable, effects on the future of our Church.

From Rosina E

I have deflated and saved the balloon (to go with my badges). It will probably perish slowly making a rubbery smell as it goes. Perhaps by the time it has completely disintegrated, things may have changed? Perhaps I should treat it as a prophetic symbol - that the symbol of women's ordination will not rot until women are truly ordained in reality and its function as a symbol is no longer required. The shadows fade in the light of reality. Fanciful? Apartheid ended, and the Iron Curtain came down. Even Margaret Thatcher resigned. We are all mortals.

From Katharine S

For me, one of the greatest blessings of the Pope's visit was the chance to march with many other reform groups, mainly secular but with a few other religious groups, and to make our voices heard for reform in the Church. Much of what was reported in the press was rather negative, but for me it was the sharing with people as we walked along with our "ordain women now" banners - talking to young gay guys who wonder if there is any room in the church for them, to young American women visiting London who hastily made a banner and came to join us. We spoke to many media groups as well as well-wishers along Piccadilly who said - keep up the good work!!

We spoke to journalists from South Africa and the French Catholic Channel KTO amongst others. For me, it was an important part of my pilgrimage - where I am in the Church feels very much on the edge, and here were a lot of people whose voices don't often get heard. After a well-earned stop at Cafe Nero, it was back to Hyde Park for our presence as the Pope went past. Despite the presence of a very aggressive Muslim group opposite us who shouted racial hatred for quite some time, we took up Taize chants and encouraged others to sing! Despite the megaphone of those opposed to us (literally and figuratively!) we raised our voices as the Pope went past and shouted "Ordain Women Now." He could not have helped seeing us as the Popemobile was very much on our side of the road. Once again, the conversations we had with the people around us were valuable in sharing the work of CWO.

Our media presence has made CWO known to Catholic groups we could not otherwise hope to influence. My father was told by Opus Dei friends that they had been complaining about us, and I heard positive reports from French KTO and Sky. It felt very much like one of those "St Therese moments"- Therese was told not to speak to the Pope of her desire to enter Carmel when presented to the Pope at an Audience, but she did! I am sure St Therese gave me the energy for walking that day!

From Sue W

Many of us had greeted the idea of the Papal visit to the UK with mixed feelings, partly because we were distinctly unhappy about very recent announcements from the Vatican, yet this also provided us with a unique opportunity for publicising the cause of women's ordination.

Due to the generosity of CWO members both living and dead we were able to pay for fifteen London buses for a month with our message to Pope Benedict emblazoned on them. That in itself was exciting, but as the Papal visit drew near, various media opportunities presented themselves which many of us availed ourselves of. A particularly articulate presentation on the BBC 24 News Channel on the Sunday before Benedict's arrival caused the Archbishop of Southwark to alter his message in the course of the day about women in the Church. There were also later repercussions about this which were dealt with as we stood outside Lambeth Palace while the Papal entourage was inside.

My memories are particularly vivid from our vigil outside Westminster Cathedral on 15th September when many of the European press were there. One French interviewer questioned the nature of the command on the bus slogan, but I explained that it was more expensive to put in 'Please' and in any case were just trying to get our message across to whomever may read it.

The televised walk to Lambeth Place from St. George's RC Cathedral was particularly moving to be in. It felt like many of us across different groups were in solidarity at long last, especially when we got to Lambeth Palace and met up with members of WATCH. I know some members felt awkward shouting 'Ordain Women Now' as the Papal entourage arrived, but this particular member was very happy to have a go at the bishops.

During this time also several of us were interviewed by the UK press. I was actually named in the Guardian the following day which has had some good repercussions in my parish, surprisingly enough, from people who I had not realised were very much in support of what we are doing, which currently of course is raising awareness. One friend, however, did text me with the comment 'Fame at last, thanks to the Pope!'

Sue W continues

On the Saturday of the Papal visit, prior to the Hyde Park liturgy some people had marched with the 'Protest the Pope' group and others of us were going to meet them at Hyde Park Corner in the early evening with our banner. Unfortunately, we could not connect up with the earlier marchers as the police would not let us cross to the Wellington Arch by the time we had arrived there, made late by having to walk from south of Victoria as no buses or cabs were available. Mary and I did manage to raise our banner (which was the same as on the buses i.e. "Pope Benedict - Ordain Women Now") above the heads of the crowd at Hyde Park Corner. We stood in silent witness as the Pope went past when he and his entourage would definitely have seen the banner. We also had a mixed reception from those around us, with some Polish men rebuking us and others, mainly women, agreeing with us and many taking photos. We got back to the car on foot again, only to find that I had a puncture, but we felt that it had been a very worthwhile experience.

