

CWO e-news July 2010 issue 29

Welcome to issue 29 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.

Recent events and preparation for the Pope's visit have rather taken over. This issue is late and I can't be absolutely sure when the August edition will come out. Please send items by mid August if possible. info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk Also contact me for further information about anything in this e-news where contact details are not given

There is now a news page on the home page of the website so updates will go on that. There may not always be time to email everyone. Please click on as often as you can just to check that banner. Please put www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk in your

The campaign around the Pope's visit

Document from the Vatican on clerical sexual abuse and the ordination of women

The inclusion of these two items in the same document has produced a huge response. CWO members have been interviewed by press, radio and TV. Despite Vatican protests that they are not relating these two "serious crimes against the faith", most people simply won't accept that. How can it be a serious crime against the faith to follow one's calling? What does it say to our sisters who are ministers in other Christian denominations? We have had many enquiries and supportive messages since this pronouncement. Some responses are in this e-news.

The Pope's Visit <http://www.thepapalvisit.org.uk/2010-Visit/Itinerary>

16 September - Scotland - He will be received by Her Majesty The Queen, members of the Royal Family and people representing British society in the Palace of Holyrood House in Edinburgh. Having met the Queen, the Pope will travel to Glasgow where he will celebrate an open-air Mass at Bellahouston Park in the evening and then he will fly from Glasgow to London.

17 September - London - He is going to St Mary's University College, Twickenham, where there will be three aspects to his visit. The first is that he begins the day praying with representatives of religious congregations - particularly those who have a charism for education and a history of education. He will then go and meet 3,000 young people - schoolchildren, students - to celebrate Catholic education. From there he will then meet with religious leaders and people of religious faith in the Waldegrave Drawing Room and Walpole House. He will discuss with them religion and belief in our society.

Later in the day, the Pope is scheduled to meet with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace in the presence of the Anglican diocesan bishops and the Catholic diocesan bishops of England and Wales.

The campaign around the Pope's visit (continued)

He has then been invited, as part of the State visit, to address British society. Representatives of British society will be invited to Westminster Hall to hear the Pope's address.

He will finish off the day with the Archbishop of Canterbury and Christian leaders at Westminster Abbey to celebrate Evening Prayer. The Holy Father will also pray at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior and also at the Shrine of Edward the Confessor.

18 September - London - On the third day of the visit, Pope Benedict will celebrate Mass in Westminster Cathedral where he will also greet the people of Wales. Later in the day he will visit a home for older people and then be present at an open-air Vigil of prayer in Hyde Park.

19 September - Birmingham - The final day of the visit is focused very much on the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman, and the Pope will celebrate that beatification in Cofton Park in Birmingham - adjacent, fittingly, to Rednal where Cardinal Newman was buried. Pope Benedict will conclude the day by meeting with the bishops of England, Scotland and Wales in Oscott College.

On Wednesday 15th September (Our Lady of Sorrows), the eve of the Papal visit, CWO will have a vigil on the Piazza outside Westminster Cathedral 5.30 – 7.00pm, This will enable us to catch people going into and coming out of the evening Mass. Be there if you can.

For the visit itself we will focus on London. It's too early to say exactly where we'll be. WATCH will be at Lambeth Palace and they have invited us to join them, so that will definitely be one of the places where there'll be a CWO presence. Thanks to all those who have already been in touch. If you haven't, please let me know if you can be in London on 17 and/or 18 September.

CWO - On The Buses!

For four weeks from 30 August, there will be 10 buses in central London carrying our message along the most popular routes. They will pass Westminster Cathedral and House of Commons as well as main shopping areas. We have spent nearly all our money so any donations would be very gratefully received! info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk

Thanks to those who have already given very generously to the buses fund. We have had 2.5 buses paid for completely and many smaller donations. It's been an incredible response.

Greenbelt

There will also be a CWO stall at Greenbelt festival 27 – 30 August at Cheltenham racecourse. We have advertised in the festival brochure this year.

www.greenbelt.org.uk

CWO Annual Gathering Saturday, 2 October 2010

St Andrew's Church
Short Street
Waterloo
London
SE1 8LJ

Programme

10.30 - 11.00 arrive, refreshments

11.00 - 1.00 AGM

1.00 - 1.45 lunch

1.45 - 3.15 In view of recent activities we will take time to reflect.

