

CWO e-news November and December 2010 issue 32

Welcome to issue 32 of the e-news. Editor Pat Brown. Please visit CWO's website www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk News and previous issues can be seen there.

Please send items for January e-news by 15 January. Also contact me for further information about anything in this e-news where contact details are not given info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk

Below on page 2 is the next inspiring instalment of the correspondence between our member, Sheila and Archbishop Nicholls. Hopefully her success will encourage others to write either to him or their own bishop. (For the earlier correspondence see *CWO e-news* October 2010.)

Happy Christmas!



Thanks to Deb Milbrath for permission to use this cartoon

Sheila's second letter to Archbishop Nicholls

Thank you for your clear and kind letter. I would like to make a few brief comments on your own interesting comments on the relationship between priesthood and gender.

I understood from your comments that a traditional understanding of Catholic priesthood is that a priest is an icon of Christ in his maleness, and that woman can never be such an icon. I would suggest that this is a new, modern idea. The very word "icon" is foreign to our church.

In the mediaeval church, women were excluded from priesthood precisely through a devaluing of their gender but they were not excluded because they were not male icons of a male Christ. They were considered by many theologians to be naturally in a state of subordination, fundamentally defective biologically, morally and mentally, and secondary in the order of creation. It was unthinkable for beings of such low degree to signify Christ in the priesthood. Aquinas was specific.

These assumptions, common to the times, are now considered contrary to our faith and to secular values. To hold now that men and women are equal and have different ministries with equality of honour, but that women cannot signify Christ because they are not male, is to alter the ground of the ideas by which women were excluded from the priesthood formerly. It is a modern idea, but seems to me to be an effort to restate the old ideas, in which men placed a higher value on themselves than they placed on women.

Christ represented women on the cross, and women with men were redeemed, since we are told "what is not incarnated is not redeemed." Women are made in the image of God, as are men, and are as much "icons" of Christ through Baptism and Holy Communion, as are men. There is nothing defective in this, but there is something defective in the present structures within which this is lived, and which affect human relationships to God and an understanding of the nature of God. These considerations apply equally in the sacrifice of the Mass. If only the human male can represent the divine male, this seems to point to an assumption of a male godhead. It is from such theological considerations that the women I know call for ordination, and not from any considerations of the "rights of women".

It is interesting to reflect that the body and blood of Christ on the altar at mass was formed solely through the female body and blood of the Virgin Mary, according to the Church's teaching. It is therefore not only men who are physical icons.

Thank you again for your long letter. I know you are very busy now and I hope all goes well with the Pope's visit.

Sheila

Archbishop Nicholls replied. He had no arguments – just repeated the need for discussion and reflection! Sheila has not replied.

Palestine

One of our members, Ann Farr, will be in Palestine for three months as an Ecumenical Accompanier.

She hopes to send regular email letters which I can pass on to you via the e-news.

If anyone would like to contact Ann direct, please email me.

Come, Lord Jesus" is a leap into the kind of freedom and surrender that is rightly called the virtue of hope. The theological virtue of hope is the patient and trustful willingness to live without closure, without resolution, and still be content and even happy because our Satisfaction is now at another level, and our Source is beyond ourselves.

We are able to trust that the Lord will come again, just as Jesus has come into our past, into our private dilemmas and into our suffering world. Our Christian past then becomes our Christian prologue, and "Come, Lord Jesus" is not a cry of desperation but an assured shout of cosmic hope!

Richard Rohr

Requests from archive and media groups

Re- Ordinariate in January - would everyone keep their eyes open for any news in the press.

It is worth all of us googling and searching in other ways for CWO media coverage before and during Pope's visit and any subsequent coverage so we can archive it and find leads for further coverage. Pippa was idly googling herself precisely to see whether anything was still around (not being too egoistical but curious to see where some of our media coverage had gone!)and found the Reuters/ITN videos and some of the written script that was used, which wasn't there before and showed many of us in it.

If we all do this and send it to Myra and Ruth we might find quite a collection for the CWO archives. Some of the links only last a week and we have saved one or two of those onto disc. We might turn up some coverage we have not been aware of and can follow up for further coverage...?

Please send any links, archive pictures etc to Myra or Ruth as soon as possible.

Pippa, Myra and Ruth

Study: 74 percent of Irish Catholic women don't feel valued by church

A study by Michael Kelly from Catholic News on 3 November 2010 shows that- Irish Catholic women feel that they are not sufficiently appreciated by the church, but their faith remains strong.