For those who took the more orthodox route of attending the liturgies, many found them very moving. The one abiding comment from many quarters, however, was that the whole panoply looked extremely unbalanced with the noticeable absence of women. Do we want to walk in procession in dressing-up clothes, I ask myself? Even if the answer is 'probably not', it would still seem vital to hear women's voices and women's spiritual input at every level. The RC Church is now seen as extremely anachronistic in this area, if not in others. Let us hope that the Holy Spirit, plus the workers, can enable it to change!

From Cathy W

A group of us met at the crossroads of College Rd and Chester Rd outside Oscott before the afternoon meeting of Pope Benedict, the bishops and seminarians at the college. We were able to hold our banners on the edge of the crossing outside the barriers. We made sure that people behind us could get a good view as well. A couple of hundred people had gathered along the roads behind barriers to see the Pope go by. There were a lot of police around, who were helpful to everyone. We chatted to people around, who were positive about women in the church. A mother told us that her little girl was fascinated by the church, and we hoped that she might one day have the chance to be ordained.

After a short wait, there was some activity with police motorcycles going along the road, and before long the bishops passed by in two smart silver coaches. There was much friendly waving on the part of everyone, including us! Then the Pope's car passed our banner calling for women's ordination - we thought he saw us, although the windows were a little darkened. Finally, there were two coaches of seminarians and teachers. Sadly, the body language there appeared negative.

It was all over in an hour or so, but it felt good to have been able to communicate however briefly with the bishops and Pope Benedict, and to be part of a cheerful open air crowd.

Litany of thanks from Pippa B

- Thanks that CWO continues, came together, prayed, laughed and cried together as we walked and stood for what is important to CWO.
- Thanks that CWO was able to pray and speak to each other and to the world through the media.
- Thanks to Christina and Chris for giving some of us media training, and encourage ways to speak out and develop confidence.
- Thanks to the Spirit for helping many members to respond courageously to opportunities that were presented, to give our CWO message.
- Thanks for the grounding in life and experience which supported us before and during the Pope's visit.
- Thanks for the liturgies and years of prayer which have helped to form us in CWO.
- Thanks for the energy and diversity of CWO and the creativity as the contemplative and active strands of our vision grows and develops.
- Thanks for the Spirit and the support from each other when we needed it, particularly when it didn't "work out" as planned.
- "Thanks" to the Vatican for that now infamous Statement "apparently" linking sexual abuse and women's ordination which attracted attention.
- Thanks for Catholic Voices 4 Reform to which CWO contributed as an ad hoc partner, which also gave us extra support and strength.
- Thanks to Myra for starting the media adventure on the BBC on the 10pm News as soon as the Statement appeared.
- Thanks to Pat who spent the next few weeks answering the CWO mobile and website which sprang to life, day and night.
- Thanks for the willingness of all members to try and develop any opportunities to send out our CWO message of reform whenever we could.
- Thanks for the courage of the Spirit and companionship with each other, which inspired women and men to step out in joyful faith.
- Thanks for the Westminster vigil where many of us around the country came together again to pray and face the world and media.
- Thanks for the procession from Southwark to Lambeth where we prayed and sang together.
- Thanks for the coach driver who parked the Cardinals and Bishops alongside of our Lambeth Vigil so they were faced with our CWO message.
- Thanks to WATCH and womenpriest.org who were with us and have been a supportive presence over the years.
- Thanks to Peter Tatchell who spoke of women's ordination many times and supported our Lambeth Vigil and CWO.
- Thanks for the Hyde Park Vigil where the Pope saw us as he turned away from extremist protestors on the opposite side of the road.
- Thanks for the Oscott Vigil where the seminarians of England, Wales and Scotland drove past our smiling, waving supporters.
- Thanks to the police in London and Birmingham who gave us prime sites and ensured we could pray and protest safely.
- Thanks to you: what we have tried to be and do together.
- Thanks to Blessed John Henry Newman.
- Thanks to God. Alleluia!

From Kathryn B

The Sixties seemed to pass me by: I didn't really drink, I only smoked for a week, I didn't do drugs and I certainly didn't protest. It seems I needed grey hair and a bus pass to find the desire to speak out. As an Anglican, I could only sympathize with the plight of women in the Roman Catholic Church who believed they had a vocation to be priests. It seemed an unlikely possibility. When I heard about CWO blowing its meagre funds on a poster campaign on the London buses, it fired my imagination and I sent off an email of good wishes. Actions speak louder than words and Pat immediately pinged back an email inviting me to join – and so your latest supporter was recruited.