3.15 - 3.30 liturgy

3.30 – 3.45 short break

3.45 – 4.45 Lisa Wright

Lisa was one of the first ordained Anglican priests and was a member of MOW. She remembers CWO members handing them flowers.

Lisa will be giving us her performance based on her book "Spilling the Beans - Letters from East Ham Vicarage 1953-1956" , lately seen at the Edinburgh festival

The letters were written to Lisa by her mother Margot, a Rector's wife in the East End. when Lisa set off to teach in Connecticut in her first job. For nearly three years the letters give a racy, vivid picture of East End parish life 50 years ago - a social scene now gone for ever. The letters lay in shoe boxes for decades until Lisa edited them and brought them to life in her one woman shows and her books.

4.45 – 5.00 Questions and winding up.

A powerful email received via the website

Please keep up the good work! Women have as much right as men to be Priests. The Catholic Church should look to its true roots. The Holy Spirit is after all female, She is the original She, in fact as She is the Shekinah of the Torah!

Jesus did mix with women and had women followers, one of whom of course had her own Gospel originally.

Discrimination is not acceptable in any other part of our lives, why should it be allowed in religion? All things in life need balance and the Church (Catholic, C of E and the rest) would benefit enormously from women being allowed to REALLY participate and get involved with it. For one thing maybe 50% of that faith's followers would no longer be made to feel like second class citizens.

Jesus welcomes women with his love, no more and no less than men. If he calls, he calls, gender should not be a barrier to God's will!

I was raised into an old Catholic family. The primary reason I turned my back was that as a woman I was discriminated against and felt like an inferior. Every moment of my time as a Catholic I felt like they only wanted me to bear more Catholic children for them, no one respected me as a woman or person. When it was realised that I'm barren and could not provide the Church with fresh blood I was shunned terribly and made to feel like a complete failure and was told that God did not love me and was punishing me for being abused as a child, by a Priest. Apparently as I child I was Satan's spawn who tempted this pure man. I was a small child! I understand from many others that this attitude is typical. It would not be if the Church understood women or had women involved in running it.

There's also no need for celibacy, that breeds abuse and I don't care what the Church says, that's fact!

Now that there's a Pope who seems to think child abuse can all be swept under the carpet, I am so glad not to be Catholic, sorry but that is how I feel. Pope Benedict has personally done a lot of damage to the Church and I can't bring myself to pray for forgiveness or anything else for such an evil man. I am angry that he is coming to my country with his attitude.

I walked away from Church and from God because of my experiences. Many others are doing the same.

The Church will I am sure die before it allows women to become Priests. It is corrupt and evil. Yet ironically only women can save it.

Keep up the good work.

Letter sent by a CWO member to her bishop on 16.7.10 Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

I made my First Holy Communion 69 years ago today and was Confirmed a few weeks later at the age of 6; the expected Invasion brought these sacraments forward but I had been well prepared by my parents and teachers so understood in a simple and faithful way what they meant and I have been a practising Catholic ever since.

Now my faith has had its greatest shock ever in the reported announcement yesterday that the Pope has pronounced that those who work for the ordination of women in the Catholic Church are to be excommunicated and put in the same category as paedophile priests.

That really is the last straw as far as my allegiance to the **Roman** Catholic Church is concerned. I love the Lord, pray formally daily, attending weekday Mass when possible and 'chat' to the Him constantly, giving thanks for His goodness, mercy and love.

But.....how can I be a member of, support and attend a Church whose leader says such wicked and ignorant things(has he been misquoted?). You and all the clergy have to be 'loyal' as you are the official hierarchy so whether you agree with the Magisterium/Curia or not is irrelevant. As a member of the laity/ people of God/ the Church, I have the luxury of using my informed conscience and choosing to accept Rome's views..... or not.