For full article see <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1004513.htm>

Thanks to Sue W

CWO Noddfa weekend and Greenbelt

Noddfa had always sounded wonderful - the write-ups always sound just what is needed for spiritual and bodily sustenance - and in the e-news there were invitations to go for a weekend to pray for and gain strength for the coming action. On the train going (why be eco-friendly I thought as stuck outside Chester for hours) there was plenty of time to have slight concerns about what the weekend would be like - maybe everyone would be very serious or non drinkers - but no such worries were founded! The introductory cup of tea and scones and jam and cream set the scene for a weekend of delicious food especially the nut roast (and it wasn't a dry house either). The kindness and hospitality of the nuns was overflowing.

It was a very special weekend - the camaraderie and input from people sharing ideas and actions and so much of themselves was wonderful. I felt deeply honoured to be listening to Una's wise, wise words and to people's stories - pain and laughter and positivity in the face of such adversity. It was impossible to leave Noddfa without feeling refreshed and embraced by faith, support and friendship.

Then managed to get signed up for a shift at Greenbelt - on the Bank Holiday Monday and had another train adventure but arrived in good time (it wasn't like most festivals and had walkways so no mud and proper loos!) Pat dished out the tee-shirts - thought they would be loose, but no, very tight which over a black bra looked terrible - not only that, the words were bang in the middle and a lot of time was spent crossing my arms so no-one could read anything!

The support was phenomenal - people coming up and saying how they would pray for women's ordination and several women priests talked about their struggles. There was only one Catholic woman (a recent convert) who was firmly against us and who told us that she would always defer to her priest and was not open to conversation or possibility of change. We had balloons and pens and car stickers to advertise CWO with the bus messages grabbing the imagination of many people. Pat had two mobile phones and was engaging in media interviews about the buses - she is absolute pro and a really relaxed media star - many people had seen her on the NOW show!

These two extremely different experiences prepared us spiritually and mentally for the Pope's visit.

Amanda R

"If the Pope can change his stance on condoms, why can't he also modify the Vatican's harsh, intolerant opposition to women's rights, gay equality, fertility treatment and embryonic stem cell research? This new stance shows that the Vatican now realises that its earlier policy was untenable and unsustainable,"

Peter Tatchell

Three Choices at a Crossroads

At a crossroads, remember, there are three possible options to choose from.

The first choice is simply to quit a road that is going nowhere. We can move out and move on, we can move away from it all, and leave the unfinished mission undone.

The second choice is to give in to the fatigue that comes from years of being ignored — or worse — of being ridiculed or excommunicated — and go silently into oblivion. The second choice is to crawl into a comfortable cave with nice people and wait for the storm to go by.

The third choice is to refuse to accept the decadent present and insist on celebrating the coming of the unknown, but surely holy, future. The third choice is to go steadfastly on following the path of the prophets, of those who spoke before us but were also not heard until long after the fact.

Prophets are those who take life as it is and expand it. They simply refuse to shrink a vision of tomorrow to the boundaries of yesterday. But never forget as well, that the prophets, like you and I — discouraged by the present, weary from trying—also toyed with all three options. But in the end chose to go on following the spiritual magnet of their lives rather than allow it to wither.

The prophets — everyone of them — when they came to the crossroads, when they came to a chance to settle down there, to quit, to accept what was, chose instead to keep on going.

They chose to go on — despite it all. If not with a sense of total and immediate success, then as sirens in the night, as seeders of far-flung seeds, as eternal agitators in the soul of the nation, as torches in the murk of confusion. They chose to go on illuminating to others, down century after century, the eternal word of God.

They chose to go on shouting the message upon which the future rested and the people depended if they were to find their way out of the darkness to which a failed leadership had condemned them.

You and I know that these people — people just like us: simple and sincere, eager and inspired — these fruit growers like Amos and small business people like Hosea, these priests and sheep masters, these theologians and dreamers like Isaiah and Ezekiel, these struggling lovers and suffering witnesses made no small choices indeed. They chose courage; they chose the expansion of the soul; they chose to stake their lives on what must be rather than stake their comfort on what was.

—from "Prophets of a Future Not Our Own" Joan Chittister's closing address at the 30th Annual Call To Action Conference, Milwaukee, WI, Nov. 5-7.

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

Websites

www.womenwordspirit.org

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

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

Group for rescinding the Act of Synod

<http://womenandthechurch.org/>
campaign group for women's equality in the Church of England

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

National Catholic Reporter –
Joan Chittester is a regular contributor

<http://lgcm.org.uk/>

Lesbian and Gay Christians

www.womenpriests.org.

You can sign up for their regular newsletter

www.spirituschristi.org

An inclusive Catholic Church where all are welcome

www.womensordination.org

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

Kristina Keneally's rational Catholic conscience

An article about Australia's prime minister Kristina Keneally and her support for women's ordination can be found at

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=11135>

Associations between Australia's labour party and the Roman Catholic Church are strong so hopefully, her stance will rock the boat.