It's almost a month now since I stood in the sunshine outside Lambeth Palace, sharing in a tiny moment of history. The lasting impression of the day was the friendliness and good humour. The Pope arrived in a black car with blackened windows, so it was impossible to know for sure that he was there. After his meeting with the Archbishop when he emerged in the popemobile, my very first thought was how undignified a vehicle it was. My second that he looked so tired. It was when the Pope looked through us and not at us, all the body language emitting the message "I'm not listening to you", that we began to chant, not with anger, not even with hope, not mindlessly, but because we could do no other.

Ordain women now. Ordain women now.
Ordain women now.

I truly believe the Holy Spirit was with us as we stood there on that Lambeth pavement and lifted our voices on the breeze. Not to this Pope, but to heaven. In my heart of hearts, I believe the Reformation of the Roman Catholic Church has begun.

From Rosina E

The words of John Henry Newman -
Verse 1

'Firmly I believe and truly
God is Three and God is One;
And I next acknowledge duly
Manhood taken by the Son

Verse 4

And I hold in veneration,
For the love of him alone,
Holy Church as his creation,
And her teachings as his own.'

I have copied these words from the English Hymnal. As a member of the Church of England, I have often sung these with conviction. However, Verse 4 is a qualified 'Yes' to the Church. The tension lies between what I conceive as my duty towards Jesus Christ and my duty towards the Church which I may consider is perverting his teaching. In this lies the root of the Protestant Reformation. John Henry Newman reconciled the two for himself in his day, but the tension is always there. This is what he is saying to me in this hymn. That is why when I stood with the Catholic Women for Ordination outside Lambeth Palace on September 17th, I was thankful that I am a member of the Church of England and not of Rome. The Pope was welcomed to these shores by a woman Head of the Church, Her Majesty the Queen; a woman Canon of Westminster Abbey welcomed him there, so perhaps one day a woman bishop (or Archbishop) will welcome another Pontiff to Lambeth Palace. I don't know whether Cardinal Newman supported the suffragettes; he probably didn't. Yet Jesus was not only born of a woman and ministered to women but listened to them, changed his mind because of them, and sent one out to be the first witness to his resurrection.

From Amanda R

The Church's teaching has always been a puzzling dichotomy - some wonderful leadership on social justice issues, which makes no sense at all when you consider the marginalization of women. Having been a "sleeping" member of CWO for years without doing anything much except being part of a dignified and silent witness outside a church where a former Anglican priest was ordained as a Catholic priest, I thought the Pope's coming visit was a timely reminder "to do something".

Work commitments meant that I could only attend on the Friday afternoon of the Pope's visit - where there was a tremendous sense of solidarity and purpose. Not just Catholics supporting women's ordination, but many Anglicans - remembering their original struggles. We had banners and balloons and the t-shirts and we marched singing to our place outside Lambeth Palace - it was a long wait and there were other protesters around. We were joined by Peter Tatchell - some of us were photographed talking to him - he is a truly lovely man whose support of CWO is long-standing. The "paps" were from many different countries and appeared to know the Pope's itinerary better than the police who feigned ignorance of his whereabouts and why he was running late. Slightly off-putting were the marksmen on the tower but this was shortly after the bomb scare.

Firstly the coaches arrived - very sleek executive style - and despite our best banner waving - we were unable to get much of a reaction from the Catholic bishops - think only one waved and smiled. It was an odd experience. A real heart-sink. To look away from us and not meet our eye. The disinterest or even disgust at us was chilling and I felt anger. I had tried not to let this emotion rule, but in the end was not able to rise above it. The Pope ignored us as well. Despite the hurt, it wasn't an experience I would have wanted to miss.

But now the question of whether to stay in the church or go seems more pertinent but is not something answerable.

The Parable of the Prodigal Daughter Lk 15: 11-32 Morag L (sermon for the Pope's visit)

I am sure you have all heard sermons on the Parable of the Prodigal Son many times, but have you ever thought about the Parable of the Prodigal Daughter?