Obviously, if the latter, I must stop calling myself a Catholic and just be a Christian; stop supporting the Church financially, being a Eucharistic Minister and Reader and worship elsewhere. That will be a terrible wrench after all these years as a Catholic Christian.

How long should one wait to see if Rome will modify its language, listen to the Holy Spirit and admit that half the human race are actually 'human' and capable of love and service?

Yours in deep sorrow and confusion

Ann

Another email via the website

May I as an 82 year old women who has always gone to church, offer my support in prayers only now that I am too old to give help. AS am a member of the U3A I find it difficult to explain to my friends who are Christians but most of whom do not go to church, why I still support the church even though I was divorced years ago. After a struggle to bring up five children and working full time as a teacher I received no help from the church, indeed the school at which I was working made my life difficult. However the recent announcement from the Vatican has put another nail in the coffin. However the friends that I mix with are still my friends and although they ask questions about the church I find it increasingly difficult to justify what the pope says. He will be in England soon which is costing the taxpayer millions. To see him and put your point of view is impossible. Does he ever listen to the women of the world. I will go on praying to my favourite saint Jude for some solution to this problem. Our lovely priest in Ware said this morning that there are very few priests left while he was standing next to a deacon a married man who should be ordained tomorrow. It is not only catholic women but married men too .

WOW ROME June 2010. Action during final Celebration of the Year of the Priest.

Liverpool Airport was the busiest I've ever seen despite the early hour. I had gone to great lengths to keep within Ryanair's prescribed hand luggage limits so felt peeved on boarding to find that all the lockers and underseat spaces were completely filled with clergy baggage well in excess of the allowance. Needless to say, I met steely glares from the nearest seated clergy whose sense of entitlement left me with nowhere to put my bag. Honestly how many frocks does a guy need for a few days in Rome?

On Monday evening, we went to the hotel where we were to meet the other WOW women. A couple of the American women mentioned to us that they had ordered tickets for the Papal audience and would be collecting these just minutes before the event was about to begin. They suspected that they would be refused tickets. There was no mention of whether a Mass would be celebrated with the Italian women who had recently been ordained, whether there were any other plans for us to have time together or of any attempt at engagement in a dialogue with anyone at the Vatican.

On Tuesday, I made my way by taxi to the Adista** building in the morning. I was shown to the room we were to use, a dusty, tiny, room with a few faded pages of L'osservatore Romano on the walls, and some really horrible furniture. I moved furniture about and was about to remove the yellowing newspaper when one of the staff returned to warn me that I mustn't interfere with the items on the wall. I had placed the desk and chairs we would sit on under a small, framed picture of John XX111. A good omen. There was space under the picture for a banner. Another missive from the office said we must not pin anything on the walls. After the packs got sorted Therese* got busy with her stilettos and some pins.

The media arrived within minutes of each other and busied themselves with recording equipment. They were welcomed by Erin* who did an excellent job in introducing us and explaining our purpose in being in Rome at this time. We gave our prepared presentations. This was followed by a time for questions. These were ably fielded by the seasoned members of WOW. There was a great deal of interest from some journalists in the Catholic Women Priests and much of the replies to questions were consequently fielded by the ordained women. There did not appear to be anyone from Catholic newspapers in Britain or Ireland, but Paddy Agnew from the Irish Times and David Willey from the Times were there. These latter both seemed to be aware of the previous attempts at an act of witness by WOW near St Peter's. Their questions gave Erin* and the others an opportunity to describe the way they had been treated by the Rome police who have the contract for policing St Peter's Square. The responses to the questioning were free of self pity and were good humoured. P. Agnew then enquired whether we were intending to go to St Peter's Square and whether we would have any objections to the journalists accompanying us.

Many of them came along with us and we were able to talk informally to them as we walked. CNN and other television cameras were alongside as we carried banners in various languages into the square. The police were expecting us and clearly were not going to allow us to hold banners in the square. But they were very inhibited by the cameras and microphones up close wherever they moved among us.

