

Women's Ordination Worldwide Open Letter to Pope Leo

September 17, 2025

Dear Pope Leo,

As we gather today in Bingen to celebrate the Feast Day of Saint Hildegard, we found it an appropriate time to send you this letter of welcome from Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW).

We recognise that the message of unity is a core tenet of your pontificate. As such, we urge you to consider that without the full equality, dignity and inclusion of women, there can be no unity.

This letter is being sent to you in the spirit of Canon 212.3, 'According to the knowledge, competence and prestige which they possess, they [the Christian faithful] have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful...'

St Hildegard of Bingen was a visionary leader whom the Church recognises as being deeply attuned to God's call, which led to her sharing abundant gifts and achieving miracles. She spoke truth to power as inspired by the spirit and, always, for the good of the church. WOW is a movement, inspired by Hildegard's prophetic wisdom and we urge you to recognize the vocations and talents of women that are still squandered by the church.

We know that you know there is no theological or scriptural impediment to women's sacramental ministry *. As a Canon lawyer, it must pain you to hear the misogynistic myths claiming women never exercised ministries. In particular, Canon Law 1024, which denies the fact that women receive the same baptism as men; the core qualification for all ministries, as demonstrated by the early followers of Jesus.

We are encouraged by your openness to listen and invite you to meet with us before the end of the Jubilee Year in Rome. You want

to meet your Church as you settle into your new role and women make up more than half the church. Meeting with women's ordination advocates will demonstrate your commitment to unity, because women are not a problem to be solved, we are the solution.

We represent the millions of Catholics – clerics and religious Sisters included – who, during Synodal discussions, spoke boldly in favour of ordaining women to finally recognise them for the ministries they perform while being consigned to the shadows of official structures. When it comes to restoring women to their rightful place as co-leaders in our Church, there is no label of traditionalist or progressive that can divide this movement of the spirit.

As St Hildegard taught us, no environment or structure can survive without the harmonious interconnectedness of all creation. The Catholic Church suffers from a sickness of sexism that resonates throughout and afflicts the whole world.

We know that your desire for justice and a healthy Church will be met with great resistance by a vocal minority of Catholics who want women to remain silent and subordinate. And so, we send you these words from Professor Nicola Slee, inspired by Hildegard's life:

*Dare to declare who you are
It is not far from the shores of silence to the boundaries of speech.
The path is not long, but the way is deep.
You must not only walk there, you must be prepared to leap.*

On this synodal path that we have been walking together, we encourage you to make the “leap” to correct the sins of misogyny and patriarchy that afflict the church. The Church now enjoys an unprecedented opportunity to manifest the generous love of Christ before the entire world - let us meet and prepare to do this together

As we stand on holy ground, we send you solidarity and support,
Your sisters in Women's Ordination Worldwide

* <http://womensordinationcampaign.org/vatican-documents/report-of-the-pontifical-biblical-commission-1975>