A man had a son and a daughter. The son worked with his father on the family farm. Certainly he worked very hard, but he shared in the making of decisions about the running of the farm, its buildings, and the people, who lived and worked there. He also shared in the teaching of the farm workers and household servants. The daughter also worked very hard on her father's farm. She cleaned, cooked and served meals, made clothes and did the mending, cared for the old, and the ill, and sometimes also worked in the fields. But she had no say in any of the decisions that were made! Indeed she was rarely consulted about anything! Her father and brother, and sometimes her mother too, simply took her for granted. She rarely complained, or protested, but if they ever did pay any attention to her, it was only to denigrate her and make the situation worse.

Parable of the Prodigal Daughter (continued)

One day she decided, she had had enough! She asked her father for her share of the inheritance. Her father was extremely annoyed and anxious about her request, but she insisted, so he gave his daughter her share of his property. The daughter promptly packed her possessions and left home. She travelled to a great city and spent her money studying with the best scholars and Rabbis. She worked very hard and became a respected, knowledgeable scholar. Eventually she was consecrated as a priest in a synagogue of the Diaspora and people came to hear her preach and teach.

Meanwhile, there were more problems on the family farm. Her mother had died, her brother's wife had divorced him for domestic abuse and finally the housemaids had left to work for the farmer across the road, who was much more ethical and considerate in his attitudes. He paid them decent wages and treated them much better. The farmhouse was now in a state of crisis! The kitchen was in chaos and there was no food in the pantry. What was worse, everyone far and wide was talking about them! And needless to say, news of the daughter's academic and professional success had reached the farm. Eventually, the father and brother came to realise that they would simply have to change their attitudes and take drastic action.

So the father packed the saddlebags of a donkey with what he needed for the journey and travelled to the town where his daughter lived. On the way he contemplated about what he would say to her, and decided that he would say, "Daughter, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your father: treat me like one of your students." However, the daughter saw him in the distance and ran to greet him. The father made his confession and she flung her arms around him and kissed him. The daughter forgave him and agreed to return home with him.

After they arrived at the farmhouse, all the farm workers and neighbours gathered in its great kitchen and prepared a feast to celebrate the daughter's home coming. Her father presented her with a set of the best priestly vestments and sat her beside him at the head of the table, where she presided over the Passover feast and the local people asked her to be the priest at their synagogue, which had not had a rabbi or a priest for several years. So they spent the evening feasting and rejoicing, because the daughter, who had been oppressed and rejected, had been brought home and given dignity and equality.

Sacred Sacred Scared: Trust Me I am a Priest by Leo Cavanagh

Leo Cavanagh has approached a topical and difficult issue with insight and flare. This novel stands on its own as an unusual thriller with a church background. But more than that, it demonstrates a deep understanding of the issues arising from the abuse by priests of their status and authority, their exploitation of the vulnerable and the inexcusable protection given to them by senior members of the clergy. This book can be read at several levels. It is a gripping novel set in the present switching between England and Rome. It also digs deep and looks hard at an important issue which the Catholic Church has not yet fully addressed.

Revue from Amazon. This book helped me crystallise my thoughts at the time of the Pope's visit when the media were approaching us. Pat B

I've been a very inactive member of CWO over recent years but felt that I really had to be there for the Papal visit and that this occasion would be a good way of getting involved again.

On Friday I arrived at Lala's a bit early and immediately found myself engaged in helping to put the final touches to banners and placards downstairs while upstairs a sea of purple balloons was taking over all the available space. Gradually more women arrived and were introduced to me and as the house filled up Lala provided a welcome bread and cheese lunch for those who hadn't brought their own and copious quantities of tea. At around 2.30pm we walked to St. George's Cathedral at Southwark where others joined us and a number of interviews were given to members of the media. After this we processed to our allotted space opposite Lambeth Palace, effectively fourth behind the police, a metal barrier and a row of "bone fide" Catholics. (My experience was that they ignored us and didn't attempt to engage in conversation; I wondered what their feelings were.)

It was quite a long afternoon's wait, which found us getting stiff arms and backs holding up our placards and balloons, but it was enlivened by the arrival of Peter Tatchell (plus a rather larger police presence) who remained with us for some time, chatting and holding a placard declaring "Pope bans women priests". The fact that he made time to lend his support was appreciated and helped lift our spirits.

The other high moment of our wait was the arrival of a coach-load of prelates going to the Palace who were held up for several minutes just opposite us, There was much waving of placards and balloons and a chorus of "Ordain Women Now!" which we can only hope they found suitably discomfiting. Benedict had slipped past in an entourage of darkened-windowed cars before we all fully realised it but he reappeared around 5.30., a little figure in a bright-red cape in his pope-mobile which moved slowly enough for him to notice us and our message if he cared to. It was all over very quickly and as the crowd drifted away we dispersed too, many of us to return to Lala's to pick up our belongings, drink more tea and watch the BBC news which was greeted with cheers and some jeers: there were a few seconds showing us walking along and a very short interview with a female Anglican priest; still, better than nothing.