WOW ROME June 2010. Action - Celebration of the Year of the Priest (cont'd)

The walk to St Peter's Square had a great deal more impact in an area swarming with tourists because of the accompanying media. Also it is a great protection in dealing with the Italian police who have a reputation for brutality during demonstrations, as anyone who has followed the G8 events at Genoa will remember. In the past year other groups of women have been dealt with harshly in St Peter's Square, in particular the Grandmothers of the American Nation who came there to protest the bulls issued by Pius 11 encouraging slavery of native Americans and Africans and which have never been rescinded.. .

On Wednesday, we visited many churches and left the CWO business cards among the devotional materials for the tourists. We made visits back to St Peters to distribute cards but it was highly regimented with a queue circling the square.

On Thursday, we found ourselves sitting next to Colette* when we sat down near the Castello San Angelo. We were able to catch up on what had happened with the others on Wednesday afternoon. Also we found out then about the technical hitches that prevented them contacting us.

Before leaving our hotel, we slid plenty of CWO cards under doors on the first floor, where all the "Holy men"/Opus Dei were accommodated.

On the flight back, I renewed acquaintance with the head of the police security in the UK. He is concerned for the safety and wellbeing of all concerned, though it has been emphasised to him that the Pope's life is in his hands during the visit. He wants to ensure that those who have a legitimate wish to protest are enabled to do so and that British police do not emulate some of the tactics by police of other nations as seen at the G8. He mentioned that he now reads the Tablet and reporting on church matters in mainstream newspapers, that he is not a believer, but a family member is a retired female priest. He has been surprised at the vicious tone of much of the discussions among Catholics in the press. He intended looking up our website and thought that the opportunity for us to demonstrate if we wished to should be ensured.

This visit to Rome with women from a wide range of approaches to the issue has sparked many questions for me.

Mary

* Member of WOW steering group

** The Adista premises where we held the media conference prior to our march to St Peter's Square is, I have discovered, the offices of a news agency and Rome weekly politico-religious publication, Adista. The editor of Adista is Valerie Gigante. When she addressed the 12th National Assembly of We Are Church at Milan she referred to the traditional relationship of friendship with WAC. She mentioned 'the problem of religious information', 'the timidity of the Church in regard to the media as it reacts in an institutional way that leaves no space to the voices of dissent, the voices of those who experience discomfort, spaces for bringing to light the diversity of views and options that the Church should welcome as an asset rather than a threat'. She emphasised the importance of not abandoning attempts at dialogue with the institution and offering proposals.

Fine Words Butter no Parsnips

This trenchant North Country saying applies only too well to the inaction after insightful events or publications by the institutional Church. The National Pastoral Congress of 1980 pointed the way to the church as the People of God: on pilgrimage rather than static, able to trust each other and its leaders, a church "that speaks its mind", a sharing church, as well as one with a hierarchical structure (they could hardly leave that out). The experience of the congress itself was almost a messianic one and very powerful. Much of its vision was incorporated in the official report entitled "The Easter People", but was never put into practice.

One of its most interesting inclusions was an actual though rather tentative apology for the way women had and was being treated. "We recognise with regret that you have often been permitted to play mainly a limited and often inferior part in the Church" (para 178). At this time even the treatment of Galileo had yet been apologised for! Yet how much have this report's words been acted upon? Women do now play a greater part but often with reluctant rather than enthusiastic support of the powers that be.

Since then we have had a number of forward looking documents being issued by our bishops. One was the result of an episcopal week of reflection in 96 looking forward to the challenge of the Millennium. This was called *Come With Us* and was a very thoughtful meditation. Unusually it recognised the need for repentance by the church itself and ends "our confidence and strength come from the Lord. Before we are leaders, we are followers, disciples among the baptised. We trust that in collaboration with priests and all Christ's faithful we can fashion the new relationships which will show the world that no-one is outside the embrace of God's love - we say to all in our dioceses, "Come with us"." But how far did they go themselves in following through their thinking in this document?

One excellent document from the English and Welsh bishops drawn up with lay participation was the *Sign We Give* on collaborative ministry. Is it inertia or fear that prevents such insights being carried out in practice? Collaboration is acknowledged in principle but it is practically never explored what are the best means of training the clergy to put this into effect. Over the years there have been a number of "consultations" with the laity and each time there comes up from the people a call for in-service training of the clergy to become more effective leaders, to learn how to listen, and for the Bishops to learn the benefits of modern management techniques. Lay input was asked for the recent update of the *Common Good* document but one does not know how much lay understanding was incorporated into the final draft.

One reason for lack of progress is that the People of God as a whole quickly get dispirited when they come up against Church authorities. Bishop Derek Worlock asked Oliver and myself, in writing *A Parish Handbook*, to put in that people should put pressure on their bishop when things that should be done were being neglected! Can the concept of the Church (both as people of God and the institution) be revived by the realisation that inclusivity must be our hall mark if we are to image the practice of Jesus and the nature of the Godhead?

Ianthe

A personal experience from Leeds

For a few days in July CWO came in out of the cold, into the warmth to speak freely and directly to people around the world. Literally, this is how it seems.

Since the mid 1990s we have been forbidden by the Vatican from speaking within the Church about women's ordination. Some of our members are academic theologians and historians who have written extensively. The rest of us have tried hard to write and speak out where we can. Sometimes this has worked well, and then back to the cold. We know that many people, priests and nuns support the idea of women's ordination in a reformed Catholic Church. But, we have no official structures to use to speak out. When some have tried to put their heads above the Catholic parapet they have been ostracised, not put forward for promotion, and, in some cases bullied and threatened. We have names but have to protect those who have suffered. Many have been frightened, demoralised and damaged by the process.

Last week Myra Poole was televised on the 10pm News on BBC1 following the Statement from Rome, apparently placing clerical abuse and women's ordination together in the same letter to Bishops, as crimes, or sexual sin and sacramental sin. After that the CWO mobile rang constantly and the website had many hits. The tentative emails some of us had sent to media outlets suddenly bore fruit.

Pat spoke on the BBC nationally, and internationally on the World Service and other stations. She was interviewed on "Sunday" Radio 4 by Edward Stourton. The man who spoke off line afterwards was laughing. When she had finally been asked what impact the infamous statement had had on CWO she said the Pope had done CWO a favour!

I spoke on Radio5 Live vying with a representative from Catholic Voices and commentary on Jonathan Ross's last BBC show. I also gave six live interviews to BBC regions from Merseyside to Guernsey on their Sunday morning faith programmes. Other CWO members who live in those areas can now follow up these contacts. Interviewers were interested and friendly.

We realise the media train has moved on – for the moment – but we believe the next chapter now begins for those who are prompted to engage with the media.

- It seemed to us our media training had been very valuable.
- Keeping ourselves well informed and being able to access this information for immediate use was key.
- Theological and historical underpinning is important, but it seemed too that much of the media are hungry for our real stories and experiences, that causes us to love but struggle within the Church.
- We realise we have to be focussed and thoughtful about what we say.
- We have to protect our colleagues who need to remain silent.
- We have to respond immediately, or find someone who can commit to the opportunity, if it seems it may further the cause.

A personal experience from Leeds (continued)

I think my greatest learning was that Catholic Voices, the group trained to advocate for the Pope as he visits the UK are articulate, well trained and technologically equipped (funded by who?). They speak with authority (the Vatican's authority) but we speak with the authority of our suffering and experience. The Holy Spirit goes where s/he will. Myra and others were a great help in boosting our confidence in Leeds. Other media encounters have gone on elsewhere too. Tell us about them.

Pat and I remain grounded, aware of the hard task ahead and knowing there is a need to keep our lives balanced between campaigning and our spiritual journey. Our Radio 4 interviewer this evening asked us what we did to have fun. Then all three of us, including the interviewer found it difficult to stop giggling! We all need fun and a spiritual boost.

Pippa

Facebook report

Facebook membership is up to 86 members. We have people from 11 countries including Taiwan, Hungary and the Isle of Man. There are 11 topics on the discussion boxes.

The biggest response we have had is to the Vatican's decision to make the ordination of women a "grave sin" along the same lines as paedophile priests. Feelings were very strong about this, with comments and a several "thumbs up" to the WOW response.