The following day, Saturday, some of us went on the "Protest the Pope" rally organised by Peter Tatchell. This received very limited attention from the media though it had quite an impressive attendance (one estimate was 12,000) which was clear evidence of the extent to which the Vatican has antagonised the British public at large.

If we had had doubts about whether we should be attending this event, these were pretty much allayed by the "good natured" (The Observer) atmosphere and the fact that many of the banners and placards bore slogans with which most of us would be in broad agreement: for example "Keep the Pope out of women's reproductive rights" and "Condoms save lives".

Every Little Helps (continued)

If there were a few rather unpleasant ones, for example "Benedetto Brucia all Inferno", there were also those that made a good point through humour: "Science flies you to the moon. Religion flies you into buildings" and "Abstinence makes the Church grow fondlers."

En route CWO members did several interviews with the media, including Sky News and a Russian station. There was discussion with other participants and onlookers and we were seen by lots of people out shopping or sight-seeing, walking or on buses. When we got to Downing Street, most of us didn't stay to hear the speeches, having to get to Hyde Park to be ready for the demonstration there. I, regretfully, had a coach to catch.

As I travelled back to the West Country, I had the opportunity to reflect on what had been a tiring but worthwhile couple of days. OK, at Lambeth Palace we had hardly been visible to the world at large and to Catholics in particular, but we had been seen by many of those in power in the Church, especially the Pope of course. There had also been a lot of media interest, which, if it hadn't immediately translated itself to our televisions etc., may well find its way to destinations all over the world in various forms over time.

On the "Protest the Pope" rally, though we really had been very few and in many ways "outsiders" too, I felt it was positive that we had had a presence there. It was good that those of other denominations and none could see that the Roman Catholic Church contained individuals who could and did step outside rigid orthodox viewpoints and also were able to make common humanitarian cause with them. For us it was good to be reminded that those who espoused "aggressive forms of secularism" (Pope Benedict) were not necessarily that different to us and certainly not demons. (I personally believe that those who describe themselves as "atheists" are often closer to "believers" than the indifferent who can't be bothered, as they have come to their position through a thoughtful, ethical approach to life.)

It was interesting to read in The Observer the following comment from an Italian who had joined the demonstration, "This is amazing to see: in Italy we wouldn't dare say these things. But as people in Italy are getting poor-they are getting fed up of giving their taxes to make the Vatican rich. I think this will give them strength to speak out."

Despite all the outward evidence of unchangeability, I am hopeful - dare I say it I have faith - that like the fall of the Berlin Wall and then eastern European communism itself, the Vatican's intransigence towards women's ordination and the wider issues relating to patriarchy in the Church will eventually collapse suddenly and surprisingly easily.

It was great for me to meet so many CWO members (how many names will I remember?) and I want to say thanks for all the organisation that went into making our protest possible, especially to Pat, who was really busy and had to deal with a series of queries from me. I look forward to doing my bit in the future as "every little" does help.

From Mary A

A response to the Popes visit and what I would have said to the UK media had I been given the opportunity.

Firstly like many of us Welsh Catholics, I was disappointed that the Pope wasn't able to visit us and see something of our beautiful country but I think we understand that at eighty three his schedule and the travelling it entailed had to be kept to a minimum. Why couldn't the Prince of Wales could have been part of the Scottish welcoming party?. I enjoyed the address given by Pope Benedict to the people of Wales. His attempt at speaking Welsh was impressive, a Celtic language spoken with a Germanic accent. Wow!!! It was also good to hear him allude to the influence on St David of his mother, St Non, but I would have liked also to hear him remind us that her sainthood was something conferred on her by her community who recognised her gifts long before the days of canonical recognition and had little to do with her eligibility for sainthood solely by reason of her motherhood of David. In fact it is more likely that David became a saint because of her influence. She is thought to have been a single mother who brought up her son alone in a place which came to be known as Llanon ...the Church of Non. where she founded a convent. In later years she founded two monasteries, one in Brittany and another in Wales.

On the subject of Catholic Women's Ordination, canonical restriction on debate and discussion of the subject was a favourite among those members who were interviewed during the papal visit . It was one issue I addressed when asked to by foreign journalists. Here in Wales it makes life very difficult for me to take soundings of members and supporters of outside my own area. I have manage to glean the following points during informal discussions with supporters:

The shortage of Priests.