You can join facebook/catholic women's ordination if you are a facebook participant or you can view if you're not a member.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Catholic-Womens-Ordination/27311398359>

Please encourage support for this site there is a lot of kudos for sites with large numbers of members/supporters.

Catherine

PS Link to CWO interview on radio Leeds with Pippa is on there at the moment.

Women complain about PMT, but I think of it as the one time of the month that I can be myself

Roseanne Barr

Letter from Roy Bourgeois to his Maryknoll community 24 May 2010

To My Maryknoll Brothers, You have been my community, my family, for 44 years. Because of my love and respect for you and for Maryknoll, I want to explain, as best I can, why I believe women should be ordained in our Church. As a young man in the military, I felt God was calling me to be a priest. After much discernment, I entered Maryknoll and was ordained in 1972. I am grateful to have found the hope, meaning, and joy I was seeking in life.

In my ministry over the years, I have met many devout women in our Church who feel called by God to the priesthood, just as we do as men. And why shouldn't they be called? As Catholics, we profess that our all-loving God created men and women of equal worth and dignity. As priests, we all say that the call to the priesthood is a gift and comes from God. My brothers, who are we to reject God's call of women to the priesthood? Who are we, as men, to say that our call from God is valid, but their call, as women, is not? I believe that our all-powerful God, Creator of the universe, is certainly capable of calling women to be priests.

Our Church leaders tells us that women cannot be priests because Jesus chose only male apostles. With all due respect, this is not accurate. As Christians, we know the importance of the resurrection. It is at the core of our faith. Jesus chose a woman, Mary Magdalene, to be the first witness to His resurrection. She was also chosen to bring "the good news" to the male apostles and became known as "the apostle to the apostles." Galatians 3:28 is very clear: "There is neither male nor female. In Christ Jesus you are one." Furthermore, a 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the Vatican's top scripture scholars, concluded that there is no justification in the New Testament for excluding women from the priesthood.

reflecting on the scriptures, the love of God, and the many stories I have heard from women over the years about their being called by God, I believe that excluding women from ordination is rooted in sexism. Sexism, like racism, is a sin. And no matter how hard we may try to justify discrimination, in the end, it is always wrong.

For the past 20 years I have been speaking out against the injustice of the School of the Americas and U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. In conscience, I cannot be silent about an injustice I see much closer to home - an injustice in my Church. The exclusion of women from the priesthood is a grave injustice against women, against our Church, and against our God who is calling women to serve our Church as priests.

Fundamentally, the ordination of women is a matter of justice. At the same time, there are practical benefits to having women priests. As we know, our Church is in a serious crisis. Hundreds of churches are closing because of a shortage of priests. When I entered Maryknoll, we had over 300 seminarians preparing for the priesthood. Today we have eight.

Roy Bourgeois' letter to his Maryknoll community (cont'd)

If we are to have a vibrant and healthy Church rooted in the teachings of Jesus, we need the wisdom, compassion, courage, and gifts of women in the priesthood. Like the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement, and the right of women to vote, the ordination of women is inevitable because it is just.

Let us be on the right side of history. Our Maryknoll community is well known and respected for its work for justice and the oppressed. My brothers, I respectfully ask that you break your silence and stand in solidarity with the many women in our Church who, like you and me, are called by God to the priesthood.

Your brother in Christ,
Roy Bourgeois, M.M.
P.O. Box 3330/Columbus, GA 31903
706-682-5369

From the Washington Post

Open mouth and insert foot--again and again and again. That must be the Vatican motto under Pope Benedict XVI. How else to explain the Vatican's recent statement placing priestly paedophilia and attempts to ordain women as priests on the same list of "grave delicts" to be punished by the Roman Catholic Church. Oh yes. Heresy, apostasy, and schism also made the list. In case you haven't heard the word "delict" used lately, it is a legal term meaning--naturally--an offense against the law. In this case, the target of the delict is church law. This term is itself revealing, because it locates both priestly paedophilia and women's ordination in the realm of violations of church rules rather than in the realm of sin or crime. The Vatican is certainly right about half of this equation. Ordaining women as priests is neither a sin nor a crime, but an offense--a delict--against these men in their black, red, and white frocks. You can now be defrocked for raping a child or for conferring Holy Orders on a woman.

CWO Newsletter

Please send items for the next CWO Newsletter (October) to Diana
info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk

If anyone who has received an electronic copy of the last Newsletter and would like a hard copy please let Pat know
info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk

If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito.

Anita Roddick

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

AND –Ours!

<http://www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk/>

Don't forget to put it in your favourites and check for updates about the Pope's visit

Last in a series of talks by Dr Dorothea McEwan –

Supported by filmmaker Brek Taylor and writer Penelope Middelboe

St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation

78 Bishopsgate (near Liverpool Street Station), London, EC2N 4AG

What is leadership?

An examination of the existing pyramid structure and ways of moving towards an inclusive Church.

Monday September 20th 6.30-8.30pm

There are half a billion women Catholics. Women are excluded from all decision-making as well as from ordination. The discussion of women's ordination has been banned by the Vatican.

"Catholicism and tradition subjugate women to 'second class citizens'. It's extraordinarily important religious leaders understand they must change and there must be equal status in the home, in religious expression and in the political sphere." Mary Robinson, Irish President 1990-97, Former UN Commissioner for Human Rights

Dr Dorothea McEwan is a well-travelled lecturer and academic and editor of *An A-Z of Feminist Theology* (with Lisa Isherwood), *Cymbals and Silences: Echoes from the First European Women's Synod. Women for Change in the 21st Century* (with Fanny Martin and Lucy Tatman) and *Making All Things New* (with Myra Poole).

There is no fee to attend this workshop, though contributions will be welcomed. Refreshments will be served.

To book your place now or for more information please email Brek Taylor at cwolondon@gmail.com

The Authority of those who have suffered

If religion is not primarily a belonging system, but is truly a transformational system, one would need, it seems to me, a very different kind of authority. One needs the experience and conviction of someone who has walked the journey himself or herself. One needs the authority of a person who can say, "I know what God does with pain, because of what God has done with mine." And not just the authority to say, "You must believe in this and you must believe in that." This utterly changes the focus of spiritual authority.

For me, almost the best litmus test of whether a person has healthy or unhealthy religion is, "What do they do with their pain?" Because pain is always part of the deal, as Jesus, the Jewish prophets, and Buddha agree.

Richard Rohr

An Icon for Our Century

It is Mary Magdalene, the evangelist John details, to whom Jesus first appears after the resurrection. It is Mary Magdalene who is instructed to proclaim the Easter message to the others. It is Mary Magdalene whom Jesus commissions to "tell Peter and the others that I have gone before them into Galilee."

And, then, the scripture says pathetically, "But Peter and John and the others did not believe her and they went to the tomb to see for themselves."

It is two thousand years later and little or nothing has changed. The voice of women proclaiming the presence of Christ goes largely unconfirmed. The call of women to minister goes largely unnoted. The commission of women to the church goes largely disdained.

Mary Magdalene is, no doubt about it, an important icon for the twenty-first century.

She calls women to listen to the call of the Christ over the call of the church.

She calls men to listen for the call of the Christ in the messages of women.

She calls women to courage and men to humility.

She calls all of us to faith and fortitude, to unity and universalism, to a Christianity that rises above sexism, a religion that transcends the idolatry of maleness, and a commitment to the things of God that surmounts every obstacle and surpasses every system.

Mary Magdalene is a shining light of hope, a disciple of Christ, a model of the wholeness of life, in a world whose name is despair and in a church whose vision is yet, still, even now, partial.

Joan Chittester

Advance Notice of Richard Rohr weekend

Richard Rohr is leading a weekend at St James' Piccadilly on 3-4 Sept "The greatest vocation is not the contemplative, nor is it the active, but the utter art form of putting the two together." Some of the input will come from his Franciscan Tradition, and the event is sponsored by the Society of St Francis.

Price £40

Bookings as follows:

www.oxfordplayhouse.com/ticketsoxford

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