I do know that parishes are being closed and communities are being deprived of the sacraments and pastoral care. The community where I worship is one of six administered by three priests.

Many suggestions have been made as to how the priest shortage can be addressed. A poll was taken in one parish where the favoured solution was a married clergy. There is some resentment at the Pope offering to fast track disaffected Anglican clergy into the Catholic priesthood when we have so many men who are ordained as Catholic priests and have left to get married. Why not reinstate them? Anglican clergy wives are accepted! It is thought here that this would be step in the right direction towards an ordained women's ministry as the feminine influence would be there and we could work towards a more fully human and balanced Church. Any immediate action towards women's ordination is something to be hoped for in the more distant future. Most women I talked to support this aim although there is a substantial number, mainly among the elderly who are vehemently opposed to the very idea of women priests.

Mary A continues

Lay run parishes.

There are women both religious and lay who are doing tremendous work in keeping parishes going. The big problem is that they have responsibility but no authority. The buck stops at the parish priest who represents the local Bishop who is now seen as a mere yes-man and mouth piece of Rome. There needs to be a development of the concept of collegiality as originally and very beautifully set out in the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* where

‘.....each individual bishop represents his own church, but all of them together in union with the Pope represent the entire Church joined in the bond of peace love and unity . para 23

thus establishing a bond of trust between the pontiff, the bishops and the people in which we are empowered to exercise and obey the authority of Christ and the Holy Spirit conferred on us in baptism. This decentralising of the Church would automatically lead to a climate in which the local faithful would recognise their own minister, man or woman and recommend that they be ordained to serve their community.



St Non

A stained glass window in St Non's Chapel,
near St David's Pembrokeshire

Benedict in Britain – a reflection by Professor Tina Beattie, Director of the Digby Stuart Research Centre

See <http://digbystuartresearchcentre.blogspot.com/2010/09/benedict-in-britain-reflection-by.html>

Demonstration with Catholic Women Ordination group - from Sally B

On Friday 17th September, WATCH members joined with CWO in support of their determination to let the Pope, on his visit to London, know that there are women who have a calling to be ordained in the Roman Catholic Church. A large number of people gathered with banners and purple balloons to stand in the place allotted to us by the police. Far more protesters came than I imagined including at least a third being WATCH members. We wanted to show the same support that the Catholic women have always shown us. Some had come from work, others had travelled a distance to attend, many, who were not able to join in, sent their good wishes to CWO. It was, in fact, a joyous time, meeting and greeting people we had not seen for ages and being introduced to others we had not previously met. It was particularly good to have among us a number of our ordained women wearing their clerical collars standing in sympathy with their catholic sisters. The number of police on duty was huge. I have never seen so many at any other gathering or demonstration. They stood facing us; presumably, to make sure none of us would jump over the barriers - I wish! I quote from one of the many post-demonstration messages sent to WATCH from a member who took part:

"The magic moment came when those two coaches full of the hierarchies of the C/E and R/C churches were held up at the Palace gates right beside our vocal band with their banners. The police presence was amazing. What on earth were they expecting us to do? I wonder if the criminal fraternity in Lambeth realised that they could have a field day while the Met was busy observing a group of middle class women calling for equal opportunities. It's a funny old world."

The Pope eventually arrived and left with his retinue and black suited minders accompanied by our own bishops and guests. We called out in good voice, "Ordain women now" (which took the CofE supporters back a few years) and kept it up until the procession had passed. We managed to get some photographs of the Pope in his Pope-mobile who drove close to us and could not have been unaware of our message. Considering, according to the latest opinion polls, over 62% Roman Catholics are in favour of women being ordained we did not feel in the minority expressing the views of CWO. They may have a long time to go, with the desire of the hierarchy to ignore the pressure and try to forbid discussion on this issue, but, support for the recognition of the ordination of women in the RC Church is springing up all over the world and in the end will be unstoppable. We need to remember an apt saying of Dame Julian of Norwich that, "All will be well and all manner of things will be well"; our Catholic sisters, along with ourselves, will always bear this in mind with great optimism and faith.



From Morag L

This mural could be seen on St John's Episcopal Church, Princes Street, Edinburgh, during the Pope's visit. The Pope probably saw it when he passed by in the Popemobile. The priest in charge of St John's received several complaints about this mural, presumably from Catholic traditionalists.